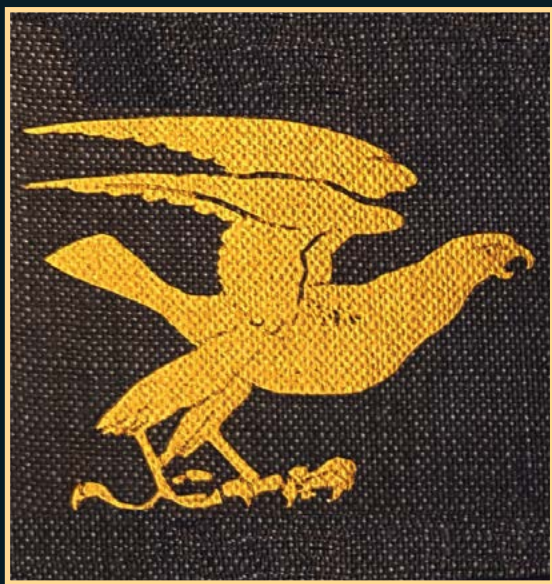


# YEATS'S LEGACIES



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Edited by WARWICK GOULD

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# YEATS'S LEGACIES

YEATS ANNUAL No. 21

*A Special Issue*

Edited by Warwick Gould

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The Editor dedicates his work on this volume to

WILLIAM H. O'DONNELL

in gratitude for his meticulous textual scholarship  
and restless curiosity in annotation







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## Abbreviations

- Au* *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1955).
- AVA* *A Vision: An Explanation of Life Founded upon the Writings of Giralduſ and upon certain Doctrines attributed to Kuſta Ben Luka* (London: privately printed for ſubſcribers only by T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., 1925). See alſo *CVI*.
- AVB* *A Vision* (London: Macmillan, 1962).
- Berg Books and Manuscripts, The Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, New York Public Library (Aſtor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations).
- BG* Ann Saddlemyer, *Becoming George: The Life of Mrs W. B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Preſs, 2002).
- BIV1, 2* *A Book of Irish Verſe* ſelected from Modern Writers with an Introduction and Notes by W. B. Yeats (London: Methuen, 1895, 1900)
- BL Add. MS Additional Manuſcript, The British Library, London (followed by number).
- BL Macmillan Later papers from the Macmillan Archive, British Library, London.
- Bodley Bodleian Library, Oxford.
- Bradford Curtis B. Bradford, *Yeats at Work* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Preſs, 1965).
- Brotherton Manuſcript, The Brotherton Collection, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.
- CH* W. B. Yeats: *The Critical Heritage*, ed. by A. Norman Jeffares (London: Henley; Boſton: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).
- ChronY* *A W. B. Yeats Chronology* by John S. Kelly (Baſingſtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

- CL1, 2, 3, 4* *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats: Volume I, 1865–1895*, ed. by John Kelly and Eric Domville; *Volume II, 1896–1900*, eds. Warwick Gould, John Kelly, Deirdre Toomey; *Volume III, 1901–1904*, and *Volume IV, 1905–1907*, eds. John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, 1997, 1994, 2005).
- CL InteLex* *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, gen. ed. John Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press [InteLex Electronic Edition], 2002). Letters cited by accession number.
- CM* *W. B. Yeats: A Census of the Manuscripts*, by Conrad A. Balliet, with the assistance of Christine Mawhinney (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990).
- CVA* *A Critical Edition of Yeats's A Vision (1925)*, ed. by George Mills Harper and Walter Kelly Hood (London: Macmillan, 1978).
- CW1* *The Poems: Second Edition* (New York: Scribner, 1997), ed. by Richard J. Finneran and replacing *The Poems: Revised* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989; London: Macmillan, 1989), *PR*, which replaced *The Poems: A New Edition* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1983; London: Macmillan London Ltd., 1984), *PNE*, as the first volume of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (formerly *The Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*).
- CW2* *The Plays*, eds. David R. Clark and Rosalind E. Clark (New York: Scribner, 2001), Vol. II of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (formerly *The Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*).
- CW3* *Autobiographies*, eds. William H. O'Donnell and Douglas N. Archibald, assisted by J. Fraser Cocks III and Gretchen Schwenker (New York: Scribner, 1999), vol. III of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (formerly *The Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*).
- CW5* *Later Essays*, ed. by William H. O'Donnell, with assistance from Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), vol. V of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (formerly *The Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*).
- CW6* *Prefaces and Introductions: Uncollected Prefaces and Introductions by Yeats to Works by other Authors and to Anthologies Edited by Yeats*, ed. by William H. O'Donnell (London: Macmillan, 1988), vol. VI of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (formerly *The Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*).
- CW7* *Letters to the New Island*, eds. George Bornstein and Hugh Wittemeyer (London: Macmillan, 1989), vol. VII of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (formerly *The Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*).

- CW8 *The Irish Dramatic Movement*, eds. Mary FitzGerald and Richard J. Finneran (New York: Scribner, 2003), vol. VIII of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (formerly *The Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*).
- CW9 *Early Articles and Reviews: Uncollected Articles and Reviews Written Between 1886 and 1900*, eds. John P. Frayne and Madeleine Marchaterre (New York: Scribner, 2004), vol. IX of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (formerly *The Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*).
- CW10 *Later Articles and Reviews: Uncollected Articles, Reviews, and Radio Broadcasts Written after 1900*, ed. by Colton Johnson (New York: Scribner, 2000), vol. X of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (formerly *The Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*).
- CW12 *John Sherman AND Dhoya*, ed. by Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991), vol. XII of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (formerly *The Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*).
- CW13 *A Vision: The Original 1925 Version*, ed. by Catherine E. Paul and Margaret Mills Harper (New York: Scribner, 2008), vol. XIII of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (formerly *The Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*).
- CWVP1–8 *The Collected Works in Verse and Prose of William Butler Yeats* (Stratford-on-Avon: The Shakespeare Head Press, 1908), 8 vols.
- DC *Druid Craft: The Writing of The Shadowy Waters, Manuscripts of W. B. Yeats*, transcribed, edited and with a commentary by Michael J. Sidnell, George P. Mayhew, David R. Clark (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1971).
- Diaries *Lady Gregory's Diaries 1892–1902*, ed. by James Pethica (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1996).
- E&I *Essays and Introductions* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1961).
- Emory Books and Manuscripts in the Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University.
- Ex *Explorations*, sel. Mrs W. B. Yeats (London: Macmillan, 1962; New York: Macmillan, 1963).
- EYP Richard J. Finneran, *Editing Yeats's Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1983).
- EYPR Richard J. Finneran, *Editing Yeats's Poems: A Reconsideration* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990).

- FFTIP* *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, edited and selected by W. B. Yeats (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1888).
- G-YL* *The Gonne-Yeats Letters 1893–1938: Always Your Friend*, ed. by Anna MacBride White and A. Norman Jeffares (London: Hutchinson, 1992).
- Harvard Manuscript, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
- HRHRC Books and Manuscripts, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.
- I&R* *W. B. Yeats: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. by E. H. Mikhail (London: Macmillan, 1977), 2 vols.
- IFT* *Irish Fairy Tales*, edited with an introduction by W. B. Yeats (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892).
- J* *W. B. Yeats: A Classified Bibliography of Criticism*, second edition, revised and enlarged by K. P. S. Jochum (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990). Item nos. or page no. preceded by 'p.'.
- JBYL* *Letters to his Son W. B. Yeats and Others 1869–1922 by J. B. Yeats*, edited with a Memoir by Joseph Hone and a Preface by Oliver Elton (London: Faber & Faber, 1944).
- Kansas Manuscripts in the Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, Lawrence.
- L* *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954; New York: Macmillan, 1955).
- LBP* *Letters from Bedford Park: A Selection from the Correspondence (1890–1901) of John Butler Yeats*, edited with an introduction and notes by William M. Murphy (Dublin: The Cuala Press, 1972).
- LDW* *Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley*, introduction by Kathleen Raine (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).
- Life 1* *W. B. Yeats: A Life, I: The Apprentice Mage*, by R. F. Foster (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- Life 2* *W. B. Yeats: A Life, II: The Arch-Poet*, by R. F. Foster (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- Lilly Manuscript in the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.
- LJQ* *The Letters of John Quinn to W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Alan B. Himmer, with the assistance of George Mills Harper (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983).

- LMR* 'Ab, Sweet Dancer': *W. B. Yeats, Margot Ruddock, A Correspondence*, ed. by Roger McHugh (London and New York: Macmillan, 1970).
- LNI* *Letters to the New Island* by William Butler Yeats, ed. and with an introduction by Horace Reynolds (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934).
- LRB* *The Correspondence of Robert Bridges and W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Richard J. Finneran (London: Macmillan, 1977; Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1978).
- LTWB1, 2* *Letters to W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Richard J. Finneran, George Mills Harper and William M. Murphy, with the assistance of Alan B. Himber (London: Macmillan; New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 2 vols.
- MBY* Manuscript in the Collection of Michael Butler Yeats.
- McGarry* *Place Names in the Writings of W. B. Yeats* by James P. McGarry, ed. with additional material by Edward Malins and with a preface by Kathleen Raine (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd., 1976).
- Mem* *Memoirs: Autobiography—First Draft: Journal*, transcribed and edited by Denis Donoghue (London: Macmillan, 1972; New York: Macmillan, 1973).
- Myth* *Mythologies* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1959).
- Myth 2005* *Mythologies*, ed. by Warwick Gould and Deirdre Toomey (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
- MYV1, 2* *The Making of Yeats's 'A Vision': A Study of the Automatic Script*, by George Mills Harper (London: Macmillan; Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 2 vols.
- NC* A. Norman Jeffares, *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1984).
- NLI* Manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland, Dublin.
- NLS* Manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.
- NYPL* Manuscripts in the New York Public Library.
- Norwood* Manuscripts, Norwood Historical Society, Day House, Norwood, MA.
- OBMV* *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1895–1935*, chosen by W. B. Yeats (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936).
- Princeton* Manuscript in the Scribner Archive, Firestone Library, Princeton University.



- Quinn Cat.* Complete Catalogue of the Library of John Quinn sold by auction in five parts [with printed prices] (New York: The Anderson Galleries, 1924), 2 vols.
- SB* *The Speckled Bird by William Butler Yeats: An Autobiographical Novel with Variant Versions: New Edition, incorporating recently discovered manuscripts*, edited and annotated by William H. O'Donnell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
- SQ* *A Servant of the Queen: Reminiscences*, ed. by Maud Gonne MacBride, A. Norman Jeffares and Anna MacBride White (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1994).
- SS* *The Senate Speeches of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Donald R. Pearce (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960; London: Faber & Faber, 1961).
- TB* *Theatre Business: The Correspondence of the First Abbey Theatre Directors: William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory and J. M. Synge*, ed. by Ann Saddlemyer (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe; University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982).
- TSMC* *W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence, 1901–1937*, ed. by Ursula Bridge (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).
- UP1* *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats, Vol. 1*, ed. by John P. Frayne (London: Macmillan; New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).
- UP2* *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats, Vol. 2*, ed. by John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson (London: Macmillan, 1975; New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).
- VBWI* *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, collected and arranged by Lady Gregory, with two Essays and Notes by W. B. Yeats and with a foreword by Elizabeth Coxhead (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).
- VP* *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957). Cited from the corrected third printing of 1966.
- VPI* *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Russell K. Alspach, assisted by Catherine C. Alspach (London and New York: Macmillan, 1966). Cited from the corrected second printing of 1966.
- VSR* *The Secret Rose, Stories by W. B. Yeats: A Variorum Edition*, ed. by Warwick Gould, Phillip L. Marcus, and Michael J. Sidnell, second rev. and enl. ed. (London: Macmillan, 1992).

- Wade* Allan Wade, *A Bibliography of the Writings of W. B. Yeats*, rev. Russell K. Alspach, third ed. (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968). Cited by item no. and/or page no. preceded by 'p.'
- WWB1, 2, 3* *The Works of William Blake Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical, Edited with Lithographs of the Illustrated 'Prophetic Books', and a Memoir and Interpretation* by Edwin John Ellis and William Butler Yeats, 3 vols. (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893).
- YAI, 2, etc.* *Yeats Annual* (London: Macmillan, nos. 1–17, 1982–2007; Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, nos. 18–, <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/section/39/1>), cited by no.
- YAACTS* *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies*, ed. by Richard J. Finneran (publishers vary, 1983–1999), cited by no.
- YGYL* W. B. Yeats and George Yeats: *The Letters*, ed. by Ann Saddlemyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- YL* Edward O'Shea, *A Descriptive Catalog of W. B. Yeats's Library* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1985).
- YO* *Yeats and the Occult*, ed. by George Mills Harper (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada; Niagara Falls, New York: Maclean-Hunter Press, 1975).
- YP* *Yeats's Poems*, ed. and ann. by A. Norman Jeffares, with an appendix by Warwick Gould (London: Macmillan, 1989). Cited from the second, revised edition of 1991.
- YT* *Yeats and the Theatre*, ed. by Robert O'Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada; Niagara Falls, New York: Maclean-Hunter Press, 1975).
- YVP1, 2, 3, 4* *Yeats's Vision Papers* (London: Macmillan, 1992; Palgrave 2001), gen. ed. George Mills Harper, assisted by Mary Jane Harper, *Vol. 1: The Automatic Script: 5 November 1917–1918 June 1918*, ed. by Steve L. Adams, Barbara J. Frieling, and Sandra L. Sprayberry; *Vol. 2: The Automatic Script: 25 June 1918–1929 March 1920*, ed. by Steve L. Adams, Barbara J. Frieling, and Sandra L. Sprayberry; *Vol. 3: Sleep and Dream Notebooks, Vision Notebooks 1 and 2, Card File*, ed. by Robert Anthony Martinich and Margaret Mills Harper; *Vol. 4: 'The Discoveries of Michael Robartes' Version B ['The Great Wheel' and 'The Twenty-Eight Embodiments']*, ed. by George Mills Harper and Margaret Mills Harper, assisted by Richard W. Stoops, Jr.



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**Stoddard Martin** is a writer, lecturer, and publisher. His books include *Wagner to the Waste Land*, *Orthodox Heresy* and *The Great Expatriate Writers*, published by Macmillan. He edited anthologies of Byron, Nietzsche, and D. H. Lawrence in the Duckworth 'Sayings of' series, which he helped to devise, and has contributed chapters to many other anthologies, including on George Moore and Ezra Pound. He has taught at Harvard, Oxford, Łódź and Warsaw universities and was for many years an associate fellow of the Institute of English Studies, University of London. He writes short fiction under the name Chip Martin.

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**William O'Donnell** is Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Memphis. He edited Yeats's unfinished novel *The Speckled Bird* (1974, 1977, and 2003), *Prefaces and Introductions* (1989), *Later Essays* (which included *On the Boiler*) (1994), *Autobiographies* (co-editor, 1999), and *Responsibilities: Manuscript Materials* (2003). He is author of *A Guide to the Prose Fiction to W. B. Yeats* (1983) and *The Poetry of William Butler Yeats: An Introduction* (1986). He has compiled a catalogue raisonné of the art that Yeats owned.

**Catherine E. Paul** is Professor Emerita at Clemson University. She is author of *Poetry in the Museums of Modernism: Yeats, Pound, Moore, Stein* (2002) and *Fascist Directive: Ezra Pound and Italian Cultural Nationalism* (2016). With Margaret Mills Harper, she edited W. B. Yeats's *A Vision: The Original 1925 Version* (2008) and *A Vision: The Revised 1937 Version* (2015), both for Scribner's Collected Works Series. She presently works as a textile artist at the Greenville Center for Creative Arts in South Carolina.

**James Pethica** teaches at Williams College, Massachusetts. He has published editions of *Lady Gregory's Diaries 1892–1902* (1996), and *Last Poems: Manuscript Materials* in the Cornell Yeats series (1997). His *Lady Gregory's Early Irish Writings, 1883–1893*, the 16th vol. in *The Collected Works of Lady Gregory* (gen. editor and publisher, Colin Smythe) including 'An Emigrant's Note Book', the Angus Grey Stories, and 'A Phantom's Pilgrimage', will be out this year. He is currently working on the authorized biography of Lady Gregory.

**Hannah Sullivan** is an Associate Professor of English at New College, Oxford. Her first book, *The Work of Revision* (2013), was a comparative study of modernist writers' practices of writing and redrafting, with a particular focus on the use of typescript. She was awarded a Leverhulme Prize in 2013 to write a book on the theory, polemic, and practice of free verse from Wordsworth to the present. In fact, as this article on Yeats (written at the beginning of research for the book) begins to suggest, the equation between freedom and prosodic irregularity is not always as simple as it may seem. Her debut poetry collection, *Three Poems*, will be published by Faber & Faber in 2018.

**Deirdre Toomey** is editor of *Yeats and Women: Yeats Annual No. 9* (1991), revised and augmented as *Yeats and Women* (1997). She is co-editor of *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats, Volume II, 1896–1900* (1997) and *Mythologies* (2005). She is working with Warwick Gould on a complete revision of A. Norman Jeffares's *A New Commentary on the Poems of Yeats* and is Research Editor of *Yeats Annual*.

**Stanley van der Ziel** lectures in British and Irish literature at Maynooth University. His work on modern and contemporary Irish literature has been published in various books and journals. He is the author of *John McGahern and the Imagination of Tradition* (2016), and the editor of two of McGahern's works—*Love of the World: Essays* (2009) and *The Rockingham Shoot and Other Dramatic Writings* (2018), both published by Faber & Faber.



## Introduction

### ‘THE POETRY OF THE THING OUTLIVED’<sup>1</sup>

THERE WERE TWO ‘YEATS EVENTS’ OF 2017. The first took place on 27th September at Sotheby’s, London, where the sale of *Yeats: The Family Collection* offered the relics of three generations of artistic lives, and represented the Aesthetic equivalent of an Irish country-house sale. This then was followed—a surprise to some—by the auction of a further 253 items at Fonsie Mealy’s in Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny, on 14 November 2017.<sup>2</sup> These sales were a moment in the history of Yeats as defining in its way as his 150th anniversary in 2015. Involved as I was in the preparation of the first sale, I offer some thoughts arising from these events before a brief resumé of the principal essays in this volume.

An ordinary family snapshot of Thoor Ballylee, showing the tower as viewed from the cabbage patch over the road, offers a small example of the kinds of research possibilities opened by the objects released in the Yeats Family Sales.

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Dr Joe Hassett for reminding me of this Introduction to *The Aspern Papers*, written by Henry James’s for the *New York Edition of Novels and Tales* (New York: Scribner, 1907–1909), 12, x. See also <http://www.henryjames.org.uk/prefaces/home.htm>

<sup>2</sup> See *Yeats: The Family Collection*, with an Introduction by Warwick Gould (London: Sotheby’s, 2017), *The Chatsworth Fine Art Sale: Including the Final Chapter of the Yeats Family Collection* (Castlecomer, co. Kilkenny: Fonsie Mealy, 2017).

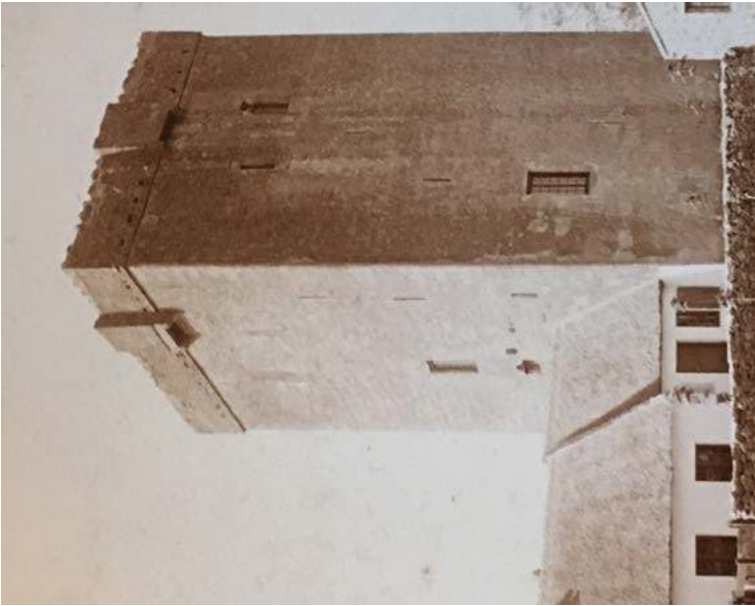


Plate 1. Yeats family snapshot c. 1927, of Thoor Ballylee and its cottages, taken from the 'acre of stony ground' or cabbage patch over the road. Image courtesy Private Collection London.

Thoor Ballylee, a monumental sixteenth-century fortified tower-house, was finally purchased, as James Pethica details in his essay in this volume (see below, 213–68), in May 1916. It had been coveted by Yeats since the 1890s and probably since 1896, and it became a public monument from 14 February 1928, the publication day for *The Tower*, with Yeats's new personal seal upon its top board. 'Blood and the Moon', written in August 1927 and 'declar[ing] this tower ... my symbol' (*VP* 480) was then published in *The Exile* in the spring of 1928.

Thomas Sturge Moore's famous cover design was drawn not from the snapshot sent by Yeats which survives in the Sturge Moore collection at the Senate House Library, but from this family snapshot offered at the Sotheby's sale as part of lot 82, a dealer's lot with an estimate of £200–300 which fetched £550.<sup>3</sup> Sturge Moore's imposed

<sup>3</sup> See Plates 1 and 2. For the photograph which survives in the Sturge Moore collection at the Senate House Library, see *YA17* Plate 7 (facing 255).



Plates 2–3. Plate 2 is a cropped detail of Plate 1 approximating the ‘view’ of the tower and cottages depicted in Plate 3, a detail of Thomas Sturge Moore’s top board design for *The Tower* (1928). Images courtesy Private Collection London.

view puts the arches of the bridge below of the tower and cottages, almost as if the tower and cottages had been built upon it: he ‘needed to “move” the bridge (substituting it for the garden wall) in order to have the tower reflected on the surface of the flowing river’.<sup>4</sup> Impossible view as it is, it stamped Yeats’s symbol into the public mind and quite displaced all previous rose symbols, including those Sturge Moore’s own designs for Yeats’s books.

But back in the 1920s, Thoor Ballylee had rather quickly lost its markedly compromised charms for the Yeats family as a summer home and writing retreat, and for various practical reasons. Its abandonment had been foreseen as early as 22 December 1921:

I am in deep gloom about Ireland ... I see no hope of escape from bitterness .... When men are very bitter, death & ruin draw them on as a rabbit is supposed to be drawn on by the dancing of the fox .... all may be blood & misery. If that comes we may abandon Ballylee to the owls and the rats & England too (where passion will rise & I shall find myself with no answer), & live in some far land. Should England & Ireland be divided beyond all hope of remedy, what else could one do for the childrens sake, or ones own work (*CL InteLex* 4039).

Oliver St. John Gogarty warned him that

To stones trust not your monument  
 To make a living fame endure.  
 Who built Dun Aengus Battlement?  
 O’Flaherty is forgotten in Auchnanure.<sup>5</sup>

And he who told how Troy was sacked  
 And what men clipt the lovely Burd,  
 Had seven Mayors to swear, in fact,  
 Their towns first heard his babbling word.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> As aptly put in a confirmatory email to me by Dr Declan Kiely, the Yeats and Sturge Moore scholar (6 January 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Unlike Dún Aonghasa the Bronze Age hill fort on Inishmore, Aughnanure is another sixteenth-century tower house, in Oughterard, Co. Galway built by the O’Flaherty’s, and one of more than 200 such tower-houses in the county, constructed mainly by Gaelic and Anglo-Norman land-owning families. It thus offers a direct comparison with the Norman De Burca family’s Ballylee.

<sup>6</sup> See *The Poems and Plays of Oliver St. John Gogarty*, collected, ed. and intr. by A. Norman Jeffares (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 2001), 49.

By 26 August 1927 Yeats had left Ballylee for the last time, before going to Algéciras in November to recover from pneumonia. A year later, the workload in the Seanad and in Dublin public life had become crushing and Yeats's health was failing.

Although written in 1918, 'To be carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee', was not erected as a tablet until 1948. Its 'powerful rhyme' looked set to outlive the monument itself as the tower, vandalised, again fell into ruin.<sup>7</sup> Some few moveable items of furniture had found their way back to Dublin, and, by the time they appeared in *Yeats: The Family Collection* sale at Sotheby's, London, on 27 September 2017, they had acquired relic status.<sup>8</sup>

Very few 'dear perpetual' places can be securely endowed against time and taxes. While Henry James's Spencer Brydon still finds 'ineffaceable life' when he revisits his family's home on 'The Jolly Corner' in New York after thirty-three years abroad,<sup>9</sup> it is a truism of the sale rooms that there eventually comes a time when a family outlives the *Lares et Penates* of its forebears. Inevitably, disencumberment ensues.

*Yeats: The Family Collection* was a sale carefully planned by the Yeats family over a long period with the auction house, the National Library and other state depositories in Ireland. In that preparation, as became publicly apparent both before and after the sale, lay in fact the culmination of nearly 80 years of extraordinary generosity by Mrs Yeats and her descendants. Jack B. and Cottie Yeats remained childless, so too did the 'weird sisters' of the Dun Emer and Cuala Presses Susan Mary (Lily) and Elizabeth Corbet (Lollie) Yeats. So, too, was W. B. Yeats's daughter, Anne. The inherited, the created, the

<sup>7</sup> Shakespeare, Sonnet 55. Michael Yeats did not have the money to restore and use it, but it was eventually restored and reopened in the 1960s, inspired by the enthusiasm of the Kiltartan Society and Mrs Mary Hanley. It was badly damaged again by floods, restored again, and re-opened in 2015. It is now administered by the Yeats Thoor Ballylee Society.

<sup>8</sup> *Yeats: The Family Collection*, with an Introduction by Warwick Gould (London: Sotheby's, 2017), 176 pp.

<sup>9</sup> See *the New York Edition of Novels and Tales* (New York: Scribner, 1907–9), Vol. 7, *The Altar of the Dead, The Beast in the Jungle, The Birthplace, and Other Tales*, 447.



acquired—some of it with W. B. Yeats’s Nobel Prize money—all that had not already gone to archives and galleries all around the world, came to rest in Cliff House, Dalkey, the family home of Michael and Gráinne Yeats and their children.

That family’s generosity to the State has been profound: its proud record is summarized in the series of press releases from the National Library of Ireland, not only announcing the acquisition by the Library of the Yeats-Joyce and Yeats-George Yeats correspondences, but also reviewing the history of some €8.5 million worth of gifts from the family since 1939 to that institution alone.<sup>10</sup>

When I first visited Cliff House and Anne Yeats’s nearby house ‘Avalon’ as a postgraduate in 1970, I did not know that I sat on one of Yeats’s dining chairs, lunching *en famille* at ‘Yeats’s dining table’, purchased with his Nobel Prize money (Lots 102, 103, estimates and hammer prices below). Sunk into a too comfortable chair in the living room, I found my eyes continually drawn from my study of Yeats’s manuscripts and marked proofs by the paintings, drawings, even the furniture. I think particularly of the John Butler Yeats self-portrait, unfinished, relayered and encrusted with impasto over 11 years as he sought to prolong his life in New York to avoid returning to his family in Dublin (Lot 64, est. £30,000-£50,000; fetched £70,000). Or of a portrait of William Butler Yeats at 22 by his father (not in this sale) of the poet in his own poem, as his own mad ‘King Goll’,

<sup>10</sup> See the press releases from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs on 16 February 2017 (‘Letters between WB Yeats and James Joyce feature in new acquisition by the National Library—Minister Humphreys’, available at <https://www.nli.ie/getattachment.aspx?id=ef2635b8-81bf-4047-971b-8247862a792d>) and ‘National Library announces major acquisitions of remarkable Yeats treasures’ (available at <https://www.nli.ie/GetAttachment.aspx?id=151f10ec-fbc0-4ae5-8262-66f03326ca34>) which details the pre-sale purchase of over 500 letters between W. B. Yeats and his wife, George Yeats. These press releases did much to dampen, though they could not entirely forestall, various expressions of begrudgery in the Irish media by those not privy to pre-sale negotiations (notably in the *The Irish Times*, 27 September 2017, 9). For further information, contact Sebastian Enke (to whom I am grateful) at DHR Communications, Dublin, <http://www.dhr.ie/>, Tel: 01-4200580 / 087-3239496 / 087-2309835.

hitherto known to me only as a steel engraving in *The Leisure Hour* of September 1887, in which he is depicted ‘tearing the strings out [of] a harp, being insane with youth, but looking very desirable—alas no woman noticed it at the time—with dreamy eyes & a great mass of black hair. It hangs in our drawing room now a pathetic memory of a really dreadful time’: so Yeats recalled for Olivia Shakespear in 1924. ‘I write for boys & girls of twenty for I am always thinking of myself at that age’ (*CL InteLex* 4556). Working among Yeats’s own books at Anne Yeats’s nearby ‘Avalon’, my eyes were drawn to Yeats’s gilded Moorish (actually a Burmese chest, now in the National Gallery of Ireland) wedding-chest in which, as he had written, he had kept his ‘barbarous words’ (*Myth* 366; *CW* 5 32).

What George, Michael, Anne Yeats and Michael’s children gave to Irish state institutions over the years were objects easily identifies as research materials—books, manuscripts, letters, sketches, and paintings. What had hitherto been perhaps unforeseen is the new research interests in domestic interiors, and of the relic-making processes of writing and artistic creation. Sotheby’s exploited the potential of this in their Dublin and London displays of what was to be offered, and the web advertising for the sale as well as the catalogue captured well their co-location of objects around Yeats’ desk and writing chair—desk candlesticks, letters, a large silver inkwell, the black-japanned deed box with his name upon it.

The deed box is instructive for historians of price. On 23 July 1987, Sotheby’s sold a vast collection of such writers’ deed boxes from A. P. Watt & Co., advertising them at prices of little more than £100 each (lots 202–224 in that sale). Yeats’s was not among them, presumably having been returned to the family at some point. It turned up as lot 983 in the current sale, with an ambitious estimate of £2,000–3,000. It fetched £12,000.

To judge only by observation of paddle numbers as announced by the auctioneer at the sale, three separate buyers divided between them a multitude of lots. The prodigious first single buyer appears to have purchased—in the case of the first two items below against a determined and well-publicized attempt by Poetry Ireland—



Plate 4. Yeats family heirlooms as clustered by Sotheby's, London, for the frontispiece of their *Yeats: The Family Collection*, the catalogue accompanying the sale of that name on 27 September 2017. Image courtesy Philip Errington, and © Sotheby's, New Bond St., London, all rights reserved.

- Yeats's oak writing bureau (Lot 89, estimate £20,000–£30,000, hammer price £150,000)
- Yeats's elm desk chair (Lot 87, est. £3,000–£5,000, hammer price £26,000)
- John Butler Yeats, Four Sketchbooks, c. 1892–1904 (Lot 50, est. £6000–£8000, hammer price £11,000)
- Yeats Family Scrapbook (Lot 9, est. £4,000–£6,000, hammer price £10,500)
- Jack B. Yeats's Palette (Lot 212, est. £200–£300, hammer price £7,500)
- John Butler Yeats's 1921 pencilled Self-Portrait (Lot 2, est. £3000–£5,000, hammer price £6500)
- John Butler Yeats, Four Sketchbooks, New York, 1908–1913 (Lot 53, est. £6,000–£8,000, hammer price £6,500)
- John Butler Yeats, watercolour 1883, 'Three Girls Listening to Music' (Lot 34, est. £6,000–£8,000, hammer price £6,000)
- Eight photograph albums, assembled and captioned by Lily and Lolly Yeats, early 20th C. (Lot 139, est. £5,000–£7,000, hammer price £5,000)
- John Butler Yeats, Sketch of Jack B. Yeats, 1899, signed by sitter and artist (Lot 173, est. £3,000–£5,000, hammer price £5,000)
- John Butler Yeats, Pencil sketch of his wife, Mrs Susan Yeats (Lot 30, est. £2,000–£3,000, hammer price £3,800)
- A pair of Edwardian rosewood brushes with monogram of William Butler Yeats, early 20th C. (Lot 91, est. £800–£1,200, hammer price £3,500)
- John Butler Yeats, three sketches of Ladies (Lot 51, one possibly Lily Yeats, writing, one dated Sept 4th 1898, the others 'Cousin? Laura Yeats' and 'Marian Orr March 20th 1901' (Lot 51, est. £3,000–£5,000, hammer price £2,800)
- John Butler Yeats, Three Sketches of Women one possibly Mary Walker, one possibly Jenny Mitchell (Lot 52 est. £3,000–£5,000, hammer price £2,800)
- Two pairs of repoussé brass Scandinavian candlesticks, 19th C. (Lot 118, est. £1,200–£1,800, hammer price £2,200)
- John Butler Yeats, pencilled Portrait of Elizabeth Corbet, 'Lolly' Yeats, signed and dated, 'Oct. 6 1898' (Lot 134, est. £2,000–£3,000, hammer price £2,000)

- Collection of eight professional portrait photographs (Alice Boughton, 1904; 'Vaughan' 1890s; Elliot & Fry (?1930s); Howard; W. Bates of Chertsey etc.), of Jack B. Yeats (Lot 208, est. £1,500-£2,000, hammer price £2,000)
- Arnold Genthe, three photographic portraits of W. B. Yeats, 1914 (Lot 108, est. £1,500-£2,000, hammer price £1,600)
- Jack B. Yeats's collapsible top hat (Lot 209 est. £500-£700, hammer price £1,300) (see above Plate 4)
- Jack B. Yeats, Three Head Studies, possibly of Jenny Mitchell (Lot 40, est. £1,000-£1,500, hammer price £1,200)
- Silver Inkwell, William Comyns & Sons, 1903, with ceramic inkpot, probably belonging formerly to Aunt Elizabeth Pollexfen ('Lolla' i.e., Mrs Alexander Barrington Orr) (Lot 29, est. £200-£300, hammer price £650) (see above Plate 4)
- John Butler Yeats, Portrait drawings of Charles Fitzgerald and Fr. Kavanagh (Lot 38, est. £600-£800, hammer price £600).

These hammer figures add up to £262,150, and while a number of these purchases were within range of the estimates, the buyer's total investment would have been in the region of £314,580 excluding VAT if an overseas buyer. It was rumoured at the sale that the purchaser is to put them on public exhibition, but nothing has yet been confirmed. Another multiple-lot buyer appears to have purchased

- The Yeats family dining table, mahogany and boxwood, said to have been bought with the Nobel Prize money (Lot 103, est. £1,500-£2,500, hammer price £8,000)
- The 17th C. (heavily wormed) 'Monk's Chest', said by family tradition to have been used for 'storage' by W. B. Yeats (Lot 88, est. £600-700, hammer price £2,600)
- A matched set of six late George IV ash spindle back dining chairs, c. 1820, with rush seats (Lot 102, est. £800-£1,200, hammer price £3,800)
- Four medals and one badge, including Yeats's Goethe Plakette (Lot 99, est. £500-£700, hammer price £2,600)
- W. B. Yeats's card index and ring binder (Lot 92, est. £100-£150, hammer price £2,400)
- Two Arts and Crafts desk candlesticks in the manner of Benham and Froud, London in brass and copper (Lot 95, est. £400-600, hammer price £1,800)

- 18 reproductions and prints by Aubrey Beardsley and W. T. Horton (Lot 114, est. £400-£600, hammer price £1,000)
- A late George IV mahogany armchair (Lot 46, est. £800-£1,200, hammer price £950)
- A Victorian walnut and velvet aesthetic style rocking chair in the manner of Bruce James Talbert, c. 1890 (Lot 142, est. £500-£700, hammer price £500).

The total hammer price here is £28,550. The candlesticks here listed as lot 95 had been the pair chosen by Sotheby's to sit on Yeats's desk for the Dublin and London exhibitions: the added *mana*-by-association may be gauged by the price of the next item (Lot 96, two brass desk candlesticks, also in the manner of Benham and Froud, also Aesthetic style, est. £200-£300, hammer price £480). I believe similarly enhanced prices were achieved by the display of lot 29, 'Lolla' Pollexfen's inkwell (see above), also placed on W. B. Yeats's bureau desk in these exhibitions.

A third collector appears to have acquired

- John Butler Yeats's oil Portrait of Elizabeth Corbet ('Lolly') Yeats c. 1899 (Lot 138, est. £20,000-£30,000, hammer price £42,000)
- Jack B. Yeats, Ireland sketchbook, 1909 (Lot 204, est. £10,000-£15,000, hammer price £8,000)
- John Butler Yeats, Sketches of Family Life (Lot 8, est. £5,000-£7,000, hammer price £7,000)
- Jack B. Yeats, A collection of early Sketches and Illustrations (Lot 160, est. £8,000-£12,000, hammer-price £7,000)
- Anne Yeats, 'Crayfish', oil on board (Lot 213, est. £1,500-£2,500, hammer price £5,000)
- John Butler Yeats, three sketchbooks dating from his New York period (Lot 58, est. £5,000-£7,000, hammer price £4,000)
- Mary Cottenham Yeats, Sketchbook, including portraits of Jack B. Yeats (Lot 177, est. £2,000-£3,000, hammer price £3,200)
- Mary Cottenham Yeats, Sketchbook of 26 designs and stencils in watercolour (Lot 179, est. £2,000-£3,000, hammer price £3,200)
- John Butler Yeats, Two Sketches of John O'Leary (Lot 35, est. £1,500-£2,500, hammer price £1,500)

- Collection of 6 photographic portraits of John Butler Yeats, 1860s to 1900s (Lot 54, est. £1,500–£2,000, hammer price £1,500).

These total £82,400 in hammer prices. Between them, these three buyers paid c. £448,000 (including buyer's commission but excluding VAT).

An atmosphere of doubt pervaded the saleroom when lot 37, a John Butler Yeats oil 'thought to be [of] William Morris with a pencil sketch also said' was offered (Lot 37, est. £4,000–£6,000, hammer price £3,800), but a determined purchaser bought the companion to the oil portrait of Lolly Yeats, that of Susan Mary ('Lily') Yeats, 1899 (Lot 137, est. £20,000–£30,000, hammer price £50,000); while notable prices were also paid for:

- Lot 79, est. £. 8,000–£12,000, hammer price £90,000, the Antonio Mancini pastel portrait of W. B. Yeats used as the basis for the frontispiece to Vol. V of *The Collected Works in Verse and Prose* (1908). The buyer, Philip Mould of Philip Mould & Co., London, told me that he thought this possibly a world record price for a modern pastel portrait.
- Lot 73, est. £8,000–£12,000, hammer price £24,000, a John Butler Yeats oil portrait of W. B. Yeats in a basket chair, reading in the overgrown garden at 3 Blenheim Rd., Bedford Park, London, c. 1888–1889.<sup>11</sup>
- Lot 110, est. £2,000–£3,000, hammer price £6,200, a pencil drawing with white highlights of Iseult Gonne by Maud Gonne, c. 1910–1915.

Overall, exceptional prices for a number of compelling paintings such as these helped to compensate for those highest-estimated lots in the sale which ultimately failed to find buyers. Not only were a number of Jack B. Yeats pieces unsold, but the painting which, in many ways had been judged the star item of the sale, a late explosive oil entitled 'The Runaway Horse' (Lot 181, est. £150,000–250,000) was unsold

<sup>11</sup> Stop Press 24 February 2017: Lots 73 and 64 (the large oil John Butler Yeats self-portrait) and other portraits of the Yeats family are now on long-term loan to the Model arts centre in Sligo, from an anonymous buyer who has also donated the nine Jack B. Yeats model ships and their decorated box (lots 167–168) as an outright gift. See <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/homes-and-property/fine-art-antiques/mystery-donor-gives-valuable-yeats-art-to-sligo-arts-centre-1.3367320>

at a bid of just £95,000, whereas ‘The Sunset belongs to You’ (lot 205, est. £100,000–£150,000) went for a hammer price of £170,000. The highest estimate of the entire sale was for lot 86 (£250,000–£350,000), 133 autograph letters from W. B. Yeats to Olivia Shakespeare, with 37 letters from Shakespeare to Yeats, and two letters to her forwarded on to Yeats. That the whole of this correspondence is available in the *InteLex* online edition and the Shakespeare side was edited by John Harwood for *Yeats Annual No. 6* may account for the lack of interest from research libraries, and the lot was bought in at £200,000.

*Yeats: The Family Sale* had been estimated as likely to total c. £2 million, a figure pretty much reached despite the fact that only 87% of lots were sold.

It will be seen that relics of what Seamus Heaney called ‘the place of writing’ bringing writing agency to life were appropriately valued. Yeats’s card index file box, used in the preparation of *A Vision*, Jack B. Yeats’s palette, and his pencil box, with designs on five surfaces (Lot 166, £3,000–£5,000) went at the high end of the estimate, at £4,800. (By contrast, Lily Yeats’s charming little walnut and maple Davenport (Lot 141, est. £500–£700) was knocked down for only £600.)

Now that the materiality of writing and even of drawing is vanishing, museums of writing seek to preserve not merely Sumerian tablets, ancient manuscripts, and calligraphic tools, but also typewriters and word processors. The objects in this sale preserve something not always found in such museums: particularity of ownership, the perpetually vital ingredient of human agency. A known and valued creator, we say, lived, and worked using or surrounded by these objects. This *mana* has market value, and is not always effaced when transferred as ‘relic value’ into new ownership. All those years ago in a house full of teenage children I had found myself continually distracted by objects of recognizable associations: now it seems as if once a connexion is recognized between the here and now and the past lives and works of artists and poet, nearly every object becomes charged with potential significance. W. B. Yeats’s two monogrammed brushes (listed above) bring to mind the words ‘Always particular about my clothes’ in a passage of memorably reflective self-criticism in his *Pages from a Diary Written in Nineteen Hundred and Thirty* (*Ex* 308).





Plate 5. Antonio Mancini's 1908 pastel portrait of W. B. Yeats used as the basis for the frontispiece to Vol. V of *The Collected Works in Verse and Prose* (1908). Image courtesy Philip Errington, and Sotheby's, New Bond St., London.



Plate 6. John Butler Yeats oil portrait of W. B. Yeats in a basket chair, reading in the overgrown garden at 3 Blenheim Rd., Bedford Park, London, c. 1888–1889. Image courtesy Philip Errington, and Sotheby's, New Bond St., London.

The mystique of memorabilia, however, transcends an editors' occupational hazard, Total Awareness Syndrome. Unlike most family clearance sales, this one released to the market items each seemingly stamped with an aura of unshakeable associations, the bases of new collections or treasured additions to existing collections, public and private. Viewed in such a light, it somehow seems logical that even Conan Doyle's undershirts, D. H. Lawrence's beaded moccasins and Evelyn Waugh's ash-trays did not elude the Texas archives formed by Harry Hunt Ransom as what he called his 'counter-frontier' for what he saw as a frontier society. Some of the heroic sums paid, e.g., for Yeats's bureau and desk chair, bring to mind the sums paid for Ian Fleming's typewriter (£56,250 (\$90,309) at Christie's, London, on 5 May 1995); or the prominence given to Conan Doyle's writing chair in the reading room at the Ransom Center and the same library's former recreated writers' rooms, now dismantled but available on line. The American Writers Museum, Chicago is based on the Dublin Writers Museum, which holds a wide exhibit of pens, papers, typewriters, and pipes—but Samuel Beckett's telephone, Austin Clarke's desk and Handel's chair are also held in the Dublin museum.

Perhaps the scruffiest item in the sale—ignored by scholarship, seemingly just negligible clutter—is a sketchbook at first thought at Sotheby's (and no doubt previously) to have been discarded by John Butler Yeats (Lot 70, est. £6,000–£8,000, hammer price £28,000), but in fact first belonging to W. B. Yeats. It best reveals the agency of family dynamics, tensions, and competing ambitions. John Butler Yeats moved his family to 10 Ashfield Terrace from a cottage in Howth because of dire penury early in 1884. A sketchbook which includes on an early page the pencilled 'W B Yeats— | 10 Ashfield Terrace | Rathmines' in Yeats's early hand dates the sketchbook, and it was used from at least May of that year, when W. B. Yeats enrolled as an art student in the Metropolitan School of Art in Kildare Street. The pencilled academic studies it contains show how little aptitude he had had for following his father as an artist. However, within the sketchbook, Yeats turns to writing. A page of confused pencilled drafts hitherto unrecorded and untranscribed but evidently from Act II Scene 3 of *The Island of Statues* suddenly emerges into a new, relatively clear inked transcription

and — — — — — and slat  
and  
 and — at me I pass from the sun ~~and~~ the shade  
 and the joy of the stream where the long lumber  
 herons wade  
 and never any more the wide eyed banks  
 of the pier <sup>from there</sup> ~~then~~ bitten from my hand  
 I shall feed no more shall I at evening hear  
 again the wood land laughter <sup>and</sup> of the clear  
 green sweet with  
 cries green sweet with calls and laughter long  
 of the earth <sup>laughing</sup> ~~laughing~~ <sup>bliss</sup> soul in ~~in~~ east sky  
<sup>crackling</sup> —

I fade I shall not see the morning <sup>water</sup>  
~~4 lakes~~ 7 fluttering the egg born popalace of lake  
 and sedge stream and things each baby into  
 and hollow lullaby the young winds with song

Plates 7–8. Two images of pages from Yeats's '10 Ashfield Terrace' sketchbook, lot 70 in the Sotheby's sale. Image courtesy Philip Errington, and Sotheby's, New Bond St., London.

This whole drafting may be compared with Act II: 3 lines 216–26 of *The Island of Statues* published as

Ah, woe is me! I go from sun and shade,  
 And the joy of the streams where long-limbed herons wade;  
 And never any more the wide-eyed bands  
 Of the pie'd panther-kittens from my hands  
 Shall feed. I shall not in the evenings hear  
 Again the woodland laughter, and the clear  
 Wild cries, grown sweet with lulls and lingerings long.  
 I fade, and shall not see the mornings wake,  
 A-fluttering the painted populace of lake  
 And sedgy stream, and in each babbling brake  
 And hollow lulling the young winds with song. (*VP* 674–75, ll. 216–26)

On the page facing Plate 7 is a draft of another poem which stumbles towards what I offer in fair copy form beneath it:

Truth is bold. but falsehood fears  
 Question of the lie of years  
 But when time her fickle pages  
 Has been turning endless ages  
 Then some Pilgrim when he searches  
 For the sight of fallen churches  
 Slowly rising to depart  
 He shall mutter to his heart  
 He shall see the [? heron] pass  
 over ruins green with grass  
 And shall mutter to his heart  
 Slowly slowly rising to depart  
 He shall mutter [?passing] by  
 'Fair the ruin of a lie'

The book title jotted down beneath this draft is but one jotting of Yeats's actual or potential reading at the time, including short titles of new books in 1884 Yeats's awareness of the following titles

- H. J. Browne [i.e., Hugh Junor Browne], *The Higher Branch of Science: or, Materialism refuted by Facts* (Melbourne: W. H. Terry, 84 Russel St., 1884).
- A. P. Sinnett, *Esoteric Buddhism* (London: Trübner, 1884)

Truth is bold, but falsehood fears  
 Question of the lid of years  
 But when time her fickle pages  
 Has been turning endless ages  
 When some Pilgrim <sup>searches</sup> ~~as the~~ ~~the~~ ~~churches~~  
 For the thespian sight of fallen churches  
~~slady rising to depart~~  
~~He shall see the heron pass~~  
 He shall see the heron pass  
 over rimegreen with grass  
 and shall mutter to his heart  
~~to~~ ~~say~~ ~~to~~ ~~depart~~  
 He shall mutter to his heart  
 "Fair the run of a life"  
 "The Higher Branch of Science  
 or Materialism refuted by facts  
 by H. J. Braune  
 W. H. Gray, 8 & Russell St.  
 Melbourne

Plate 9. Image of page facing Plate 7 in Yeats's '10 Ashfield Terrace' sketchbook, lot 70 in the Sotheby's sale. Image courtesy Philip Errington, and Sotheby's, New Bond St., London.

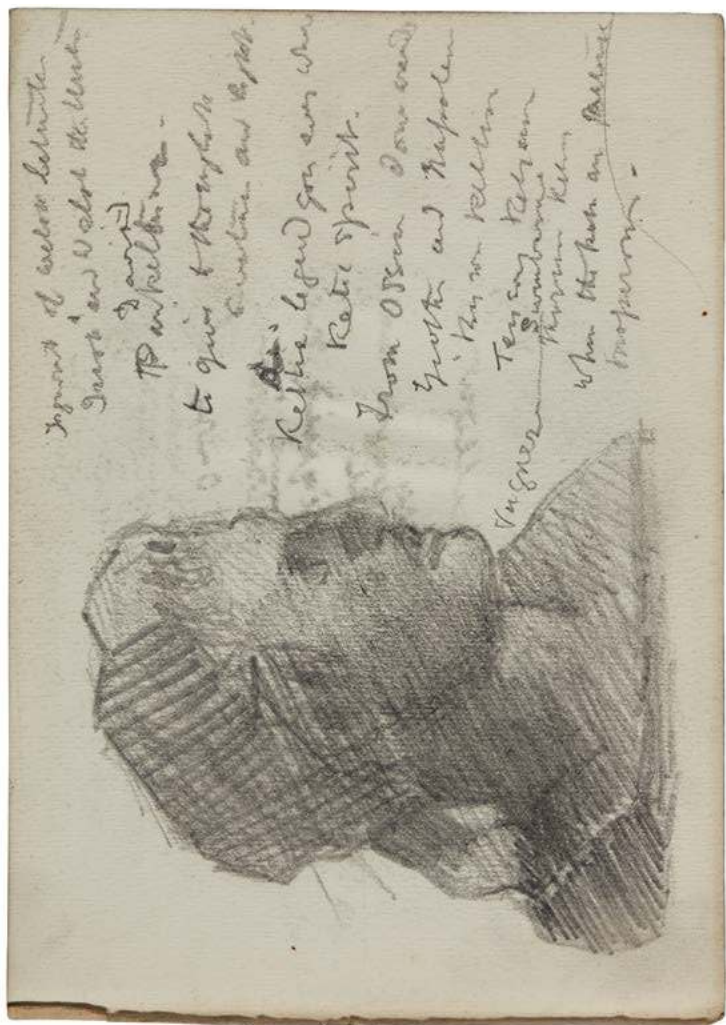


Plate 10. Image of page from Yeats's '10 Ashfield Terrace' sketchbook, lot 70 in the Sotheby's sale. Image courtesy Philip Errington, and Sotheby's, New Bond St., London.

- A. P. Sinnett, *The Occult World* (London: Trübner, 1882)
- P. G. Tait and B[alfour] Stewart, *The Unseen Universe or, Physical Speculations on a Future State* (London, Cambridge: Macmillan, 1875)

Yeats's bibliographical knowledge in relation to the first of these as found on Plate 9 is expansive (the volume's title-page offering only 'H. J. B.'), as if he had noted the details at a punctilious lecture: indeed, the first three titles above are perhaps noted at some meeting of the Dublin Hermetic Society. There also seem to be lecture notes from some talk on 'Pankelticism' on another page, the theme of which is that the 'Keltic legend goes everywhere', from 'Ossian downwards' | 'Goethe and Napoleon' | Byron [illeg., one word] | Tenysons Religion | Swinburne | Vagner' etc.

Elsewhere, there are scattered 'to do' shopping and address lists, while a further fragment of verse

And Helen's eyes beneath their moveless lids  
The bold firm glance of godhead in their gaze

suggests that this divinity was potent for Yeats five years before Maud Gonne came along to incarnate it for him.<sup>12</sup>

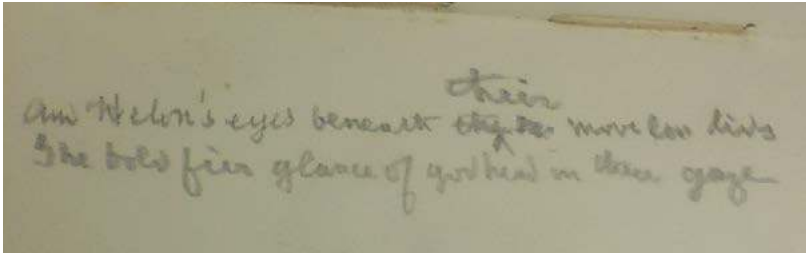


Plate 11. Image of fragment of verse in Yeats's '10 Ashfield Terrace' sketchbook, lot 70 in the Sotheby's sale. Image courtesy Philip Errington, and Sotheby's, New Bond St., London.

<sup>12</sup> It would appear that no passages from the sketchbook are represented in *The Early Poetry, Vol. 1 Mosada and The Island of Statues: Manuscript Materials* by W. B. Yeats, ed. by George Bornstein (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987).



That this sketch-book disappeared from the record is simply explained: it was taken over by his paper-hungry father for sketches of his own and remained in family hands as an object seemingly of little significance even for John Butler Yeats in whose collection of sketch-books it was found. It is hoped to provide a detailed study of this document, which was bought by a private collector, in a future *Yeats Annual*.

W. B. Yeats was endlessly on the move, and lived at some thirty domestic addresses in his lifetime. Many of his longest-held domestic interiors leave few traces in the poems. At least one of the Dante engravings (Lot 116, est. £7,000–£10,000, hammer price £12,000) acquired from the Linnell Brothers when Yeats was working on his co-edition of *The Works of William Blake*, or, a little later, when writing his three essays on ‘Blake’s Illustrations to Dante’ for *The Savoy* in 1896 can be seen on the walls of his shabby rooms at 18 Woburn Buildings. He was photographed in front of it for *The Tatler’s* series of ‘Writers in Their Rooms’ (29 June 1904), along with his Dante death mask, his shrine, his cane chair, his shabby rug and his books (see frontispiece, *YA5*)—none of these items is in the sale). There are, however, in this sale earlier records of W. B. Yeats seated at a desk, writing (e.g., the photos and studies by John Butler Yeats in lots 68–69), but *The Tatler’s* image was the first public record of Yeats in domestic surroundings he had arranged to suit himself. 18 Woburn Buildings leaves few traces in his poems beyond the ghostly ‘Presences’ of women on the stairs. 4 Broad Street Oxford, brought to life in the memoirs of numerous undergraduates who visited the Yeats menage, leaves only ‘two long glasses brimmed with muscatel’ to attract ghosts to their ‘wine-breath’ in ‘All Soul’s Night’. Yeats was at Coole nearly every summer from 1896–the mid-1920s, and, while all his lines about the seven woods, the lake, the swans are well known, it seems in other media he left only two pastels, one of the lake reproduced in *The Green Sheaf*, and the one in this sale, the rather poor image of the frontage of the house (Lot 76, est. £7,000–£10,000, hammer price £35,000). Coole had been so filled with paintings and bric-a-brac that the novelist George Moore had said ‘Balzac would have given twenty pages to the stairs’, as Yeats recalled in *Dramatis Personae*, but these interiors inspire few lines of poems beyond

Beloved books that famous hands have bound,  
 Old marble heads, old pictures everywhere;  
 Great rooms where travelled men and children found  
 Content or joy (*VP* 491)

As well as one pastel by WBY of the library at Coole (lot 85, est. £8,000-£12,000, hammer price £40,000; both pastels went to the same buyer).

Yeats's poem-making from home-making largely anticipates the not yet inhabited Thoor Ballylee in Co. Galway, not purchased until July 1917 and later declared as 'my symbol' and 'decked and altered ... for a girl's love' (*VP* 423). But the tower was inhabited in Yeats's mind and poems from 'Ego Dominus Tuus' (December 1915) onwards, as a result of an ambition unfulfilled since 1899, and no doubt reinforced by what George apparently confided to her cousin Grace Spurway in or after mid-November 1915, their secret engagement (*BG* 80). 'Now that we are almost settled in our house' Yeats writes, in 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory' (1918). By 'Meditations in Time of Civil War' (1922-1923) Yeats zooms in from 'My House' to 'My Table', with Sato's Sword, the focus ultimately closing on

A winding stair, a chamber arched with stone,  
 A grey stone fireplace with an open hearth,  
 A candle and written page. (*VP* 419)

Yeats wrote by candle-light. 'Benighted travellers | From markets and from fairs | Ha[d] seen his midnight candle glimmering' (*VP* 419-20). The great spiral twist altar candlesticks visible by the fireside in photographs of the sitting room in the tower (Lot 83, est. £800-£1,200) were sold for £3,500): it is understood that these were purchased by benefactors who wish to restore them to the tower. Even from 1932 in Riversdale, the Yeatses' last house at Rathfarnham

Midnight, an old house  
 Where nothing stirs but a mouse (*VP* 575).

there was no electricity. There, as he wrote at the end of his life, 'Picture and book remain'. *Daybreak and a candle-end*' marks a refrain

on a lifetime's writing. In such domestic contexts, the Yeats family collection of candlesticks itself begins to glimmer.

At the heart of *Yeats: The Family Collection* were numerous of Jack B. Yeats's paintings, drawings, cartoons, and sketches which reinforce his brother's view that Jack's 'memory seems as accurate as the sight of the eye'. In his boyhood in Sligo, Jack had 'spent his free hours going here and there with crowds of little boys, sons of pilots and sailors, as their well-liked leader, arranging donkey races or driving donkeys tandem ... he had begun to amuse everybody with his drawings; and in half the pictures he paints to-day I recognize faces that I have met at Rosses or the Sligo quays' said W. B. Yeats (*Au* 68; *CW* 3 83). Jack B. Yeats's early scribbling diaries (1887–1889, lot 161, est. £8,000–£12,000, hammer price £11,000; lot 162, same est., hammer price £14,000), his designs for *A Broadsheet* (lots 182–83, est. £800–£1,200, price £1,300; est. £1,000–1,500, hammer price £4,200) and *Broadsides* (e.g., lot 189, est. £15,000–20,000, hammer price £21,000), and numerous pen and ink drawings and sketches for Cuala Press prints—all mainly sold well. His personal obsessions were strongly in evidence, with pirate themes dominating even the designs with which he decorated his pencil box (lot 162, prices above), as well as the storage chest in which he kept his collection of model ships (lot 167, est. £7,000–£9,000, hammer price £12,000). This boyish obsession was shared with John Masefield, whose model ship, named *George and Willy* (lot 121, est. £700–£900, hammer price £1,100) was also in the sale. Perhaps with Masefield's ship in mind, Yeats, when he collected *The Cat and the Moon*, the play dedicated to Masefield 'who made me a ship', into *Wheels and Butterflies* (1934) added as a tailpiece, seemingly to the whole book:

*The bravest from the gods but ask:  
A house, a sword, a ship, a mask.*<sup>13</sup>

The sale might well have taken its title from one of Jack B. Yeats's best-loved early paintings of Rosses Point Co. Sligo, 'Memory

<sup>13</sup> W. B. Yeats, *Wheels and Butterflies* (London: Macmillan, 1934), 133 (dedication), [157] tailpiece.

Harbour', so powerful is the sense of crowded family activity running through all these works and well beyond the works of the principal creators. That title was borrowed by the journalist Filson Young for a book of essays in 1909, an appropriation which irked W. B. Yeats and not merely because he was thereby effectively dissuaded from using it as the title of what became *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*.<sup>14</sup> A reproduction of 'Memory Harbour' stands as its frontispiece. In the distant background is the shipping channel marker, the 'Metal Man' who turns up not only in Lily Yeats's bookplate but also as the matrix of her desk seal stamp (lot 143, est. £3,000–5,000, surprisingly bought in at £2,800).

This sale, then, seemed a last chance. Or so I thought when I wrote the introduction to the sale. But as dealers will tell you, there is always more, and so the Fonsie Mealy sale of 14 November 2017, including 253 lots billed as 'The Final Chapter of The Yeats Family Collection' (<http://fonsiemealy.ie/catalogues/14112017/>) is unlikely to be so. The Irish sale acknowledges the assistance of the Dublin dealer, Cian O'higeartaigh, a relation of the Yeats Family, in identifying and cataloguing the Paintings, Watercolours, Albums, Artefacts etc. included in this sale'. Reviewing the catalogue, one can see that the heavier items of furniture were omitted from the London sale, as well as many lots of seemingly lesser value. And yet, it is also apparent that Sotheby's missed a great number of items which perhaps emerged after Sotheby's had made their selection. Happily, one can report that the following items were secured by the National Library of Ireland.

- Lot 593, John Butler Yeats sketch of Frank Fay commissioned by Annie Horniman (est. €400–€600, hammer price €1,500, total €1,830).
- Lot 602, John Butler Yeats watercolour of the waterwheel and mill houses at Ballisodare (est. €400–€600, hammer price €1,000, total €1,220).
- Lot 630, another W. B. Yeats sketchbook (est. €3,000–€5,000, hammer price €17,000, total €20,740).

<sup>14</sup> See Warwick Gould, 'Singular Pluralities: Titles of Yeats's *Autobiographies*', *YA11* 205–18.

This item had been bruited by Fonsie Mealy as ‘A Major Discovery’, and the catalogue offers six thumb-prints which suggest its close likeness to lot 70 in the London sale, although, at 50 pages, its seems either a larger or more complete sketchbook. Fonsie Mealy offers thumb-nails of a couple of pages of verse and drawings from which I offer the following necessarily tentative transcriptions:

The Field Mouse—

The field mouse running yonder has reared up  
 No pyramid of ~~laws~~ customs or of laws  
 To break her ~~heat~~ heart  
 No. she is angry sometimes and she loves  
 The history  
 The shadow of the wheat sheaves, that is all  
 The history of her life

This mouse is perhaps a harbinger of that ‘*running by me in the grass*’ of ‘To the Rose upon the Rood of Time’ or of those avoiding the reaping-hook in the ‘last ridge of barley’ in ‘[I walked among the Seven Woods of Coole]’, the proem to *The Shadowy Waters* (VP 101, 218). But it seems as though this is one of the fragmentary ‘aphorisms’ inscribed on the facing page. Again, I decipher from one of the thumb-nails

aphorisms

—When thy heart wishes evil  
 It is a ~~foolis~~-useless slavery to ~~not~~ to do right  
 for riteousness and rong are housed alone  
 among the wishes—

—And do you prey to him  
                                     Who crushed a  
   world  
 that he might scrawl upon the front  
   of time

An Epigram—

Together, these lines might indicate a start being made on the project first externalised in the *Dublin University Review* (January, February 1886) as ‘In a Drawing Room’ and ‘Life’, before being extended

under the title 'Quatrains and Aphorisms' in *The Wanderings of Oisín* and thereafter suppressed (*VP* 734–35). If so, lot 630 might be a later sketchbook than the one sold as lot 70 in Sotheby's sale.<sup>15</sup>

Another item recovered at last in the Fonsie Mealy auction is the original John Butler Yeats drawing of his son which was used as frontispiece to his first book, *Mosada* (also 1886). Sold as lot 631 (est. €4,000–€6,000) its hammer price was €21,000 (Maggs Bros., London). A fine photograph of Maud Gonne as a young woman wearing a Tara brooch (lot 638, est. €300–€500, fetched €1,300 (Maggs Bros.), while lot 642, the Yeats family tarot cards (the Pamela Colman Smith set) est. €450–€650, brought a hammer price €4,800. A fine drawing of Pamela Colman Smith by John Butler Yeats (lot 643, est. €400–€600 brought down the hammer at ten times that upper estimate at €6,000).

The respective buyers of the Lolla Yeats inkwell (Sotheby's lot 29, hammer price £650; see above Plate 4) and that claimed by Fonsie Mealy to be 'W. B. Yeats's' Edwardian silver desk inkwell (lot 633, est. €600–€800, hammer price €2,900) can now fight it out as which of the 'many wonderful compositions flowed' (Fonsie Mealy's catalogue) from their respective purchasers. Yeats's leather briefcase, later used by his son with an 'M.' added to its initialling) inspired the cataloguers to wonder 'who can say what poems and papers it once carried' (lot 634, est. €600–€800, hammer price €3,400). Yeats's pince-nez (est. €500–€600 fetched €10,000, a figure which contrasts with the mere £6,000 paid at an English provincial auction last autumn for another Nobel Literature Laureate's glasses, Winston Churchill's. To see the world as painters with visual defects saw it can be revealing—is the same true not for writers? The Ashmolean Museum holds two pairs of glasses which belonged to J. M. W. Turner, and a third is in the hands of the dealer, Philip Mould, while William Blake's spectacles are held in Cambridge at the Fitzwilliam, while those of Sir Joshua Reynolds are also important for ophthalmic

<sup>15</sup> It would appear that none of these lines has been included in *The Early Poetry, Vol. II 'The Wanderings of Oisín' and Other Early Poems to 1895 Manuscript Materials* by W. B. Yeats, ed. by George Bornstein (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994).

historians.<sup>16</sup> While it is perhaps more obvious that for a painter facing old age ‘the Eye altering alters all’, Yeats’s pince-nez are not just a property in his best-known self-icons. He too suffered from serious optical problems, including keratoconus, or conical cornea, and ‘my eyes are bad’ is a constant complaint in his letters. There is a study to be done of the texts he had read to him, by Lady Gregory, Ezra Pound, and others.

Writers’ and artists’ *mana* when thus redistributed is, I think, to be distinguished from the aura of merely celebrity possessions (e.g., Paul Newman’s Rolex watch, sold a couple of weeks before the Fonsie Mealy sale, fetched \$17.8m.), but it is not an argument I’d care to have to make. ‘What is aught, but as ‘tis valued?’ remarks Shakespeare’s Troilus.

#### THE SENSE OF THE PAST

I delight in a palpable imaginable visitable past—in the nearer distances and the clearer mysteries, the marks and signs of a world we may reach over to as by making a long arm we grasp an object at the other end of our own table. The table is the one, the common expanse, and where we lean, so stretching, we find it firm and continuous. That, to my imagination, is the past fragrant of all, or of almost all, the poetry of the thing outlived and lost and gone, and yet in which the precious element of closeness, telling so of connexions but tasting so of differences, remains appreciable. With more moves back the element of the appreciable shrinks—just as the charm of looking over a garden-wall into another garden breaks down when successions of walls appear. ... The one partition makes the place we have wondered about other, both richly and recognizably so. ... We are divided of course between liking to feel the past strange and liking to feel it familiar; the difficulty is, for intensity, to catch it at the moment when the scales of the balance hang with the right evenness.<sup>17</sup>

Extravagance of price represents a huge investment of the emotion of ‘relic value’ in objects from that ‘visitable past’ no longer held by descendants themselves. Relic value might not always be transferable. Sales of effects from writers and artists can be considerably more

<sup>16</sup> See e.g., <https://www.college-optometrists.org/the-college/museum/museum-services/education-and-outreach/tyranny-of-treatment.html>

<sup>17</sup> Henry James’s preface to *The Aspern Papers*. See above n.XXX [1].

chaotic than these two proved to be—one thinks, of course, of the Oscar Wilde bankruptcy sale of 24 April 1895, where, among trophies dispersed and lost sight of was lot 125, ‘An old oil painting of Will Hewes, framed’ which was in fact the ‘Portrait of Mr W. H.’ in the style of Clouet by Charles Ricketts, done to Wilde’s commission and intended to illustrate an edition of the story which never appeared. Although a subsequent thumbnail sketch of the portrait, also by Ricketts, survives in the William Andrews Clark library, the portrait itself, purchased by one Edwin Parsons, who later disposed of it, had disappeared by 1914.

Even as one wonders if the heaped-up possessions of forebears do not weigh the more oppressively on successive generations of a distinguished creative family, one can be assured that, when dispersed, their *mana* is at least temporarily enhanced by the price paid, which is not always the case when they remain co-located in a writer’s residence turned into a museum. Such places seem to me sometimes slightly spectral, haunted by the very absence they try to preserve. Artists and writers routinely trade in their own *mana* when they sell their manuscripts and preliminary sketches, as every male member of the Yeats family did in their lifetimes to collectors and patrons such as John Quinn. ‘MAKE PROVISION FOR YOUR OLD AGE!!!’, urges the caption of a self-portrait drawing Jack B. Yeats sent in a letter to Lady Gregory,

WHY INSURE LIFE  
 WHAT IS LIFE WITHOUT HIS PICTURES  
 WHY TAKE SHARES IN A COMPANY  
 EVERY PICTURE  
 A SHARE OF THE WORLD.<sup>18</sup>

Buyers would do well to record the provenance of their trophies from *Yeats: The Family Collection*.

<sup>18</sup> Undated, but quoted in Figgis Rare Books Bulletin 71, item 416, from which this drawing is reproduced in Plate 12. Mr Figgis, who kindly gave his permission for it thus to be reproduced, kindly tells me that these letters, having been bought by him at the great Christie’s Lady Gregory sale of 1979, then went to Mr Aidan Heavey, but this one is not in the Heavey Collection, Westmeath Co. Library, Athlone, and its whereabouts is unknown.



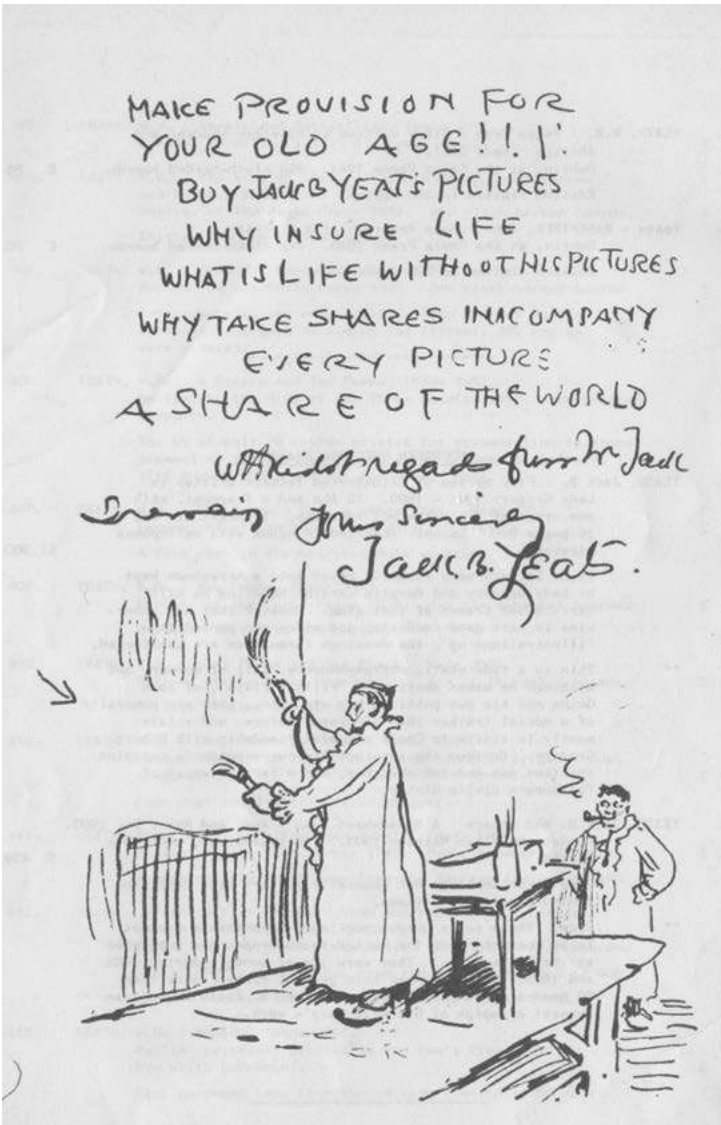


Plate 12. (as a tailpiece) Jack B. Yeats's drawing 'MAKE PROVISION FOR YOUR OLD AGE!!!!' from an undated letter to Lady Gregory as illustrated for lot 416, Figgis Rare Books catalogue, c. 1982–1996 (Private Collection, London). Image courtesy Mr. Neville Figgis, House of Figgis Rare Books, Letterfrack, Co. Galway.

## THE ESSAYS IN THIS BOOK

This volume acquired its theme—and so its title—almost by serendipity. I had been hoping that essays might address the ‘vain battles’ in Yeats’s lifetime (a volume I still envisage) but as the essays came in and I read them, the title *Yeats’s Legacies* framed itself. These two great sales and the legacy of the Yeats family’s 80-year tradition of generosity to Ireland’s great cultural institutions provide the kaleidoscope through which the advanced research essays find their theme in this volume. Hannah Sullivan’s brilliant history of Yeats’s verse craft challenges Poundian definitions of Modernism; Denis Donoghue offers unique family memories of 1916 whilst tracing the political significance of the Easter Rising; Anita Feldman addresses Yeats’s responses to the Rising’s appropriation of his symbols and myths, the daring artistry of his ritual drama developed from the Noh, his poetry of personal utterance, and his vision of art as a body reborn rather than a treasure preserved amid the testing of the illusions that hold civilizations together in ensuing wars. Warwick Gould looks at Yeats as founding Senator in the new Free State, and his valiant struggle against the literary Censorship law of 1929 (with its present-day legacy of Irish anti-Blasphemy law still presenting a Constitutional challenge). Yeats’s enduring resistance to the reactionary censorship which became inevitable in the free state, offer an object lesson to all who seek to keep their heads when manufactured outrage multiplies into moral panic in outrageous times. The essay is followed by reprinted interviews Yeats gave to the international press as the Irish Censorship Bill became inevitable in 1928. The effects of that Act are internationally not without significance today, when Irish Law retains unrepealed, and arguably unconstitutional anti-blasphemy provisions, even today.

Drawing on Gregory Estate documents, James Pethica looks at the evictions which preceded Yeats’s purchase of Thoor Ballylee in Galway, Lauren Arrington looks back at Yeats, Ezra Pound, and the ghosts of *The Winding Stair* (1929) in Rapallo. Having co-edited both versions of *A Vision*, Catherine Paul offers some profound reflections on ‘Yeats and Belief’. Grevel Lindop provides a pioneering view of Yeats’s impact on English mystical verse, and on Charles Williams

who, while at Oxford University Press, helped publish the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*. Stanley van der Ziel looks at the presence of Shakespeare in Yeats's *Purgatory*. William H. O'Donnell examines the vexed textual legacy of his late work, *On the Boiler*. If 1916–1929 provides the focus for several of the essays in this volume; so, too do the years of *A Vision* (1937), *Purgatory* and *On the Boiler*.

In our Research Updates, John Kelly recovers a startling autobiographical short story by Maud Gonno, which provides a useful background to the divided views of two readers of Adrian Frazier's recent *The Adulterous Muse Maud Gonno, Lucien Millevoeye and W. B. Yeats*. Warwick Gould considers the challenge which Yeats's intentionalism posed for the editors of his *Collected Edition of the Works*, in the 1980s and after, when post-structuralist editorial theory became fashionable. Nine works of current biographical, textual and literary scholarship are reviewed, Maud Gonno is the focus of debate for two reviewers, as Eva Gore-Booth, Constance and Casimir Markievicz, Kipling, David Jones, T. S. Eliot and his presence on the radio. In the 'Publications Received' we also list the texts of Yeats's poems which Douglas Saum of Reno, Nevada has set to music, recorded and published in CD format over a twenty-two year project.

We mark the death on 18 April 2017, of Aleck Crichton, grandson of Andrew Jameson, head of John Jameson & Son, Irish whiskey distillers of Smithfield, Dublin. The family farm is in Sligo, and he always thought of himself as a Sligo man. After Cambridge and wartime service with the Irish Guards at the Normandy landings and after (for which he was appointed Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur), he served in the family firm and as European director of Irish Distillers, founded the Irish Mountaineering Club Crichton went on to become European Director of Irish Distillers after Ireland joined the European Community (as it then was).

His parents, Dr Brian Crichton and the former Violet Jameson had entertained Yeats to tea in Fitzwilliam Square, and had played with the Yeats children, and Crichton had played with Yeats's children. It was Dr Crichton who had sent Michael Yeats to see a London specialist who confirmed the tubercular gland which consigned

Michael Yeats to a school in Switzerland about the time Yeats and George Yeats went to Cannes in January 1928.<sup>19</sup> After his retirement to Sligo as ‘the last of the Dublin merchant princes’ he took a close interest in the Yeats Society of Sligo (becoming its president) and was a familiar figure at the Summer School lectures, always seeking ideas for the consolidation of this Sligo institution. His obituary from which much of the above was drawn, was published in *The Times* on 9 May 2017 (54), on what would have been his 99th birthday.

The 2018 Yeats International Summer School, the 59th to be held in Sligo, will be held between 19–27 July 2018. It is directed by Professor Matthew Campbell and Dr Lauren Arrington, and it has for a theme ‘The Greening of Yeats’. For bookings and programme information, see <http://www.yeatssociety.com/>.

Warwick Gould  
London, December 2017

*Note*, 5 January 2018. We deeply regret the early death on 4 January 2018 of the noted Irish Art Historian, Nicola Gordon Bowe, the leading expert on the Arts and Crafts Movement in Dublin and Edinburgh. She was celebrated for such books as *Harry Clarke: the life & work* (Dublin: History Press, 2012), *Wilhemina Geddes: Life and Work* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2015); *Gazetteer of Irish Stained Glass: The Works of Harry Clarke and the Artists of An Túr Gloine* (The Tower of Glass) 1903–1963, eds. Nicola Gordon Bowe, David Caron and Michael Wynne; with an introduction and biographies by Nicola Gordon Bowe (Dublin: Irish Academic, 1988).

<sup>19</sup> *CL InteLex*, 5068, to Lady Gregory, 18 January 1928.



## Acknowledgements and Editorial Information

Our chief debt of gratitude is to the Yeats Estate over many years for granting permission (through A. P. Watt Ltd., now part of United Agents Partnership, Ltd.) to use published and unpublished materials by W. B. Yeats. Stewardship of the Yeats Estate is now in the hands of Kat Aitken ([kaitken@unitedagents.co.uk](mailto:kaitken@unitedagents.co.uk); +44 (0)2032140931). Many of our contributors have been further indebted to the Yeats family and Estate for making unpublished materials available for study and for many other kindnesses, as is the Editor. Dr Declan Kiely now of the New York Public Library (NYPL), Dr Steve Ennis (Director), the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Austin, and Mr Gearoid O Luing at the National Library of Ireland continue to provide us with research materials and research assistance. Dr Isaac Gewirtz and Lyndsi Barnes at the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection (Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations) of the NYPL, as well as research librarians at the Stuart A Rose Rare Books Library, Emory University (particularly E. Kathleen Shoemaker and Elizabeth Shoemaker), and at the John J. Burns Library, Boston College (Christian Dupont, Katherine Fox and Andrew Isidoro) have all been generous and prompt in recovering specialist materials. Karen Johnson, Archivist, Christian Brothers Province Centre, Dublin, Mr Neville Figgis of House of Figgis Rare Books, Letterfrack; the Director, National Archives of Ireland, Dublin, the Digital Library at Villanova University; Private Collectors in London and in Ireland, Barry Houlihan, James Hardiman Library, NUI, Galway. Wikimedia Commons and Dr Colin Smythe of Colin Smythe Ltd., Gerrards Cross Bucks have all been similarly helpful.

A research-level journal is always hungry for new bibliographical detail and recently discovered copies of rare books and manuscripts, contacts among collectors. *Yeats Annual* is deeply indebted to various specialists in the London Rare Book trade, including Dr Peter Errington and Mr Charlie Minter at Sotheby's, New Bond St., Ed. Maggs, Ben Maggs and Joe McCann at Maggs Bros., 48 Bedford Square, Sammy Jay at Peter Harrington, Dover Street, and Jamie Fergusson of James Fergusson Books and Manuscripts, London.

Martin Enright, President of the Yeats Society, Sligo, also alerted us to the existence of rare archival materials. Dr Karen Attar in Special Collections at the Senate House Library, University of London has been unfailingly helpful, especially in respect of the Thomas Sturge Moore Collection. Riette Sturge Moore (who died in 1995) allowed us to use in the livery of the *Yeats Annuals* the rose symbol adapted from Thomas Sturge Moore's designs for the H. P. R. Finberg translation of *Axël* (1925).

Professors Roy Foster, FBA and John Kelly on behalf of Oxford University Press, are generous with permissions. Individuals, institutions private collectors and estates which gave permission for the reproductions of images are profoundly to be thanked for helping us to take advantage of the digital publishing. Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders, and while some images are by unknown photographers, the editor would be grateful to acknowledge any omissions in the next issue.

At Open Book Publishers, William St. Clair FBA, Dr Rupert Gatti and Dr Alessandra Tosi provided patient assistance and invaluable advice to facilitate our transfer to open access publishing. Members of the Advisory Board continue to read a large number of submissions and we are grateful to them, and also to Mr R. A. Gilbert and other specialist readers who offered valuable assistance. Deirdre Toomey as Research Editor of this journal continues to take up the challenges which routinely defeat contributors, finding innumerable ways to make good articles better by means of her restless curiosity and indefatigable reading. All associated with the volume (as well as its readers) continue to be grateful for her persistence with intractabilities. The editor's deepest personal thanks are extended also to the dedicatee of this volume.

Contributions for *Yeats Annual* No. 22 and later issues should reach me, preferably by email as soon as possible after publication of this volume at [warwick.gould@sas.ac.uk](mailto:warwick.gould@sas.ac.uk) or at The Institute of English Studies, University of London, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU.

A style sheet, instructions for the submission of articles to the Editorial Board and consequent editorial procedures will be found at our website, <https://www.ies.sas.ac.uk/publications/yeats-annual> where it is also possible to find full information about, and to purchase, in-print numbers from the *Yeats Annual* backlist. The website is being further developed to complement the online and print availability of the current issues through the publisher at <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/section/39/1>.

Professor John Kelly of St. John's College, Oxford is General Editor of *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*. Later years of the letters are now available in the InteLex electronic edition, which is now online at <http://www.nlx.com/collections/130> but which presently includes only the first three fully annotated volumes as well as the 'B' text of all subsequent letters which have come to light. Priority in the publication of newly discovered letters remains, however, with the print-based volumes, the fifth of which is shortly to be published by the Clarendon Press.

Colin Smythe (PO Box 6, Gerrards Cross, Bucks, SL9 8XA, UK, [cpsmythe@aol.com](mailto:cpsmythe@aol.com)) is completing his revision of the Wade-Alspach *Bibliography* for Colin Smythe Ltd., while an authorised edition of *Yeats's Occult Diaries, 1898–1901* is being prepared by Deirdre Toomey and myself. We continue to revise A. Norman Jeffares' *New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats*. All the above would be very grateful to hear of new letters, and to receive new information from readers.

We are grateful to receive offprints and review copies and other bibliographical information (acknowledged at the end of each volume).

Warwick Gould,  
Institute of English Studies, London,  
31 December 2017.





## ESSAYS



## How Yeats Learned to Scan<sup>1</sup>

Hannah Sullivan

ACCORDING TO ONE FAMILIAR, much reiterated version of literary history, free verse was invented in pre-war London by Ezra Pound. It then quickly and decisively triumphed over poetry in traditional metres to become a new stylistic orthodoxy.<sup>2</sup> In fact, English poets had been writing in versions of free verse for many centuries; by the end of the nineteenth century metrical discomfort and some degree of resistance to inherited iambic forms had become practically the norm. As Joseph Phelan puts it, in one of several recent revisionist accounts of late nineteenth-century metrical practice, the movement towards free verse was ‘halting and interrupted’ rather than teleologically

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [hannah.sullivan@new.ox.ac.uk](mailto:hannah.sullivan@new.ox.ac.uk)? Quite apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

<sup>2</sup> Charles O. Hartman’s *Free Verse: An Essay on Prosody* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) gives an extended and thoughtful version of this story, which grows out of modernist polemic. Robert Bernard Hass describes free verse as the prosodic change accompanying modernism’s other disjunctions of content and structure in ‘(Re)Reading Bergson: Frost, Pound, and the Legacy of Modern Poetry’, *Journal of Modern Literature* 29. 1 (2005), 55–75 (67).

straightforward.<sup>3</sup> But the old-fashioned story of stylistic ‘rupture’ is not entirely unfounded, because it was only in the twentieth century that the ‘free verse’ picked up its full range of polemical and ideological associations. Now ‘free’ became prescriptive rather than descriptive. Instead of referring to a phonologically arbitrary principle of lineation, ‘free’ began to denote a particular kind of poetry—flexible, organic, democratic, and hospitable to the rhythms of ordinary speech.<sup>4</sup>

It is hard to believe that Google’s N-Gram viewer can be accurate in its determination that *no* book in English published in 1900 or 1901 contained the term ‘free verse’. But the statistical story that it tells of the term’s rapid upswing in popularity, and eventual cannibalization of the French ‘vers libre’, is remarkable. By 1910, the year nominated by T. S. Eliot as the ‘point de repère’ of modern poetry, the term was in modest use.<sup>5</sup> Over the next decade, however, it exploded in popularity, occurring *forty times* more frequently in books published in 1920 than 1910.<sup>6</sup> The French term ‘vers libre’ enjoyed a similarly meteoric explosion in popularity from 1910 until 1918, at which point it seems to decline in favour of the anglicised version. In fact,

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Phelan, *The Music of Verse: Metrical Experiment in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 11. And see Meredith Martin’s ‘Introduction’ to *The Rise and Fall of Meter: Poetry and English National Culture 1860–1930* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012) for careful critique of ‘the narrative we have been taught’ (3).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the adjectives employed by D. H. Lawrence in ‘Poetry of the Present’, in Michael Herbert ed., *D. H. Lawrence: Selected Critical Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 75–79 (78).

<sup>5</sup> T. S. Eliot, ‘American Literature and the American Language’, 1953, republished in *To Criticize the Critic* (London: Faber & Faber, 1978), 43–60 (58).

<sup>6</sup> From a search across the Google Books corpus. By 1918, ‘free verse’ is used about seven times more often, and ‘vers libre’ five times more often, than ‘iambic pentameter’. But ‘vers libre’ had a shorter useful history than ‘free verse’, and remained in greater use than the fairly stable ‘iambic pentameter’ only until 1937. The rapid upswing in the use of both terms is really remarkable (compared, say, to the slower rise in the use of ‘imagist’), and significant even with the usual concerns about Google Books as a corpus (including but not limited to: OCR errors, duplication in corpus, bias towards academic/scientific writing). Google Ngram Viewer: [‘free verse’], [‘Free verse’], [‘Free Verse’], [‘FREE VERSE’], [‘vers libre’], [‘Vers Libre’], [‘Vers libre’], [‘VERS LIBRE’], [‘iambic pentameter’], [‘Iambic pentameter’], [‘Iambic Pentameter’], 1890–1940 in English.

by 1920, 'free verse' was a more commonly used phrase than 'iambic pentameter'.

Given that Yeats is the only major poet in whose career 1910 or 1914 could be seen as a midway point, we might expect the free-verse explosion to have affected him more than anyone else. By 1912, Tennyson, Swinburne and Hopkins were dead. Thomas Hardy was seventy-two. On the other hand, Eliot and Stevens were still some years away from publishing a book, and Pound only in the infancy of his career. So what if anything happened to Yeats's metrical practice in the twentieth century? Did he learn to scan differently, or even to stop scanning at all? Yeats certainly wasn't unaware of the practice or polemic of the free versifiers; during the teens he was a close friend, almost a collaborator, of Pound's. He was repeatedly exposed to Pound's tripartite goals for modern poetry: precisely observed images, musical free verse, and natural syntax, 'nothing that you couldn't, in some circumstance ... actually say'.<sup>7</sup> By 1937, when he crafted 'A General Introduction to My Work', he even proposed that naturalness of language had been his own contribution to modern English poetry:

Then, and in this English poetry has followed my lead, I tried to make the language of poetry coincide with that of passionate, normal speech. I wanted to write in whatever language comes most naturally when we soliloquise, as I do all day long, upon the events of our own lives or of any life where we can see ourselves for the moment. I sometimes compare myself with the mad old slum women I hear denouncing and remembering; 'how dare you', I heard one say of some imaginary suitor, 'and you without health or a home'. If I spoke my thoughts aloud they might be as angry and as wild. It was a long time before I had made a language to my liking; I began to make it when I discovered some twenty years ago that I must seek, not as Wordsworth thought words in common use, but a powerful and passionate syntax, and a complete coincidence between period and stanza. Because I need a passionate syntax for passionate subject-matter I compel myself to accept those traditional metres that have developed with the language. Ezra Pound, Turner, Lawrence, wrote admirable free verse, I could not. I would

<sup>7</sup> Ezra Pound, letter to Harriet Monroe, Jan. 1915, in D. D. Paige ed., *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound: 1907-1941* (New York: New Directions, 1950), 49.

lose myself, become joyless like those mad old women. The translators of the Bible, Sir Thomas Browne, certain translators from the Greek when translators still bothered about rhythm, created a form midway between prose and verse that seems natural to impersonal meditation; but all that is personal soon rots; it must be packed in ice or salt. (*E&I* 521; cf., *CW5* 212–13)

In fact, the early Yeats used a great deal of blurry and imprecise language. A. Walton Litz has suggested that Pound's 1913 precepts for Imagism, which advise 'Don't use such an abstraction as "dim lands of peace"'. It dulls the image' were written in direct chastisement of Yeats, who had used the word 'dim' twenty-six times in *The Wanderings of Oisín*.<sup>8</sup> The actual story of Yeats's engagement with free verse needs to be untangled from his clear-eyed and self-promoting retrospectives in the 1930s.<sup>9</sup> As an endemic sufferer of what Warwick Gould has called 'textual restlessness', we should also ask whether he metrically updated his work in post-publication revision.<sup>10</sup> One hypothesis might be that Yeats's poetry became metrically freer—if not entirely free—as his career progressed, and that he used revision to loosen up or make more natural phrasing that strict form had necessitated in his books from the 1890s and 1900s.

At stake in the question 'did Yeats use or disavow free verse?' is the more general question of his relationship to modernism. If it is true that 'Yeats never could absorb the rhythms of Pound's poetry, and his later poetry shows only a slight growth away from his customary iambic patterns', then he can't be easily folded into a modernism

<sup>8</sup> He also cites Yeats's troubled, but self-critical, remark to Lady Gregory, 'Ezra ... helps me to get back to the definite and concrete and away from modern abstractions. To talk over a poem with him is like getting you to put a sentence into dialect. All becomes clear and natural'. A. Walton Litz, 'Pound and Yeats: The Road to Stone Cottage', in George Bornstein ed., *Ezra Pound Among the Poets* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 128–48 (138–39).

<sup>9</sup> These include the 1937 'General Introduction', the 1936 *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, and the poems themselves in their final form. Having published a *Collected Poems* in 1933, Yeats was, in 1937, anticipating an expansion of the edition 'in about two years time'. Richard J. Finneran, 'Preface', *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats, Vol. 1: The Poems* (New York: Scribner, 1996), 2nd ed., xxiii.

<sup>10</sup> Warwick Gould, 'Writing the Life of the Text: The Case of W. B. Yeats', *Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies* 30 (2004), 9–34 (9).

whose main *technique* was *vers libre*.<sup>11</sup> But here we become involved in a vexing hermeneutic circle; it is hard to imagine defining modernism in poetry without talking about Yeats, and it is hard to talk about Yeats in any historical or intellectual context without referring to modernism. The process of clear metrical description ought to be easier, requiring only a weighing of the poems that Yeats wrote (perhaps in their various forms, as evidenced by the *Variorum*) against the criteria for free verse. In that case, how do we explain the relative lack of critical consensus on Yeats's use of metre? Many critics write as if he occupied some nebulous middle ground between traditional form and free verse, and remained in the same metrical limbo for his entire career. Martin Duffell's generally excellent history of English metre says not much more than that Yeats wrote in 'loose iambics';<sup>12</sup> Laura O'Connor finds that Yeats 'does not wish to "break the pentameter", but to shake it up';<sup>13</sup> but Peter Howarth tells us that Yeats 'disliked' Pound's free verse, and Donald Davie that he 'abjured free verse' in general.<sup>14</sup> Thomas Parkinson suggests that Yeats counted the number of stresses in a line, but not the number of feet, and so never wrote traditional accentual-syllabic verse.<sup>15</sup> Other critics seem to avoid making any general pronouncement on Yeats's use of metre. Helen Vendler doesn't use the word *at all* in *Our Secret Discipline*, although she does talk of a poem's 'outer form' as 'metrical and stanzaic shape'.<sup>16</sup> In 1970, Marjorie Perloff began her book on Yeats and rhyme by regretting that the sound features of the lyric

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Rees, 'Ezra Pound and the Modernization of W. B. Yeats', *Journal of Modern Literature* 4.3 (February 1975), 574–92 (580).

<sup>12</sup> Martin J. Duffell, *A New History of English Metre* (London: Legenda, 2008), 189.

<sup>13</sup> Laura O'Connor, *Haunted English: The Celtic Fringe, the British Empire, and De-Anglicanization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 84.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 9. Donald Davie, *Articulate Energy: An Inquiry into the Syntax of English Poetry* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), 125.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Parkinson, *W. B. Yeats: The Later Poetry* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), 187–89. Despite the diachronic coverage of his work, Parkinson also tends to write as if Yeats worked in the same way for his whole career: see the description of his general practice of composition, 182–83.

<sup>16</sup> Helen Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2007). The plural 'metres' is used, but both when quoting Yeats, not in analysis: 16, 145; 'free verse' once, 347.



poems remain largely unexplored'.<sup>17</sup> Because Yeats's development runs counter to a meliorist history in which freedom always triumphs over form, it has sometimes been difficult for critics to see that there *is* a development.

Curiously, this development ran counter to the general trajectory of English versifying; Yeats's poems became more metrically constrained and traditional in the period when free verse flourished. This is true both when we compare revised to original versions, and when we compare the new poems from *The Tower*, say, or *Last Poems* to the shiftier, more metrically uneasy early work. His very last poems inscribe themselves clearly within an English tradition of accentual-syllabic poetry, where both stresses and syllable numbers are counted. In 'Under Ben Bulben', promoting the 'well made' over the shapeless, the artisanally crafted over organic form, he employs the trochaic tetrameter catalectic of Renaissance song.

Irish poets, learn your trade,  
Sing whatever is well made,  
Scorn the sort now growing up  
All out of shape from toe to top ... (*VP* 639)<sup>18</sup>

This essay contends that this gradual process of self-chastisement into form was a conscious decision, motivated first by Yeats's sense of the interrelation of prosody and syntax and, second, by a growing ideological distaste for free verse, 'the American vice' (*CL InteLex* 6072).<sup>19</sup>

Yeats's early poems are formally heterogeneous, taken as a group, but there is also a degree of formal unease or shiftiness within individual poems. Rather than being free in Pound's sense, as an act

<sup>17</sup> Marjorie Perloff, *Rhyme and Meaning in the Poetry of Yeats* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), 13.

<sup>18</sup> W. B. Yeats, 'Under Ben Bulben', in Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach eds., *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 639. Unless otherwise stated, future references to poems are to this edition.

<sup>19</sup> Yeats uses the term to describe Adah Menken's writing in a letter to Olivia Shakespear, 24 July, 1934, in John Kelly, Eric Domville, Warwick Gould, and Ronald Schuchard eds., *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats: Electronic Edition, Unpublished Letters* (Charlottesville: InteLex, 2002).

of willful choice, they can seem merely or casually free by the strictest standards of English versification. At other times, the metrical grid is followed to the point of woodenness. The dedicatory verse to *Poems* (1895), *To Some I Have Talked with by the Fire*, begins rather metronomically, because of the almost complete coincidence of word boundary and metrical foot:<sup>20</sup>

While I wrought out these fitful Danaan rhymes  
 My heart would brim with dreams about the times  
 When we bent down above the fading coals;  
 And talked of the dark folk, who live in souls  
 Of passionate men ... (*VP* 136)

But within a few lines the poem has swung to the other end of the pendulum, from woodenly over-metrical to unmetrical. 'Talked' is still the governing verb:

And of the embattled flaming multitude  
 Who rise, wing above wing, flame above flame,  
 And, like a storm, cry the Ineffable Name ...

It is almost impossible to assimilate 'wing above wing' and 'flame above flame' to the stress pattern of the metre; by including both a third foot *and* a fifth foot trochee, Yeats has effectively broken his pentameter. The next line then contains an extrametrical syllable and another reversed foot. The same pattern, when a fixed metre is set up only to dissolve without obvious reason, happens in many of these early poems. It is even more noticeable when Yeats writes in the less capacious tetrameter. He is prone to filling out the lines with monosyllables, giving a harsh, jerky effect, and to inserting a caesura exactly halfway. But, a few lines later, he will break the pattern entirely.

I must be gone: there is a grave  
 Where daffodil and lily wave  
 And I would please the hapless faun,  
 Buried under the sleepy ground. (*VP* 67)

<sup>20</sup> W. B. Yeats, *Poems* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1895), vii.

According to the traditional rules of English prosody, which look for artful variation within a fixed pattern, particularly a varied use of pauses, this is not a very elegant use of iambic tetrameter.<sup>21</sup>

Pound's manifesto for Imagism was a manifesto for freedom in poetry, but it also plays great attention to the 'craft' that a poet must acquire before freedom is possible:

Let the neophyte know assonance and alliteration, rhyme immediate and delayed, simple and polyphonic, as a musician would expect to know harmony and counterpoint and all the minutiae of his craft. No time is too great to give to these matters or to any one of them, even if the artist seldom have need of them.<sup>22</sup>

In fact, across the arts, this narrative of craft before innovation, mastery before freedom, is sometimes used to counter the argument that abstract painting, modern music, or free verse are *art-less*, child's play. An exhibition of Picasso's drawings explains that he was, first, an 'old master manqué', a master of 'the conventions of classical representation'.<sup>23</sup> Arnold Schoenberg was a famously strict teacher who insisted that musical education '*must* be based on an acquaintance with the works of the masters', and that the classical tradition should be mastered before beginning to write atonal verse.<sup>24</sup> Pound, Eliot, and Joyce all wrote early poems that show much more rigid adherence to traditional versification than their mature works. Yeats is not really in this category. He did not learn how to scan as an unformed, even juvenile poet, and then slowly relax constraint to produce his greatest works: his development runs the opposite

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, George Saintsbury's 'Rules of the Foot System', numbers 19 and 22, prohibiting substitutions that confuse the basis of the metre, and claiming that 'the most important and valuable engine in the constitution of English verses is the variation of the middle or internal pause', *Historical Manual of English Prosody* (London: Macmillan, 1910), 32–33.

<sup>22</sup> Ezra Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', *Poetry* 1.6 (March 1913), 200–6 (203).

<sup>23</sup> Susan Grace Galassi, senior curator at the Frick, cited by Catesby Leigh, 'Could Picasso Draw Better than Raphael?' *Standpoint Magazine*, June 2012, <http://standpointmag.co.uk/node/4499/full>

<sup>24</sup> In a radio interview, 19 November 1933, reprinted by Walter Frisch, *Schoenberg and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 300.

way. Even at the end of his life, he called prosody (which he had earlier been prone to misspell as 'prosedy') the 'subject of which I am most ignorant' if the 'most certain of my instincts' (*CL InteLex* 7037).<sup>25</sup> Earlier in his career he had been less confident in his own capacities to manipulate metre without a scholarly understanding of its exigencies, writing in on 10 January 1897 to Robert Bridges:

I too would much like to discuss with you questions of rhythm, for though I work very hard at my rhythm I have but little science on the matter and as a result probably offend often. Without a consistent science it is difficult to distinguish between license and freedom. (*CL InteLex* 23)

This anxiety was perhaps fuelled partly by J. B. Yeats's criticism of his son for writing in 'bad metres', a habit which he attributes in an 1884 letter to faulty and self-indulgent declamation: 'His bad metres arise very much from his composing in a loud voice manipulating of course the quantities to his taste'.<sup>26</sup> Roy Foster claims that it was only in 1906 that Yeats felt his lyric capacities 'were now accomplished enough for his recent poetry to need no alteration'.<sup>27</sup> And it is certainly true that he tended to revise *out* some of the gratuitously unmetrical lines in poems otherwise in fixed metres. For the 1895 *Poems*, for example, he got rid of the seven-syllable 'They were of no wordy mood', and the trochaic 'In the verse of Attic story' in 'The Song of the Happy Shepherd'.

The majority of Yeats's early work is not, however, in an entirely familiar traditional form; poems like 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', 'The White Birds', or 'The Meditation of the Old Fisherman' employ long lines and ternary rhythms, playing with the bounds of the line in English. *The Wanderings of Oisín* is even more obviously experimental. Between the poem's first appearance in 1889 and its second appearance in 1895, Yeats also made it *more* metrically

<sup>25</sup> Letter to Edith Shackleton Heald, 10 August 1937. For 'prosedy', see *CL InteLex* 2995, 2998.

<sup>26</sup> In a letter to Edward Dowden, cited by Ronald Schuchard, *The Last Minstrels: Yeats and the Revival of the Bardic Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>27</sup> R. F. Foster, *The Apprentice Mage, 1865–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 336.

free, sometimes turning lines of ‘well-formed’ iambic tetrameter into halting and bizarrely unmetrical new versions. How can we account for this? The three books are in distinct, and not entirely traditional, metrical styles. One early and complementary review described these as being fitted to three different kinds of subject matter, and as respectively ‘free octosyllabics’, ‘Keatsian decasyllabic couplets’, and ‘quatrains of long-lined dactylic and anapaestic verse’.<sup>28</sup> But this is perhaps being over-precise—Matthew Campbell is more accurate when he describes the third part as ‘an accentual verse which challenges the bounds of metre in English’.<sup>29</sup> I would go further and say that this sprawling poem, stuffed full of discordant things, is also a good, if accidental, showcase of some of the metrical tendencies or limit point of Victorian versification; iambic accentual-syllabic verse, both tetrameter and pentameter, is on the verge of being washed away into the *dolnik*, the ballad, and accentual long lines, amplified by some of the alliteration typical of the Old English stress line. Taken as a whole, it indicates that Yeats began as a more experimental prosodist than he ended up.

*The Wanderings of Oisín* begins, in the 1895 text, with a thumping, monosyllabic tetrameter, ‘You who are bent, and bald, and blind’, before loosening itself up:

With a heavy heart and a wandering mind,  
Have known three centuries, poets sing,  
Of dalliance with a demon thing. (*VP* 2)

Here, as throughout the poem, we see total line lengths of more than eight syllables, and extra skipping beats inserted between stresses. (It wouldn’t have been impossible for Yeats to write ‘With heavy heart and wandering mind’.) Yeats’s free use of these extra beats is what leads Parkinson to conclude that he *never* employed accentual-syllabic verse: ‘it seems to me unlikely, however, that he used a foot

<sup>28</sup> John Todhunter, review of *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems*, *The Academy*, January–June 1889.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew Campbell, ‘Poetry in the Four Nations’, in Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman, and Antony W. Harrison eds., *A Companion to Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 438–56 (447).

prosody in view of the fact that his manuscripts give *no* example of scanning by feet'.<sup>30</sup> But it is not the case that all English poetry in traditional forms has a perfect binary oscillation between unstressed and stressed syllables. Nor, I think, is Parkinson's genetic claim robust: accentual-syllabic poetry is perfectly possible, as oral traditions show, without a lexical practice of marking out and scanning the feet. What is unusual about Yeats's practice in the poem is not the pattern of any individual line taken by itself, but the lack of formal consistency, the running together of line *types* that, historically, belonged to different genres.

Marina Tarlinskaja argued some decades ago that 'transitional forms' ('between syllabotonic and syllabic, between syllabic and accentual, or between accentual and free verse') exist in every literature, and that, in certain periods, even established forms may 'lean towards typologically adjacent meters'.<sup>31</sup> In English, she finds that all verse forms contain at least some 'extra' syllables (traditionally we might call these 'anapaestic substitutions'), but the frequency with which these occur depends very strongly on the verse genre. Her statistical analysis accordingly describes verse forms as bands within a continuous space, rather than the discrete labels of prosody textbooks. In strict, classical English verse, she finds that fewer than 3% of intervals between stresses are occupied by two syllables. She then identifies two other, major kinds of English verse writing: 'loose' or transitional iambics, and a form that is more balanced between ternary and binary beats. Borrowing from Russian terminology she calls this last form the 'dolnik'. The dolnik is a poem that traditional metrical analysis described as anapaestic or in a 'ternary' metre; Yeats's escapist, flyaway fantasy 'The White Birds' would be an example. (Arguably it is a 3-ictic dolnik written out with two lines compressed into one.)

I would that we were, my beloved, white birds on the foam of the sea!  
We tire of the flame of the meteor, before it can fade and flee ... (*VP* 121–22)

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Parkinson, *W. B. Yeats: The Later Poetry*, 188–89.

<sup>31</sup> Marina Tarlinskaja, 'Beyond "Loose Iamb": The Forms and Themes of the English "Dolnik"', *Poetics Today* 16. 3 (Autumn 1995), 493–522 (496).

This may seem an unnecessarily cumbersome additional term, but Derek Attridge has argued robustly that: ‘a name that distinguishes this verse form more clearly from accentual-syllabic verse is desirable, in order to signal clearly its identity as a recognizable metrical genre in its own right and one that does not produce uncertainties about whether to divide up the line into iambic or trochaic feet’.<sup>32</sup> Tarlinskaja’s own analysis suggests that in ‘loose’ or transitional iambs, of the kind that Yeats is often alleged to have written, the percentage of disyllabic intervals is about 3–12% (her examples are primarily from nineteenth-century poets—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Tennyson and Browning), but in the *dolnik* the percentage is much higher again, from, roughly, 20% to 80%. Between these bounds, however, she finds a ‘frequency gap’: besides a few ‘older folk ballads’ very few poems in English have more than 10% but fewer than 20% of their interictic intervals filled with two syllables. In other words, the apparent freedom enjoyed by poets writing loose iambs and poets writing in *dolniks* is something of an illusion; either they use about one disyllabic interval every two lines (loose iambs), as a relatively pointed variation from the norm, *or* they use multiple disyllabic intervals in every line, so that the ear never settles comfortably into an anticipation of two or three.

Curiously, the first part of *The Wanderings of Oisín* falls into this frequency gap and, in his process of revising the text in 1895, Yeats made its metrical aberrance stronger. The poem is too anapaestic (in the old terminology) to be ‘still iambic’, but not anapaestic enough to be definitely anything else.<sup>33</sup> In the 1889 text, by my analysis, some 10% of the stress (interictic) intervals in its 506 lines are occupied by two syllables: this is about the same proportion as in Coleridge’s ‘Christabel’. But, in the slightly shorter 1895 first part (almost identical, apart from some name differences, to the next revise), over 14% of the intervals in 414 lines are disyllabic. So, by Tarlinskaja’s taxonomy, this new version is neither strictly iambic, nor even on the

<sup>32</sup> Derek Attridge, ‘The Case for the English *Dolnik*; or, How Not to Introduce Prosody’, *Poetics Today* 33.1 (2012), 1–26 (8).

<sup>33</sup> On the frequency gap between ‘still iambic’ and ‘something else’, see Marina Tarlinskaja, ‘Beyond “Loose Iamb”’, 504–6.

outer reaches of 'loosely iambic', as the first version was, but falls into a 'gray zone instinctively avoided by literary authors' (505–6).

The fact that Yeats changed his versification in revision suggests that the turn away from an iambic pattern without embracing the deliberate dolnik of 'The White Birds' is a considered and deliberate aesthetic choice. But what kind of choice is it? One possibility is that the poem's unusual metrics have some thematic or generic resonance, and are, if unconsciously, a deliberate way of declaring kinship with the poem's diverse source materials. In a letter to the *Spectator* of 29 July 1889, Yeats said that the first few pages were 'developed'—an interesting word, like a film script from a novel—from 'a most beautiful old poem written by one of the numerous half-forgotten Gaelic poets who lived in Ireland in the last century'. He added that 'in the quarrels between the saint and the blind warrior, I have used suggestions from various ballad dialogues between Oisín and Patrick, published by the Ossianic society'. (*CL1* 176–77; unnumbered in *CL Intalex*). In other words, given that he knew no Gaelic, he was reliant on a series of verse translations published in the 1850s. And these translations, precisely because they aimed at fidelity to the original Gaelic text (which was published on the facing page), tended to be, prosodically at least, quite unlike late-nineteenth-century English language poetry. Russell Alspach gives some examples of the rather literal, prosaic verse that the Ossianic Transactions contained.<sup>34</sup> Returning to the original volume shows, in addition, that readers were presented with little introductory or paratextual material to explain the method of translation, or the relationship between the facing-page English and Gaelic texts. O'Daly's introduction is devoted mostly to explaining the complex genealogy of various Irish kings and militias, and some summary of the scribal manuscripts from which the text derives (xxxi); one paragraph at the end asks the English reader 'to excuse the style, consequent upon our being obliged to adhere as closely as the idioms of the English language would

<sup>34</sup> Russell K. Alspach, 'Some Sources of Yeats's *The Wanderings of Oisín*', *PMLA* 58.3 (Sept. 1943), 849–66.



admit to our originals'.<sup>35</sup> But, according to Alspach, an even more important source than these antique, original materials was Michael Comyn's much more recent poem, *The Land of Youth*, which was also published in the Ossianic Society's Transactions, in a translation by Bryan O'Looney.<sup>36</sup> As Warwick Gould explains, this was also an extremely faithful translation, with hanging indents allowing the English quatrains to mirror the original Irish.<sup>37</sup> It is perhaps the rigidity of this typesetting that makes the prosodic irregularity of the quatrains more startling, if we read O'Looney's text as an English poem. Individual lines tend to come as semantically complete units but they have no rhythmic integrity or principle of repetition. Might Yeats's own, strangely halting prosody be declaring some affinity with the haiku-like, proto-Imagist simplicity of its source? By source, of course, we mean the literal English translation (which sacrifices prosodic regularity for semantic accuracy) rather than the original, syllabic Irish verse form.<sup>38</sup>

A royal crown was on her head;  
And a brown mantle of precious silk  
spangled with stars of red gold  
Covering her shoes down to the grass.<sup>39</sup>

In fact, in later editions like Alfred Graves's 1909 *The Irish Fairy Book*, O'Looney's translation was reset *as* prose, as if it has never been a genuine verse translation in the first place.<sup>40</sup> In Yeats's own *Oisín* poem, the lingering presence of these prosaic materials may be entirely accidental, a mild stylistic overlay that resulted from

<sup>35</sup> John O'Daly, 'Introduction', *Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the Year 1856*, Vol. 4 (Dublin, 1859), xxi–xxxii (xxxii).

<sup>36</sup> And which he acknowledges only obliquely in the 1895 glossary to the poem. Russell K. Alspach, 'Some Sources of Yeats's *The Wanderings of Oisín*', 849–50.

<sup>37</sup> Warwick Gould, 'Lips and Ships, Peers and Tears: *Lacrimae Rerum* and Tragic Joy', *YA18* (2013), 15–56 (32).

<sup>38</sup> Muiris O Rochain claims that the form of the poem is 'in a form described as rannaíocht mhór', 64, which is a syllabic metre.

<sup>39</sup> 'The Land of Youth', ed. by Bryan O'Looney, *Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the Year 1856* (Dublin, 1859), 227–80 (237).

<sup>40</sup> 'The Lay of Oisín on the Land of Youth' is set as prose in Alfred Graves, *The Irish Fairy Book* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1909), 71–84.

his having to work with translations. But the consequence was the production of a poem that is, by the standards of the 1890s, metrically innovative and which, in a longer literary history, we might see as looking *forward* to some of the free verse experiments of the 1910s (also heavily influenced by translation).

The first book of *The Wanderings of Oisín* occupies a novel 'gray zone' in its use of disyllabic intervals, while retaining lines of conventional length, but in the second, and especially the third, books, Yeats's lines expand and, in doing so, become freer still. In the second part, a four-beat line turns into a five-beat line, which is sometimes a well-formed iambic pentameter but equally often a 'near miss', a line that comes close enough to pentameter that its unmetricality is painfully marked.

Now, man of croziers, shadows called our names  
 And then away, away, like whirling flames;  
 And now fled by, mist-covered, without sound,  
 The youth and lady and the deer and hound;  
 'Gaze no more on the phantoms', Niamh said,  
 And kissed my eyes .... (VP 29)

Here we have three lines of relatively regular pentameter washing up in line four. 'The youth and lady and the deer and hound' only evokes the metre if the first and third 'and' are unstressed, but the second is stressed, a flouting of a self-instituted pattern that is bound to be awkward on the ear. Niamh's first words, 'Gaze no more on the phantoms', also present aural problems. In traditional English poetry, 'no more' is invariably stressed on the *second* of the two syllables, as shown by such diverse examples as the falling trochaics of *Cymbeline*, 'Fear no more the heat o'the sun'; Shelley's breathless lament in 'Adonais', 'He will awake no more, oh, never more!'; and Tennyson's 'So sad, so strange, the days that are no more'. Here, we can only 'right' the verse to its iambic pattern by saying 'Gaze NO more on the phantoms' a strained and unnatural emphasis that the reading voice does not expect to make.

If we were unaware that these lines were the consequence of deliberate post-publication revision, we would be tempted to assume that Yeats had difficulty meeting the requirement of iambic

pentameter. But knowledge of the extensive post-publication revision contributes to a sense that the metre is *deliberately* being forced to breaking point. Pound's precepts for free verse never suggest writing in a way that is deliberately unmetrical, but Yeats's disregard here for the normal constraints of iambic pentameter is so flagrant as to seem aggressively rebellious. What is gained in doing so, in changing a line like the regular 'In triumph with her arms around me' to the unmetrical 'With her triumphing arms around me'? The answer, I think, is that breaking the pentameter was the only solution Yeats found for making the syntax more natural. This is the first version.

Now, man of crosiers, phantoms drew around  
 Once more—the youth and lady, deer and hound;  
 Half lost in vapour, shadows called our names,  
 And then away, away like spiral flames.  
 'These forms?' 'Vex not with speech the phantoms dread'.  
 And now sang Niam, swaying her bright head  
 And her bright body ... (VP 29)<sup>41</sup>

The earlier version is metrically more traditional by virtue of being, by the standards of the late nineteenth century, syntactically rather archaic; to fit the metre, in other words, Yeats is having to make use of inversions like 'vex not' (for 'do not vex') and 'phantoms dread' (for 'dread phantoms'). In the later version, the archaic 'sang Niam' is resolved into the more normal 'Niamh said', while appearing to retain the incorrect pronunciation of 'Niamh' that John Butler Yeats had queried. In his marginal comments on the first edition, he asked 'but is not Niam (Niambh) pronounced as Neev'? as one syllable? Not "Nee-am?"<sup>42</sup> Strangely, in the manuscript revise preceding the 1895 publication, Yeats changed 'Niam' to 'Neeve' and he printed 'Neave' in at least one 1895 edition.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> This text published by Yeats as *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems* (London: Kegan Paul, 1889), 21.

<sup>42</sup> Michael J. Sidnell, 'J. B. Yeats's Marginalia in *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems*', *YA13* 265–91 (269).

<sup>43</sup> See George Bornstein's transcription (page not reproduced in facsimile) in Bornstein ed., *The Early Poetry, Vol. 2, 'The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Early Poems to 1895: Manuscript Materials* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 141; W. B. Yeats, *Poems* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1895), 27. Why this text

The second book is freer than the first, and the third is more metrically inventive again. Here are its first and third stanzas:

Fled foam underneath us, and round us, a wandering and milky smoke,  
 High as the saddle-girth, covering away from our glances the tide;  
 And those that fled, and that followed, from the foam-pale distance broke;  
 The immortal desire of immortals we saw in their faces and sighed ....

Were we days long or hours long in riding, when rolled in a grisly peace,  
 An isle lay level before us, with dripping [1889: dripping with] hazel and oak?  
 And we stood on a sea's edge we saw not; for whiter than new-washed fleece  
 Fled foam underneath us, and round us, a wandering and milky smoke.

(VP 47)

One danger of writing long, end-stopped, lines in English is that stresses pile up at the right edge of the page, with the nuclear stress of each sentence or clause coinciding with the special metrical stress or pause that the 'passion of metre', in Wordsworth's phrase, inevitably demands.<sup>44</sup> Yeats avoids this by heavy use of noun-compounds ('saddle-girth', 'foam-pale', 'new-washed') where stress is carried on the leftmost item, as well as by forms of syntactic inversion and displacement. The word-order rearrangement also produces clusters of alliterated consonants, both within and across lines. For example, the normal, unmarked order in English would be '[foam fled underneath us] [whiter than new-washed fleece]', with subject preceding verb, and the adjunct clause following the argument. But we have instead 'whiter than new-washed fleece/ Fled foam underneath us', with the most strongly stressed words in each phrase ('fleece' and 'fled', by the nuclear stress rule) placed abutting each other across the line break. The metrical effect is both very old, in evoking of some features of the Old English verse line, and very new for 1889 or, more precisely, it is novel by virtue of its instinct for renovation. Pound's 'The Seafarer' (1911) and Auden's 'The Wanderer' are later, more self-conscious experiments with some of the same techniques. For

is different from that listed in the Variorum as '9' (1895 British and American printing) is unclear to me.

<sup>44</sup> William Wordsworth, letter to John Thelwall, 1804, quoted by Peter McDonald in *Sounds Intentions: The Workings of Rhyme in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 78.

Robert Bridges, who was something of a metre-nerd, the long lines in this third part of *The Wanderings of Oisín* certainly seemed highly original. When he read the poem in the 1895 *Collected*, he picked out the line ‘Fled foam underneath us, and round us, a wandering and milky smoke’, as a beautiful and also ingenious rhythm. ‘That’, he said, ‘is a new thing in English poetry—Yeats made it—it was not there before’.<sup>45</sup> And we should take this judgment seriously: Bridges was a trained, analytical metrist, who had already published a book on Milton’s metre, and whose letters to Gerard Manley Hopkins have a kind of train-spotter’s fascination with prosodic irregularities and gems. Bridges in fact liked Yeats’s line so much that he was still quoting it four years later, now as a kind of in-joke. Inviting Yeats to visit him, he explains the trains: ‘There is a very first class train from Paddington to Pangbourne of an evening. It leaves Paddington at 6.10 and its wandering and milky smoke does not stop at Reading’.<sup>46</sup>

The very fact that Bridges was able to quote Yeats’s phrase in a letter shows that it works in a natural prose sentence; there is nothing baroque or strained about it. Might this help to explain why Bridges was so favourable about Yeats’s line while so condemnatory about his friend Hopkins’s rhythmically very *similar* poem, ‘The Wreck of the Deutschland’? In a poem written ten years before Yeats began *The Wanderings of Oisín*, but published almost thirty years after it, Hopkins had described a shipwreck like this:

One stirred from the rigging to save  
 The wild woman-kind below,  
 With a rope’s end round the man, handy and brave—  
 He was pitched to his death at a blow,  
 For all his dreadnought breast and braids of thew:  
 They could tell him for hours, dandled the to and fro  
 Through the cobbled foam-fleece, what could he do  
 With the burl of the fountains of air, buck and the flood of the wave?<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> In John Henry Newbolt, *My World as in My Time: Memoirs of Sir Henry Newbolt* (London: Faber & Faber, 1932), 194.

<sup>46</sup> Letter, June 8, 1901, in Donald E. Stafford ed., *The Selected Letters of Robert Bridges*, Vol. 1 (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983), 382.

<sup>47</sup> G. M. Hopkins, ‘The Wreck of the Deutschland’, in Robert Bridges ed., *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 2nd ed. (London: Humphrey Milford, 1930), 11–23 (16).

Both Yeats's and Hopkins' descriptions contain a metaphorical alignment between white foam on the sea and a sheep's fleece, and both are attempting to capture some of the erratic movement and noise of the sea. In doing so, they recruit a pattern of metrical arrangement that is decidedly different from the accentual-syllabic 'norm' of English poetry. Both poets are writing in long lines that unlike the lines in, say, 'The White Birds' are not resolvable into two shorter lines. Moreover, these lines contain an unusual mixture of interictic intervals: sometimes there is one syllable between stresses, sometimes two, sometimes three, and sometimes none. 'For all his dreadnought breast and braids of thew' is actually an iambic pentameter; so too, there is only one syllable between each stress in Yeats's 'for those that fled', 'new-washed fleece' and 'milky smoke'. In Yeats's lines there is a particularly high proportion of disyllabic stresses, 'were we days long or hours long in riding'. But we find this in Hopkins too: 'stirred from the rigging to save'. In some places three light syllables intervene between stresses: this, in fact, is what gives the unusual effect to 'wandering and milky smoke', and in Hopkins 'with a rope end round the man'. In some places stressed syllables jam up against stressed syllable with no relief: this produces one of Hopkins' signature tricks, a kind of eerie, even panicked, upswell of emotion, where one syllable cracks into the next. In the terrible sonnets, it tunes us in to despair's magnitude, its inevitability: 'pitched past pitch of grief'. Here it is effective mimetically to suggest the ferocity of the ship-wrecking storm: 'through the cobbled foam-fleece' and then instead of a light syllable, an exclamatory 'WHAT could he do'?

Robert Bridges was probably the only person before 1918 who read both of these poems. He approved of Yeats's work as something entirely new but, as is well known, pronounced himself shocked by Hopkins' 'presumptuous jugglery', and added that he wouldn't for any money read the poem again.<sup>48</sup> How do we make sense of this? Some of his objections must, of course, have been to the peculiarly

<sup>48</sup> Letter 38, August 21, 1877, in C. C. Abbott ed., *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 46.

maudlin and erotic subject matter of Hopkins' poem, handled with a degree of fussiness in strophe structures. But why did he find Hopkins presumptuous, while approving Yeats's similar-sounding lines so fulsomely? One answer is that Yeats has a better sense of syntactic decorum. Yeats's lines contain some metrically reinforcing but uncolloquial inversions of word order (verb-subject instead of subject-verb, for example) but are otherwise fairly simple; Hopkins is pushing the limits of language in all places at the same time: the drowning sailor's chest, by a queer and slightly grim punning metaphor, is like a 'dreadnought'; and instead of saying that his knotted muscles look like braids, the epithet is transferred, 'braids of them'. Where Yeats spells out the metaphor, and uses only easily legible noun compounds, 'whiter than new-washed fleece | Fled foam underneath us', Hopkins compresses everything, so that the adjective 'cobbled' modifies an already compact 'foam-fleece'. Joseph Feeney, in his 2013 study, says this is: 'An incongruous, brilliant, terse bisociation of cobblestones (hard, cold, and grey), foam (liquid and white), and lamb's wool (soft and warming)'.<sup>49</sup> But metaphors work by mapping one semantic field on to another, not by linking three separate things. Here the problem is driven primarily by the ambiguity of 'foam-fleece' which, in the context, has to be read as 'fleece-like foam', with 'foam' working as the compound's head. But this is abnormal, because in English noun compounds the second word is usually the head (so a 'foamflower' is a kind of flower, but a 'flowerpot' is a kind of pot). According to some linguists, it is in fact *because* the second word is grammatically more important that it is less stressed.<sup>50</sup> Here the logical conclusion is that 'cobbled' is a property of the foam (also seen as fleece-like), but the structure and stress-patterning of the phrase points to the possibility that 'cobbled' in fact modifies 'fleece' (after the pattern of 'cobbled riding-boots').

<sup>49</sup> Joseph J. Feeney, *The Playfulness of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 74.

<sup>50</sup> The rule is usually stated the other way round, so Guglielmo Cinque argues 'stress prominence in a phrase is a mere reflection of the depth of embedding', 'A Null Theory of Phrase and Compound Stress', *Linguistic Inquiry* 24.2 (Spring 1993), 239–97 (245).

In the first case, the double metaphor leads to ambiguity; in the second, there is a degree of redundancy.

When Yeats edited the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* in 1936, he strategically relegated Hopkins to the start, to his moment of composition and not publication: he described this as ‘putting him among the Victorians’ (*CL InteLex* 6289).<sup>51</sup> And the introduction manages an anxiety of contagion, if not quite of influence, by insisting on an enormous gulf between Hopkins’ generation and Yeats’s own.

I read Gerard Hopkins with great difficulty, I cannot keep my attention fixed for more than a few minutes; I suspect a bias born when I began to think. He is typical of his generation where most opposed to mine. His meaning is like some faint sound that strains the ear, comes out of words, passes to and fro between them, goes back into words, his manner a last development of poetical diction. My generation began that search for hard positive subject matter, still a predominant purpose. (*OBMV* xxxix)

This, of course, is a bravura rewriting of literary history. When Yeats began to think and write, he sounded quite a lot like Hopkins, and his early poetry shares much of the slackness of both subject-matter and syllable count that he decries. It was Pound’s generation, not Yeats’s, who fetishized ‘hard positive subject matter’. In fact, even Yeats’s rhetorical method here seems somewhat derivative of earlier modernist attacks on ‘messy’ or blurry Victorian writing. He attacks Hopkins for being a poet of blurry surfaces, inadequately referential, untethered in things. This is the complaint that Whitman brings against Tennyson for his ‘finest verbalism’.<sup>52</sup> And, at more length, it is the substance of Eliot’s argument with Swinburne’s ‘diffuseness’, a poetry that is ‘merely the hallucination of meaning’, where sound, image, and idea are blurred together into one thing.<sup>53</sup> We see the same kind of strategic distancing in a letter from three years earlier.

<sup>51</sup> Hopkins’ seven-page selection is sandwiched between Robert Bridges and William Ernest Henley (*OBMV* 17–23).

<sup>52</sup> Walt Whitman, *November Boughs* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1888), 65.

<sup>53</sup> T. S. Eliot, ‘Swinburne as Poet’, *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1920), 131–36.



My generation revolted against ‘poetical diction’ & Hopkins was of the generation that elaborated it. He had it in one form Swinburne in another. His whole life was a form of ‘poetic diction’. He brought his faint theatrical Catholicism to Ireland where it was mocked by the sons of peasants & perhaps died of the shock. (*CL InteLex* 5623)

What Yeats does here is to align the Victorian period with failures of both style and observation—an unnatural, ‘poetic’ diction slipping and sliding over its weakly observed visual content, in an ugly metre that suggests ‘hurried conversation’—and his own poetry with the modernist revolution that overturned them. It is an ingenious and persuasive bit of rhetorical rewriting, despite its heavy reliance on supposition (‘Hopkins would have disliked increase of realism’).

*The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* gives us a modernizing Yeats, but it also gives us a modernism without free verse. It is an intelligent piece of literary positioning, less *arrière-garde* than cannily retrospective. Imagism’s semantic clarity and visual objectivity are separated from its prosodic solution, which Yeats had never liked. In 1914 Pound had claimed Yeats as a slightly prickly associate for the Imagists: ‘Mr. Yeats is a symbolist, but he has written *des Images* as have a good many poets before him; so that is nothing against him, and he has nothing against them, at least so far as I know—except what he calls their “devil’s metres”’.<sup>54</sup> The year before, Yeats had been even more direct in a letter to Harriet Monroe, praising Pound’s vigorous creativity ‘although I do not really like with my whole soul the metrical experiments he had made for you’ (*CL InteLex* 2284). The mild modifier ‘really’ does little to qualify Yeats’s confident and instinctive preference for metrical over free verse; as Warwick Gould puts it, in these encounters with Pound, we see ‘the underlying robustness of Yeats’s own artistic self-assurance’.<sup>55</sup> But it was to be another twenty years before he found the discursive rhetoric to propose his own brand of modern poetry, retaining the bits of Poundian modernism that he liked, while getting rid of the parts he

<sup>54</sup> Ezra Pound, review of *Responsibilities*, *Poetry* 2.4 (May 1914), 64–69 (65).

<sup>55</sup> Warwick Gould, ‘The Unknown Masterpiece’, in Andrew Gibson ed., *Pound in Multiple Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 40–92 (45).

didn't. Once again, he does this by alignment and association—and some rhetorical subterfuge. If the problem with Hopkins is that his poetry in the end is evanescent and meaningless, the problem with free verse, the anthology argues, is that it is prose.

When the editor at Oxford University Press saw Yeats's provisional list of selections, he was 'perplexed' by the free verse poem intended to sit at the anthology's front, like a kind of advertisement: 'One entry perplexed me, and no-one here can help. "Pater: The Mona Lisa"—*was* there such a poem?'<sup>56</sup> Critics have tended to take Yeats's resetting of Pater into free verse at face value: Robert Rubin, for example, argues that 'in presenting the selection as rhythmic *vers libre*, Yeats defamiliarizes Pater's words and challenges readers to re-examine them'.<sup>57</sup> And almost everyone who has written about Yeats's free verse poem agrees that it is, in fact, *in* free verse: a 'rearrangement'<sup>58</sup> or 'recasting'<sup>59</sup> or 'reformat[ing] of Pater's lush prose as a free verse poem'.<sup>60</sup> In fact, Yeats's poem is not very like most free verse poems. It begins:

She is older than the rocks among which she sits;  
Like the Vampire,  
She has been dead many times,  
And learned the secrets of the grave;  
And has been a diver in deep seas,  
And keeps their fallen day about her ... (OBMV 1)

<sup>56</sup> Charles Williams to W. B. Yeats, 11 October 1935, quoted in John Stallworthy, 'Yeats as Anthologist', in A. Norman Jeffares and K. G. W. Cross eds., *In Excited Reverie: A Centenary Tribute to William Butler Yeats, 1865–1939* (London: Macmillan, 1965), 171–92 (180–81). On Charles Williams work for Oxford University Press on this anthology, see below, 327–35.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Alden Rubin, 'Some Heroic Discipline: William Butler Yeats and the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011, 65.

<sup>58</sup> Daniel Albright's word in *Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and the Science of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 64.

<sup>59</sup> Roy Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life II, The Arch Poet, 1935–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 556.

<sup>60</sup> Jerome McGann, *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 81.

Some of its lines, such as ‘And learned the secrets of the grave’, and ‘And tinged the eyelids and the hands’, are perfectly well-formed lines of iambic tetrameter, and the relentless anaphora and grammatical parallelism are highly rhetorical. If Poundian free verse shrugs off all forms of decorative and ornamental ‘poeticism’, to become *more* economical and sparing even than prose, Pater’s prose is aspiring to the condition of musical verse. Most tellingly of all, Yeats’s line endings do little more than mark out the boundaries between intonational phrases or syntactic units. Rather than being used to create *additional* and unexpected breaks in sense or sound—this form of counterpoint being free verse’s most important semantic tool—the line breaks are more or less redundant, flaccid echoes of an underlying structure. But this, undoubtedly, is Yeats’s polemical purpose. If free verse is something that can be effected after the fact, by a mechanical process of relineation, then it really *is* no more than the ‘chopped-up prose’ its common-sense detractors claim. And by rendering a famous bit of Victorian purple prose into Poundian free verse, Yeats counters two important tenets of modernism in poetry. The first is the historical claim that modernism begin in (and not before) 1910, after Pound had arrived in London; the idea, in Eliot’s words, that ‘the *point de repère* of modern poetry ... is the group denominated “imagists” in London about 1910’.<sup>61</sup> The second is the connection forged by Pound between plain style and ‘direct focus on the thing’ and a break with traditional metres. (That there is no necessary connection between these two principles is illustrated by Wordsworth’s Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, which calls for ‘the language of prose’ to be allied to metrical regularity.)<sup>62</sup> Instead, Yeats takes a sardonic tone towards *both* Paterian aestheticism and free verse. His introduction describes aestheticism flippantly as the moment when poets ‘said to one another over their black coffee—a recently

<sup>61</sup> T. S. Eliot, ‘American Literature and the American Language’, 58.

<sup>62</sup> In the 1800 version of a heavily reworked passage, Wordsworth argues that ‘not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose’, in Stephen Gill ed., *William Wordsworth: 21st Century Oxford Authors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 63.

imported fashion—"We must purify poetry of all that is not poetry" (*OBMV* ix). Inevitably, it was self-limiting and 'in 1900 everybody got down off his stilts; henceforth nobody drank absinthe with his black coffee; nobody went mad; nobody committed suicide; nobody joined the Catholic church ...' (xi). Rather than being an attempt to rescue Pater for modernism, then, I would suggest that this relinication was a clever attempt to make 'vers libre' seem an embarrassing French affectation, as dated and adolescent as absinthe and black coffee.

Yeats's 1936 introduction to the Oxford anthology, presenting a decidedly slanted and polemical vision of modern poetry as a whole, needs to be read alongside the 1937 'General Introduction to my Work', which performs the same summary job on the poet's *own* work. The two prose essays are companion pieces. But where the anthology is playful or elliptical in its dismissal of free verse, the 'General Introduction' comes out straightforwardly in favour of traditional metres. In this famous passage, Yeats shows an acute awareness of what modern linguistics calls the syntax-prosody interface.

It was a long time before I had made a language to my liking; I began to make it when I discovered some twenty years ago that I must seek, not as Wordsworth thought, words in common use, but a powerful and passionate syntax, and a complete coincidence between period and stanza. Because I need a passionate syntax for passionate subject-matter I compel myself to accept those traditional metres that have developed with the language. Ezra Pound, Turner, Lawrence wrote admirable free verse, I could not. (*E&I* 521–22)

Twenty years before 1937 is 1917: the year after the Easter uprising, the year before the end of the Great War, and the year in which *Prufrock and Other Observations* was published. This is a very epigonal 'beginning' for a poet who published his first poem in the 1880s, but perhaps Yeats is correct to date his mature style to this point in time. And Yeats makes it clear that his own style is founded not on any specialty of lexis, or even metrical ingeniousness, but on its *syntax*. It is to serve the goal of a 'passionate syntax' that he is forced to 'accept' traditional metres; the decision, he implies, is made for him. What exactly 'passionate syntax' consists in is harder to say.

From comments made elsewhere, it seems clear that Yeats does not mean a mimetic groping after spoken language with its hesitations and repairs; in an unpublished 1927 notebook, he is negative about Browning's attempt to give 'an impression of reality from ejaculations and suppressions' for these are 'all an avoidance of the expression of passion'.<sup>63</sup> But if a passionate syntax is not Browning's patina of spoken language, nor is it to be found in the meditative mourning at-one-remove of *In Memoriam*, pronounced 'detestable because of its syntax'. It is associated with 'common personal speech' and 'profound feeling' and, as the 'Introduction to My Plays' adds, with the ear rather than the eye—that is, not with the phanopoeic poetry of Imagism. 'I have spent my life in clearing out of poetry every phrase written for the eye, and bringing all back to syntax that is for ear alone' (*E&I* 529). In particular, this kind of speech seems to be associated with self-talk, 'whatever language comes most naturally when we soliloquise, as I do all day long'. Yeats's focus on poetry as soliloquy rather than communication, as speech free from any particular speech *act*, is reminiscent of J. S. Mill's belief that 'all poetry is of the nature of soliloquy': a kind of language which may afterwards be repeated in front of an audience, but which owes its essential nature to its hermeticism.<sup>64</sup> By soliloquy, however, he doesn't

<sup>63</sup> Quoted by Thomas Parkinson, *W. B. Yeats: The Later Poetry*, 185.

<sup>64</sup> J. S. Mill continues 'What we have said to ourselves we may tell to others afterwards; what we have said or done in solitude we may voluntarily reproduce when we know that other eyes are upon us. But no trace of consciousness that, any eyes are upon us, must be visible in the work itself'. See 'Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties', *Dissertations and Discussions*, 2nd ed. (1867) and reprints, I, 51–76 at 58. The passage occurs in the extended discussion of the difference between poetry and eloquence: 'eloquence is *heard*, poetry in *overheard*' (57). The title of the essay is footnoted, '*Monthly Repository*, January and October 1833'. The essay had been republished from 'What Is Poetry?' *Monthly Repository*, 7 (Jan., 1833), 60–70; and 'The Two Kinds of Poetry', *ibid.*, 7 (Oct., 1833), 714–24. Both had been signed: 'Antiquus'. See John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger (eds.), *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume I—Autobiography and Literary Essays* [1824] (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 349. From John Butler Yeats's unpublished 'Memoirs', it becomes clear that he thought himself a 'disciple' of Mill: it is therefore probable that *Dissertations and Discussions* would have been among the family's books. See William M. Murphy, *Prodigal Father: The Life of John Butler Yeats, 1839–1922* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), *passim*, esp. 65.

seem to mean a rational, even philosophical form of cogitation and meditation; instead he associates himself with the 'angry' and 'wild' thoughts of 'mad old slum women ... denouncing and remembering'. In fact, it is because this language is impassioned, personal, and wild that it needs the corrective strictness of traditional form: to write a passionate syntax in free verse would risk being sloppy, egotistical, and dull: 'If I wrote of personal love or sorrow in free verse, or in any rhythm that left it unchanged, amid all its accident, I would be full of self-contempt because of my egotism and indiscretion, and foresee the boredom of my reader' (*E&I* 522). This word 'accidence' take us back to the very beginning of the essay, where Yeats contrasts the work of the poet with that of the novelist. 'A poet writes always of his personal life, in his finest work out of its tragedies, whatever it be, remorse, lost love or mere loneliness; he never speaks directly as to someone at the breakfast table, there is always a phantasmagoria'. As a result, Yeats goes on to say, the poet is 'most himself' when he is also least himself: 'he is never the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast; he has been re-born as an idea, something intended, complete. A novelist might describe his accident, his incoherence, he must not, he is more type than man, more passion than type'. This idea—of a poetry that is impersonal *because of*, rather than despite, its intense origin in the personal life of the poet—is obviously reminiscent of Eliot's formulation in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' that 'poetry is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality'.<sup>65</sup>

This argument via antithesis, where two opposites are reconciled to produce a tensile whole, is reminiscent of T. S. Eliot; so many of his essays work through an act of Hegelian synthesis. For Eliot, the mythical method is not a way of paying attention to the past but 'of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history', and the 'most individual' parts of a writer's work those 'in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most

<sup>65</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *The Sacred Wood*, 42–53 (52–53).

vigorously'.<sup>66</sup> Eliot also applied this line of thought to form, most notably in his 1917 essay on 'Vers Libre', which finds that so-called free verse is anything but: 'freedom is only truly freedom when it appears against the background of an artificial limitation'.<sup>67</sup> Most of all, he pursued it in his own work, writing a poetry of undeniably modern content and language in hard, classical forms. The kinship between Eliot and Yeats on this point seems obvious, and yet Yeats failed (or chose not) to recognize it. His introduction describes Eliot as technically competent in a completely classical way: 'He is an Alexander Pope, working without apparent imagination, producing his effects by a rejection of all rhythms and metaphors used by the more popular romantics rather than by discovery of his own, this rejection giving his work an unexaggerated plainness that has the effect of novelty' (*OBMV* xxi). In some ways, he presents Eliot as Hopkins' opposite: the one baroque, eccentric, ornamental; the other harshly and tediously plain, writing a monotonous poetry without any special subject matter where 'Tristram and Isoult were not a more suitable theme than Paddington Railway Station' (*E&I* 499).<sup>68</sup> This is not literally quite true, of course: the story of Tristram and Isoult appears in several places in Eliot's poetry, via its Wagnerian mediation as *Tristan und Isolde*, while Paddington station appears not once. Just as with Hopkins, the brittle criticism papers over an uneasy and significant anxiety of relation. For is this 'unexaggerated plainness', or the use of traditional form for its own sake, not exactly what Yeats claims in the 1937 General Introduction to be doing himself? In describing the productive counterpoint between strict form (the five notional stresses of iambic pentameter) and the 'natural' speech pronunciation of the same words, he even uses the same ghostly metaphor as Eliot.

<sup>66</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'Ulysses, Order, and Myth', *The Dial* 75. 5 (November 1923), 480–83; 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *The Sacred Wood*, 42–53 (43).

<sup>67</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'Reflections on Vers Libre', *The New Statesman*, 3 March 1917, <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/culture/2013/05/t-s-eliot-reflections-vers-libre>

<sup>68</sup> Stravinsky even judged that Wagner's opera 'must have been one of the most passionate experiences in his life', in *Themes and Episodes* (New York: Knopf, 1966), 125.

If I repeat the first line of *Paradise Lost* so as to emphasise its five feet I am among the folk singers—‘Of man’s first dísobédience and the frúit’, but speak it as I should I cross it with another emphasis, that of passionate prose—‘Of mán’s first disobédience and the frúit’, or ‘Of mán’s first dísobedience and the frúit’; the folk song is still there, but a ghostly voice, an unvariable possibility, an unconscious norm. What moves me and my hearer is a vivid speech that has no laws except that it must not exorcise the ghostly voice. I am awake and asleep, at my moment of revelation, self-possessed in self-surrender ...

Eliot’s essay on ‘Vers Libre’, published in 1917 (perhaps, not so coincidentally, the date Yeats chooses for his new beginning) also uses the metaphor of a ghost throughout. His source is Hamlet. ‘The ghost of some simple metre should lurk behind the arras in even the “freest” verse; to advance menacingly as we doze, and withdraw as we rouse’.

In broadest outline, then, Yeats began as a late Victorian prosodic innovator, wrestling with long lines, heavy alliteration, and an accentual-syllabic poetry tipping into accentual lines alone, as a kind of Hopkins. He ended up sloughing off these habits: by the time we get to, *The Tower* (1928), not only is Yeats’s versification more ‘regular’ but it is also, in a stronger sense, like Eliot’s ‘more classical’. Yeats’s depiction of Eliot as ‘Popian’ is curious, I think, and leads to a fresh point of triangulation with Pound. For without Pound’s aggressive editing of the 1920–1921 draft, *The Waste Land* would have been much *more* Popian: Yeats is describing Eliot’s initial instincts for that poem, which he could not have known, more accurately than its final form. In his own case, modernization meant accepting many of Pound’s *dicta* about visual observation, while repudiating his metrical experiments. His poetry from the mid-teens onwards gives brilliantly detailed flashes of other places and times, like ‘that dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea’ in ‘Byzantium’, as well as admitting realistic detail into a poetic landscape at once more everyday and more specified than the ‘dim’ worlds of *The Wanderings of Oisín*. Beginning, perhaps, with the description in ‘Adam’s Curse’ of going down on marrow-bones to ‘scrub a kitchen pavement’ (*VP* 204) this new poetry finds space for henwives, a ‘crowded London shop’, ‘porter drinkers’ randy laughter’, and good fellows shuffling



cards ‘in an old bawn’.<sup>69</sup> As he admitted more mundane content, Yeats also became more precise about a line’s syllable count and more artful in producing varied effects within a fixed grid. To ‘The Song of the Happy Shepherd’ or the first part of ‘The Wanderings of Oisín’, we might compare the more metrically uniform, while internally varied, effect of lines like these: now there is no regular or repeated coincidence between metrical positions and word boundaries.

In pity for man’s darkening thought  
He walked that room and issued thence  
In Galilean turbulence ... (*VP* 437)

Some of these techniques he learned, like the younger generation of modernists, by study of Elizabethan and Jacobean writers. In 1912, he read Grierson’s edition of Donne, like everybody else, and he wrote to Grierson to thank him. Here, as in the 1937 General Introduction, we see the equation of passion with precision: ‘Poems that I could not understand, or could but vaguely understand are now clear & I notice that the more precise & learned the thought the greater the beauty, the passion. The intricacy & subtlety of his imagination are the length & depth of the furrow made by his passion’ (*CL IntelLex* 2015). But, in fact, he had been ahead of the fashion. In 1908, he was already advising, in language curiously reminiscent of Eliot’s essay on Philip Massinger: ‘I am always telling young writers here that even Shelley & Wordsworth are too near us in mood & manner to be safe models. We should all go back to Spenser & Donne’ (*CL IntelLex* 894).<sup>70</sup> Of course, when he *himself* was a young writer, back in the 1880s and 1890s, Donne had not been one of his models.

The focus of this essay has been on Yeats’s metres. But it is not as a prosodist that Yeats was an innovator. I have said that his re-embrace of traditional metres was an act of modernism, a conscious regression, and yet it was also a shared action: Eliot and Pound were already imitating Gautier’s ‘hard’ metres in the mid-teens, to

<sup>69</sup> ‘Vacillation’ IV (*VP* 501); ‘Under Ben Bulben’ (*VP* 640); ‘The Tower’ (*VP* 411).

<sup>70</sup> Eliot writes: ‘A good poet will usually borrow from authors remote in time, or alien in language, or diverse in interest’, ‘Philip Massinger’, *The Sacred Wood*, 112–30 (114).

correct an Imagism that had gone too far.<sup>71</sup> What is innovative, and distinctive, is his focus on the relationship between prosody and syntax, both of which he puts under serious constraint.

Contemporary linguistics has suggested that traditional poetry (across languages) is a kind of speech where prosody outranks syntax.<sup>72</sup> In other words, a sentence like ‘Him who disobeys me disobeys’, which, as Ezra Pound noted, is not a felicitous English sentence in itself, is acceptable in *Paradise Lost* because it fits the prosodic constraints of Miltonic blank verse.<sup>73</sup> (In fact, contingent on using the word ‘disobey’, Milton’s may be the *only* sentence that fits the metre.) Imagism’s insistence that poetry be as well-written as prose can then be understood, in linguistic terms, as constraint reranking. Now, the free verse poets claimed, prosody should *never* be more important than syntax. The uniqueness of Yeats’s achievement—and its difficulty (as, I think, his ‘restless’ bouts of revision illustrate)—was in agreeing always to put natural syntax first while *also* working within the constraints of traditional metres. This makes the kind of ‘containment’ that metre offers rather different: instead of pouring a flexible material (sentences where word order is flexible, where contractions are possible, where lexical archaism is allowed, etc.) into a metrical shape, Yeats insists on fitting normal, contemporary speech into the same pattern, tessellating words and position. The idea of rewriting *Lyrical Ballads* so that the poems include no scansion-enabling syntactic archaisms will give a sense of how difficult this is, in practice. And the possibility that the procedure could go too far also seems a real danger; where Henry James managed to drive his novels, in their final New York Edition, to magisterial befuddlement, Yeats was, at times, in danger of revising towards the banal. In a BBC recording of his poems, for example, we are told that he condemned the line ‘That is no country for old men. The young ...’ as ‘the worst piece of syntax I ever wrote’, proposing instead the syntactically easier,

<sup>71</sup> Pound describes his sense that the ‘dilutation of vers libre’ had gone ‘too far’ in ‘Harold Monro’, published in Eliot’s *Criterion* 11.45 (July 1932), 581–92.

<sup>72</sup> See Chris Golston and Tomas Riad, ‘The Phonology of Classical Greek Meter’, *Linguistics* 38.1 (2000), 99–167 (103).

<sup>73</sup> Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (New York: New Directions, 1934), 35.

but workaday alternative ‘Old men should quit a country where the young’.<sup>74</sup> The second version is not only more cohesive (it gets rid of the deixis to an unspecified referent), but, curiously, it is more metrically regular, in fitting the syntactic clause to the line, rather than breaking unevenly, after eight syllables.

No one can regret that Yeats did not live to see ‘Old men should quit’ into print. But the revisionary instinct, which is to replace a copula with a finite verb, reflects Yeats’s belief that passionate syntax involved the use of finite verbs to predicate something or inquire about predication. It is remarkable how confidently Yeats’s mature poems propose, declare, and inquire, often confining their sentences within the small orbit of the line. ‘God grant a blessing on this tower and cottage’, ‘I have met them at the close of day’, ‘How can we know the dancer from the dance?’ ‘What can I but enumerate old themes’, ‘We were the last romantics’, ‘What’s water but the generated soul?’<sup>75</sup> Stanza structures allow more complex propositions to be developed, the subordinate clauses nested within two bars of white space. Think, for example, of how Yeats manages a complex question in the fifth stanza of ‘Among School Children’, placing his subject ‘what youthful mother’ in line one, the main verb ‘would think her son’ in line five, and its complement in line seven ‘a compensation for ...’ His most dramatic and successful revisions of the early poems are often, primarily, syntactic reworkings. Take, for example, the heavily rewritten ‘The Sorrow of Love’. Yeats had originally (1891–1892) built the second and third stanzas up agglutinatively, starting with ‘and then you came with those red mournful lips’, adding three end-stopped noun phrases in qualification, before turning back, chiasmatically, to the sparrows:

And then you came with those red mournful lips,  
And with you came the whole of the world’s tears.

<sup>74</sup> J. C. C. Mays gives the history in ‘Coleridge and Yeats: The Romantic Voice’, *Variants* 6 (2007), 65–84 (76).

<sup>75</sup> From, respectively: the first lines of ‘A Prayer on Going into my House’ (*VP* 371) and ‘Easter, 1916’ (*VP* 391); the last line of ‘Among School Children’ (*VP* 446); line 9 of ‘The Circus Animals’ Desertion’ (*VP* 629); line 41 and line 8 of ‘Cool Park and Ballylee’ (*VP* 490–91).

And all the sorrows of her labouring ships,  
 And all the burden of her myriad years.  
 And now the sparrows warring in the eaves,  
 The crumbling moon, the white stars in the sky,  
 And the loud chanting of the unquiet leaves,  
 Are shaken with earth's old and weary cry. (*VP* 120)

Just as 'came' is a weak verb to support the whole verbal action of the second stanza, so 'are shaken' is delayed and indefinite in the third.<sup>76</sup> The impression given by the 'then'/'now' partition, and the anaphoric 'ands' is flat and languid; the casual relationship between the woman with red lips and the disenchantment of the last stanza is not pursued. Something happens to sour the contemplative plenitude of the first stanza, but *what* is not exactly stated. The 1925 revised version is more precise in every respect.<sup>77</sup> The vague Homeric flavour of 'labouring ships' and 'myriad years' is explained; finite verbs are used with more purpose; and the boxed-in stanzas of the first version are broken down.<sup>78</sup> In the final version the source of sorrow is made clear by the repetition of 'arose':

A girl arose that had red mournful lips  
 And seemed the greatness of the world in tears,  
 Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships  
 And proud as Priam murdered with his peers;

Arose, and on the instant clamouring eaves,  
 A climbing moon upon an empty sky,  
 And all that lamentation of the leaves,  
 Could but compose man's image and his cry.

<sup>76</sup> Roman Jakobson's slightly longwinded analysis of the two versions agrees that the 1925 version 'contains a higher number of finites and, at the same time, exhibits a greater grammatical uniformity in their use', *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*, ed. by Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 79–107 (91).

<sup>77</sup> For Louis MacNeice, this is not an advantage: 'But perhaps this poem ought to be languid'. *The Poetry of W. B. Yeats* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 70–71.

<sup>78</sup> Warwick Gould discusses *why* Yeats might have made the Trojan frame of reference clearer, 'Writing the Life of the Text', 25.

This poem is so substantially rewritten that the metrical changes are not simple replacements. Once again, however, it is noticeable that slacker versifying in the original version, which contains several hypermetrical lines, and others that require metrical stress on syllables unstressed in normal speech ('And the loud chanting of the unquiet eaves' is not virtuosic), is replaced in the final form by clean, more classical iambic pentameter.

Yeats's use of verbs could not be more different from Pound's. Imagist poems are, as syntax, often little more than rubble. 'In a Station of a Metro' is an elliptical conjoining of two apparently unrelated things, a kind of copula without an 'are' or 'seem like' to specify the relationship. Instead of a verb, bibliographic coding—a colon or semi-colon, in different printings—is required to provide the pivot of meaning between two lines.<sup>79</sup> And this is true not only of Pound's early experiments in Imagism; he is a poet who seems, throughout his career, to have had a neglectful or aberrant relationship with finite verbs, preferring instead to heap up noun phrases. Canto 1 begins 'And then went down to the ship': *who* is not specified until line three, when 'we' arrives.<sup>80</sup> This was, of course, a somewhat theorized and conscious activity. Pound's belief in the value of 'superposition' is a commitment to *not* making sentences, in merely allowing various charged bits of textual matter to lie suggestively beside each other.<sup>81</sup> Eliot does not shy away so completely from the finite verb, but his poetry repeatedly hedges and qualifies, modifying the apparently confident proposition ('April is the cruelest month') with hanging participle phrases ('breeding ... mixing ... stirring ...'), turning from the indicative to the conditional mood ('Let us go', 'And how should I presume'), or professorially standing back in self-critique ('That was a way of putting it—not very satisfactory').<sup>82</sup>

<sup>79</sup> In *Poetry* 2.1 (April 1913), the poem is printed with a colon at the end of the first line; a semi-colon was introduced in *Lustra* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1916).

<sup>80</sup> Ezra Pound, Canto 1, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 7.

<sup>81</sup> On superposition, see Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska* (London: John Lane, 1916), 103.

<sup>82</sup> This aversion from the indicative is seen even in Eliot's epigraphs: 'o quam te memorem virgo' in 'La Figlia Che Piange' (the subjunctive), published, like 'The

It is because of the extraordinary propositional density of his poetry that Yeats is so quotable, so memorable. In an era of writers in both prose and poetry who avoided direct propositions, embracing instead the deferral of anaphora (as in the passage from Pater), the ambiguity of the omitted verb, or the sinuous hesitancy of subordination, Yeats's active lines—active in the strong sense of being propelled by active, finite verbs—are unique. This was something that W. H. Auden recognized, in a backhanded way, when he arraigned the recently dead poet for being excessively rhetorical, seducing us with 'the fallacious belief that art ever makes anything happen'.<sup>83</sup> But this drive to clarity was also something that Yeats had to learn. It is achieved by highly active syntax and traditional metres, and also by a pretty close fit between the syntactic unit and the prosodic unit. A relatively high proportion of punctuation marks and phrase boundaries occur at the end of the line, but 'complete coincidence' is avoided: Yeats did not want the obviousness of Pater's free-verse 'Mona Lisa', where lines do nothing other than mark boundaries between phrases.<sup>84</sup> By keeping the syntactic and the verse unit close, but just slightly off-kilter, Yeats forged a 'natural' style capable, at times, of pointed metrical artifice. By refusing to write free verse he also, ironically, enjoyed a liberty with finite verbs and complete statements that is unique in twentieth-century English poetry.

Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', in *Prufrock and Other Observations* (London: The Egoist Press, 1917).

<sup>83</sup> W. H. Auden, 'The Public v. the Late Mr. William Butler Yeats' [1939], in Edward Mendelson ed., *W. H. Auden: Prose, Vol. 2, 1939–1948* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002), 3–7 (7). And in the elegy, 'For poetry makes nothing happen', 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats', in Edward Mendelson ed., *W. H. Auden: Selected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1979), 80–83 (82).

<sup>84</sup> In Yeats's drafts, we very often find a list of complete phrases running down the page, connected, like the free-verse 'Mona Lisa', through anaphora: see, e.g. the draft for the 'honey of generation' stanza in 'Among School Children', in Richard J. Finneran et. al. eds., *The Tower (1928): Manuscript Materials* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), 369.



## EASTER 1916<sup>1</sup>

Denis Donoghue

### I

THE SECOND CHAPTER OF *Ulysses* has Stephen Dedalus teaching in Mr. Deasy's school in Dalkey. The class is reading Milton's 'Lycidas', but Stephen also permits himself a reverie about historical facts:

Had Pyrrhus not fallen by a beldam's hand in Argos or Julius Caesar not been knifed to death. They are not to be thought away. Time has branded them and fettered they are lodged in the room of the infinite possibilities they have ousted. But can those have been possible seeing that they never were? Or was that only possible which came to pass?<sup>2</sup>

In the days before the Easter Rising there were three possibilities before the initiates: one, that a Rising would not take place at all, or would be indefinitely postponed; two, that it would take place on Easter Sunday; three, that it would take place on Easter Monday. Of these, the third came to pass, ousting the other two. That third one is

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [dd1@nyu.edu](mailto:dd1@nyu.edu)? Quite apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

<sup>2</sup> James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. by Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior (New York: Random House, 1986), 21.



not to be thought away. John Bruton and others wish that it had not come to pass; but that is a different matter, their sentiment belongs to the subjunctive mood of desire.<sup>3</sup>

## II

I begin with a letter from Yeats, on 7 January 1915, to Lennox Robinson about Robinson's play *The Dreamers*, which the Abbey had accepted with pleasure. It was a play about Robert Emmet's attempted Rising, in the days between 16 and 25 July 1803. The only question was whether it would be directed by Patrick Wilson or by Robinson. That was not a contentious issue: in the event, Wilson directed it. Yeats ended his letter by saying:

I believe your play will be the making of us in Dublin this Spring. I imagine it will have many revivals. And with Pierce and McNeil flirting with the gallows tree, will be almost topical.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> John Bruton (b. 1947) was the Fine Gael Irish Taoiseach, 1994–1997, and was deeply involved in the Northern Irish Peace Process leading to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. First elected to Dáil Éireann in 1969 at the age of 22, he was later Finance Minister. Before being appointed EU Commission Head of Delegation in the United States in 2004, he was a member of the Convention that drafted the proposed European Constitution, which was signed in Rome on 29 October 2004. In the run-up to the centenary of the Easter Rising, he spoke on a number of occasions, including in an RTE-sponsored series on 'Reflecting the Rising', at the Mansion House, Dublin, on 28 March 2016. He followed P. S. O'Hegarty's argument of 1924, and claimed that the 'Proclamation and what he call[ed] the "rebellion of 1916" left no room for compromise because the Republic was proclaimed already to exist, once declared outside the GPO, and to exist as a "Sovereign Independent State", of 32 counties' and so was a "recipe for endless conflict", showing little respect for 'the seriousness, or the reasoning powers, of those who had signed the Ulster Covenant, only five years previously'. If characterized as Ireland's 'Foundation Event', the Easter Rising did not accurately reflect what the Republic of Ireland was and had become as a result of the hard work of realistic politicians down the years. See <http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/john-bruton-his-full-speech-denouncing-the-easter-rising-1-7300513>. See also below, 60–61 n. 24.

<sup>4</sup> *CL IntelLex* 2576. I leave uncorrected Yeats's misspelling of the names Eoin MacNeill and Patrick Pearse.

So Yeats in 1915, six months into the Great War, planned to put on in the Abbey a play sympathetic to Robert Emmet, and he warmed to it as 'the making of us' in the Spring. In January 1915, there was much talk of Home Rule and whether or not, suspended for the duration of the War, it would indeed be revived when the War was over. Some thought the War would be over by Christmas, so the question of Home Rule was current. But Dublin in 1915 hardly seemed a fitting place for an insurrectionist play. Yeats's reference to Eoin MacNeill is another oddity. It would not have been a surprise to Lennox Robinson or anyone else to hear that Pádraig Pearse had been flirting with the gallows-tree: that was common knowledge from his speeches and essays. Yeats shared a platform with him in Brunswick Street on 17 November 1914, when they addressed the students of the Trinity College Gaelic Society and he listened while Pearse spoke, as he was expected to speak, of Emmet, Tone, and Mitchel. But Eoin MacNeill had a different reputation. He was a respected nationalist, but he was not given to provocative speeches. Yeats's letter to Robinson makes a small quandary, which we may put aside for the moment.

The remote origin of the Easter Rising is not a complex question: there are several possibilities. We might choose 1795, the founding of the Orange Order, the risings of 1798 and 1803, January 1, 1801 when the Act of Union of Great Britain and Ireland came into force, 1836 when the Ancient Order of Hibernians was founded in New York, 1858 the Irish Republican Brotherhood, 1864 the unveiling of the O'Connell monument in Dublin, 1867 the Fenian Rising, 1884 the founding of the Gaelic Athletic Association, 1893 the Gaelic League, 1907 Sinn Fein, John Devoy and the moneyed American connection. More immediate causes would include the Dublin lock-out in 1913, Pearse's speech at the graveside of O'Donovan Rossa in August 1915, the threat of conscription from 1915 onward. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill of 1886 was rejected by the House of Commons, but even his introduction of it caused riots in Belfast and the death of twelve people. His second attempt, in 1893, was passed by the Commons but rejected by the Lords.

But the Parliament Act of 18 August 1911 made a dramatic difference: the power of the Lords to thwart a bill of Commons was limited to two years. Edward Carson, leader of the Unionists in the North, saw the significance of the Act at once and he revealed plans, on 23 September 1911, for a provisional government to take power in Ulster in the event of Home Rule. The Parliament Act was not put on the statute books out of any belated affection for Home Rule but to ensure that the Lords could no longer defeat a budget as they had defeated Lloyd George's in November 1909. Still, the Act could be used to facilitate a Home Rule Bill, and that is how Asquith used it when he introduced his Bill in the Commons on 11 April 1912. The third reading of it in the Commons was carried on 16 January 1913, but, defeated in the House of Lords a fortnight later. It passed again in the Commons on 7 July 1913 and was again rejected by the Lords on 15 July.

As early as February 1912, Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, and Andrew Bonar Law were conspiring to exclude Ulster—whatever that word denoted, nine counties or less—from any Home Rule Bill. On 9 April 1912, Bonar Law pledged British Unionist support for any resistance the Protestant Unionists in the North would bring forward against Home Rule. He also made a fiery speech to the same end at Blenheim Castle on 29 July 1912. On 28 September 1912, nearly a quarter-of-a-million northern Unionists signed a Covenant to resist Home Rule by any available means. On 16 January 1913, the third reading of Asquith's Home Rule Bill was carried in the Commons, but a few days later was defeated in the Lords. This sequence was repeated in mid-July. Inevitably, the idea of excluding Protestant Unionism from Home Rule gained momentum. The Ulster Volunteer Force was founded on 31 January 1913 with one aim, to defeat Home Rule. On 11 August, King George V urged Asquith to exclude the North from any such bill. On 24 September, the Ulster Unionist Council approved a plan by which the provisional government would take power in the event of Home Rule being enacted.

Meanwhile in Dublin, James Connolly and David Houston met by arrangement in Rev. R. M. Gwynn's rooms in Trinity College.

Dismayed by the failure of the Dublin workers in their conflict with employers in 1913, they established the Irish Citizen Army on November 19, 1913. Eoin MacNeill, in response to the setting up of the U.V.F., wrote an article in *An Claidheamb Soluis* of 1 November 1913, calling for the creation of an Irish Volunteer Force, not to do battle with the U.V.F. but to make sure that the British Government would play fair by Ireland as a whole. The response to MacNeill's call was immediate and remarkable: the Irish Volunteers was formed on 25 November 1913. By the following May, 75,000 men had joined, by September the number had increased to 180,000. On 10 June 1914 John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, demanded that his nominees be co-opted onto the provisional committee of the Volunteers, a demand reluctantly accepted a week later. Great Britain declared war on the central powers on 4 August 1914. On 20 September at Woodenbridge Redmond urged the Volunteers to be prepared to fight on England's side.<sup>5</sup> The vast majority of them were; the remnant, about 11,000, stayed with MacNeill. 'The issue between Mr. Redmond and ourselves', MacNeill said, 'is clear and simple. It is this, whether the Irish Volunteers are pledged to the cause of Ireland, of all Ireland, and of Ireland only, or are likewise bound to serve the Imperial Government in defence of the British Empire'.<sup>6</sup> His objects were to save Home Rule and to prevent Partition. But Yeats may have construed MacNeill's calling the Volunteers into existence, and his speech against Redmond, as amounting to treason, such that he might be deemed to be flirting, beside Pearse, with the gallows-tree.

The first convention of MacNeill's Irish Volunteers took place on 25 October 1914. Some of his Volunteers were members of the secret I.R.B. who hoped now to be able to drill openly in the Dublin mountains. They had a Rising in view, but MacNeill had not. In 1913, he was Professor of Early Irish History at University College, Dublin. His main publications were on early and medieval Irish culture. The documents that Father F. X. Martin published in *Irish*

<sup>5</sup> I.e., two days after the Home Rule Bill had reached the Statute Books as the Government of Ireland Act.

<sup>6</sup> F. X. Martin, *The Irish Volunteers 1913–1915: Recollections and Documents* (2013 reprint), 179.

*Historical Studies* in 1961, and his book on the Volunteers, show clearly what MacNeill had in mind. He compared the Irish Volunteers to a standing army in peacetime. Such an army is maintained at a high level of efficiency even though there is no foreseeable call for its fighting services: it should be well armed, fully trained, well disciplined; its services are otherwise ceremonial, almost decorative. But by the end of May 1915, the IRB members of the Volunteers, incited by Clanna-Gael in New York who met with the German Ambassador and asked his assistance toward an armed rising in Ireland, appointed a military committee, composed of Pearse, Plunkett, and Ceannt, to make plans for a Rising. This committee subsequently became the military council, with the addition of Clarke, MacDermott, Connolly, and MacDonagh. The council decided to plan the Rising for Easter Sunday, 23 April 1916. MacNeill was not consulted, he was not told of this plan, although he was still President of the Irish Volunteers and Chief of Staff of its military directory. By February 1916, there were rumors going around, probably carried to MacNeill by Bulmer Hobson. MacNeill then wrote a memorandum, mainly for Pearse's eyes, setting out the only conditions on which a rebel action in Ireland would be justified. MacNeill may have relied too heavily on the theology of canon law, in setting out the conditions:

(1) There must be a reasonably estimated prospect of success—a condition that did not obtain, he believed, in February 1916. If the Irish Volunteers were to resort to arms against the British Government, the Government would take steps to see that the U.V.F. would rise against the Volunteers, Irishmen killing Irishmen. 'If we can win our rights by being ready to fight for them without fighting', MacNeill wrote, 'then it is our duty to do so'. This condition may have seemed fine-spun to many of the Volunteers.

(2) The Volunteers must not be led into military action by poetic abstractions, figurative thought, or the rhetoric of Irish patriotic literature. 'There is no such person as Caitlín Ní Uallacháin or Roisín Dubh or the Sean-Bhean Bhocht, who is calling upon us to serve her'.

(3) 'The only possible basis for successful revolutionary action is deep and widespread popular discontent. We have only to look

around us in the streets to realize that no such condition exists in Ireland'. 'I wish it then to be clearly understood', MacNeill concluded this Memorandum of February 1916, by saying, 'that under present conditions I am definitely opposed to any proposal that may come forward involving insurrection'.<sup>7</sup>

MacNeill may have confused the issue by allowing talk of receiving arms from Germany to qualify his position. If the arms had come through safely and been received by secure Volunteer hands in Kerry, that might have made a difference. But the arms were not delivered. Worse, Roger Casement was arrested. So, on Easter Saturday, MacNeill quarreled with Pearse about being deceived and told him he would countermand the order to rise. Pearse answered that it was too late, MacNeill's order would not be obeyed. MacNeill then arranged to put a notice in the *Sunday Independent* ordering all Volunteers to stand down; no manoeuvres should take place on that day.

Pearse had indeed deceived MacNeill. The deceit was a ruse of war, so it admits a more than usually complex judgment: we may find such a judgment in one of Yeats's memoirs. In 1915 or thereabouts Yeats was starting to write the first draft of his autobiography. At one point he recalls, as if by compulsion, the antagonism he caused when he spoke after a lecture that Stephen Gwynn gave to a meeting of the Irish Literary Society in London on 27 October 1900. Yeats has forgotten some details, but he remembers clearly enough that 'I had described the dishonest figures of Swift's attack on Wood's half-pence and, making that my text, had argued that, because no sane man is permitted to lie knowingly, God made certain men mad, and that it was these men—daimon-possessed as I said—who, possessing truths of passion that were intellectual falsehoods, had created nations'.<sup>8</sup> Swift, and now—although Yeats does not mention him—Pearse, a fellow officer of MacNeill's Volunteers—became creators of nations, because of their daimon-driven lies.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. F. X. Martin: 'Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising', *Irish Historical Studies*, 12, 47 (March 1961), 234–40.

<sup>8</sup> *Mem* 84, Cf., *CL* 581, n. 1.

The result of the last-minute quarrel between MacNeill and Pearse was a botched Rising. MacNeill did not know that his Volunteers had been infiltrated by the I.R.B., and that further infiltration had resulted in the Military Council, a ginger group of insurgents hot for blood, even if it was their own blood. He himself was not in the I.R.B. In effect, the Easter Rising was called into being by three men, to begin with—Pearse, Plunkett, and Ceannt—with the addition of four. Even if the conditions of an insurrection had been fulfilled to MacNeill's satisfaction, he would have argued for a guerrilla war, with sporadic attacks here and there throughout the country to make administration of law impossible. He would not have favoured Pearse's plan of seizing a few large buildings in Dublin and holding them for as long as possible. Pearse and his colleagues decided to go ahead with a Rising, but they had to postpone it till Monday because of MacNeill's intervention.

On that day, as also on Easter Sunday, my uncle Séamus Ó Néill, a minor figure but not insignificant, was ready for action. He lived in Clonmel, where his father, like my own father, was a member of the R.I.C. Séamus, as a rebel, was second-in-command to Seán Treacy in Tipperary. They were ready to rise and to attack local police barracks as instructed. But between Pearse's *yes* and MacNeill's *no* they were bewildered. Not knowing what to do, they did nothing. Within a few weeks after the Rising, however, my uncle was arrested, lodged in various jails in Ireland, England, and Wales, went on hunger strike for two weeks in (I think) Fron-goch, and was released in the spring of 1917. His insurgent days were over.

I may remind you, though you don't need reminding, that on the morning of Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, members of the Irish Volunteers and the Citizen Army, numbering about 400, marched into Sackville Street—now O'Connell Street—and took possession of the most notable public building, the General Post Office. Uncertain in number, they were certain in their aim—to declare a sovereign Irish republic. In other parts of the city, Eamon de Valera, Eamonn Ceannt, the Countess Markievicz and other commandants assembled their troops close to various target buildings, including Boland's Mills and the College of Surgeons and took possession of

them. Shortly after noon, Pearse, in effect the leader of the insurgents, came out of the G. P. O. and read a one-page document headed *Poblacht na hEireann*, followed by *The Provisional Government of the Irish Republic to the People of Ireland*. The statement, addressed to 'Irishmen and Irishwomen' began:

In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Five brief paragraphs followed. The first called upon the support of Ireland's 'exiled children in America' and 'gallant allies in Europe', these last unnamed but evidently referring to the German government, which in naive theory was expected to mount an invasion with troops, artillery, and ammunition. The second paragraph maintained that 'six times during the past three hundred years' the Irish people had asserted, in arms, their right 'to national freedom and sovereignty'. Standing on that right, 'and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world', the Provisional Government proclaimed 'the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State'. The third paragraph guaranteed 'religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, regardless of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past'. That is: divided Protestants in the North from Catholics throughout the island. Paragraph four said that until a permanent National Government was established, (we) 'the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people'. Finally, the peroration: the Irish nation must 'prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called'.

The Proclamation has sometimes been dismissed as a piece of window-dressing for a Rising that could not otherwise have been justified, lacking a mandate from the people. Well, some revolutions, notably the American one, had a mandate; but some, like the Russian, had not. Some revolutions receive a mandate after the event, as the destruction of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the rise of Sinn Féin could be deemed to be a mandate in retrospect. Nor do I see any



objection to the Proclamation's historical sense. I assume that Pearse is referring to 1641, 1689, 1798, 1803, 1848, and 1867.<sup>9</sup> These were very different episodes, some were abject, some nearly farcical, but they were all moments that Pearse was justified in recognizing as signs of national life, vital signs, even if they failed. It was now a long time since 1867.

So the Rising began. The officers of the Crown were taken aback, though the atmosphere in Dublin Castle, for months back, had been thick with censored letters, reports from spies, hints and guesses. The authorities needed a day or two to gather their soldiers and bring a gunboat up the Liffey, but when the army was sent into the city and started shelling the buildings the rebels held, the defeat of Pearse and his troops was inevitable. He surrendered, unconditionally, after six days, on Saturday, 29 April. Roy Foster reports in *Vivid Faces*, though his precision makes me doubt the report:

When it was all over, 450 people in total had been killed, 2,614 wounded, 9 missing; of these, 116 soldiers had been killed, 368 wounded and 9 missing, along with 16 policemen dead and 29 wounded. Out of 1,558 combatant insurgents, 64 had died.<sup>10</sup>

Recently released data from the Military Pensions records establish that there were 508 rebels in the G.P.O. Between May 3 and 12, fifteen leaders were arrested, court-martialled for high treason, and executed. De Valera was not executed, because his birth in the United States was thought to raise a legal or a diplomatic issue. Roger Casement, arrested in Kerry on his return from an abortive mission in Germany, was brought to England and hanged in Pentonville Jail on August 3. Hundreds of men (including my uncle) and about 77 women were arrested. Most of the women were released early in May, a few were interned, the Countess Markiewicz was tried by court-martial and sentenced to death, but her sentence was commuted.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Liam de Paor, *On the Easter Proclamation and Other Declarations* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), 70.

<sup>10</sup> R. F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890–1923* (New York: Norton, 2015), 243.

The men were gradually released over the next year. Internationally, a sense of outrage continued to be expressed. Bernard Shaw wrote that the insurgents should have been treated to the dignities of prisoners of war.

Botched as the Rising was, it had a dramatic effect on the attitudes of the plain people of Ireland. Or the executions had. Something like Pearse's vision came about: the sacrifice of a holy few transformed the lazy many. Within a short time, even those who were indifferent or hostile to the Rising in the beginning gave their vote to *Sinn Féin* and repudiated the I.P.P. The British threat, renewed early in 1918, to impose conscription on Ireland did much to turn Irish people against the Empire. In the election of 1918 *Sinn Féin* won 73 of the 105 seats. More important, a mystique began to suffuse the executed leaders, especially Pearse, which revisionist historians—the School of Irony, as I think of them—have not succeeded in dispelling. Yeats wrote in 'Sixteen Dead Men':

You say that we should still the land  
Till Germany's overcome;  
But who is there to argue that  
Now Pearse is deaf and dumb? (*VP* 395)

Not that that sentiment coincided with Yeats's attitude as a citizen. As a citizen, he was bewildered by the Rising; at first, he didn't know what to think. When he started to think, he regarded it as a disaster. In effect, he agreed with Eoin MacNeill. He thought that the British Government and the I.P.P. together should have been given more time to bring in Home Rule. But in December 1913 and January 1914 Asquith had secret meetings with Carson to find some device to exclude Ulster—or part of it—from the application of any Home Rule Bill. That theme kept Parliament busy until the declaration of war on Germany and Austria on 4 August. Carson at first wanted the nine counties of Ulster, till it was pointed out to him that if he kept Donegal, Cavan, and Monaghan, the certainty of maintaining a Unionist majority in the North for the future would become doubtful. Someone suggested four counties, but in the end Carson settled for six. In any case, Partition in some form was inevitable.

I should at this point declare a minor interest. I have long thought of myself as a nationalist. I have hoped—or hoped against hope—to live long enough to see Ireland—all 32 counties—united as an Irish republic. I thought—at least for some time—that northern unionists might be persuaded to join, sinking their differences. My experience as a Catholic boy growing up in Warrenpoint, living in the police barracks where my father was the local sergeant-in-charge of the R.U.C., may have encouraged that notion, or sometimes refuted it. But of late I have been daunted by the history of Carson and the Ulster Covenant. On 23 September 1911, he addressed fifty thousand Unionists at Craigavon, calling on them, in the event of Home Rule passing, to take up the government of ‘the Protestant Province of Ulster’. In the week beginning 19 September 1912, 218,206 men and 228,991 women signed the Ulster Covenant, pledging to ‘use all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland’. Given passage of the Government of Ireland Act (including Partition) on 23 December 1920 and King George V’s opening of the Parliament of Northern Ireland (six counties) at Stormont on 22 June 1921, there was no rational hope of a 32-counties Republic. Even if Pearse had survived, there was nothing that he or any subsequent Taoiseach could have done to sweet-talk Protestant Unionists into joining a republican parliament in Dublin. That, too, is not to be thought away.

Near the end of ‘Easter 1916’, Yeats has these lines:

Was it needless death after all?  
For England may keep faith  
For all that is done and said. (*VP* 394)

This is usually, and correctly, taken to mean that the British Government would live up to its promise to bring forward the suspended Home Rule Bill as soon as the War was over. I have no worthwhile opinion on that, but I see that Ronan Fanning judged that there is no good reason to think that the Government intended taking any such action.<sup>11</sup> I would add that the only faith that England

<sup>11</sup> Ronan Fanning (1941–2017) challenged revisionism in his *Fatal Path: British Government and Irish Revolution 1910–1922* (London: Faber, 2014). He argued

kept, most clearly from 6 February 1912, when Lloyd George and Winston Churchill proposed, in cabinet, to exclude the North from any Home Rule Bill, was the inviolable character of Protestant Unionism. That could not be touched. Dublin would have to put up with it. Indeed, it has put up with it from that day to this. The Good Friday Agreement, signed on 10 April 1998, repeated the guarantee in favour of the North 'unless and until', but the unless and until are empty gestures, a majority in the North in favour of joining the Republic could not happen from here to eternity. I can't forget the Ulster Covenant.

### III

I have referred to Yeats as citizen. Despite his early membership of the I.R.B. he was never a threat to British rule in Ireland. His poems, stirring as they are, do not bring crowds into the streets, though in 'The Man and the Echo', a poem of his death-year, he asked himself a fair question: 'Did that play of mine send out | Certain men the English shot?' He wrote four poems in a more-or-less direct relation to the Rising: these are 'Easter 1916', 'The Rose Tree', 'Sixteen Dead Men', and 'On a Political Prisoner'. Then there are the late poems on Roger Casement and The O'Rahilly. Some of these give Yeats the release of expressing a single-minded attitude to the rebels, as in 'Sixteen Dead Men' and 'The Rose Tree' as if it were too late for the niceties of ambivalence, the tiring adjudications of 'Easter 1916'. But if we could rise to the occasion of that poem, we would do much.

It is sometimes said that Yeats, having finished 'Easter 1916' by September 25 in that year, cautiously held it back from publication till 1920 when he published it in *The New Statesman* of October 23 and *The Dial* of November. That is not true. Or not entirely true. Before the end of 1916 he allowed his friend Clement Shorter to print up 25 copies of the poem, to be given to Yeats's friends. This may not be publication in the standard sense, but you do not keep

in *The Irish Times* (16 August 2014) that publicly commemorating the enactment of Home Rule in September 1914 would be unwise, contrary to the stance the former Taoiseach, John Bruton had taken on the issue.

a secret by circulating it among twenty-five friends. We know that the charmed circle of friends was broken at least once by a Chicago journalist who wrote to Yeats about the little book.<sup>12</sup> The secret, if it was a secret, was out.

'Easter 1916' is an elegy, a song of loss: as such, it is supposed to issue in a cry of sorrow for the dead. And so it does. But there is more in the poem than that cry, and some reluctance to utter it. Benedetto Croce said that 'every true work of art has violated some established kind'.<sup>13</sup> I think he wanted to make room, in every genre, for extraneous matter; for such matter in 'Lycidas' and 'Paradise Lost', for instance. There is extraneous matter in 'Easter 1916', such as the speculation about needless death. This is not to say that the poem would be better if such matters were removed. Not at all. But it leads to a difficult argument about pure and impure poetry, and I am persuaded by those who say that impure is better.

Suppose we were reading 'Easter 1916' for the first time. We have a poem of eighty lines in four stanzas of unequal length. There is a metrical unit of four lines—a quatrain—rhyming *abab* to begin with, the pattern of which persists throughout the poem, though some of the rhymes barely deserve the name, such as the rhyme of 'I'—the first person singular—with the last syllable of 'utterly'. The unit of

<sup>12</sup> On 28 March [1917], Yeats sent Shorter an early version of the poem, writing '<I wonder if you would not mind delaying> Please be very careful with the Rebellion poem. Lady Gregory asked me not to send it you until we had finished our dispute with the authorities about the Lane pictures. She was afraid of it getting about & damaging us & she is not timid'. (*CL InteLex* 3204). By 16t May he felt optimistic enough to tell John Quinn of certain publishing plans including 'The Swans at Coole (I think this will be the title) a volume of 24 or 25 lyrics or a little more if the war ending enables me to add two poems I have written about Easter Week in Dublin. It will be published in Autumn and be among my best books' (*CL InteLex* 3244). On 29 June [1917] he wrote to Shorter 'Here is the MSS I promised. The Easter poem you have not seen it may interest your wife. It is not for general circulation' (ALS Texas; *CL InteLex* 3274). By December the news had reached Isaac Levin in Chicago and Yeats replied to his query 'I am very sorry that I cannot help you about "Easter 1916". It was printed by a friend not by me, and only 25 copies in all. I am sorry but I have no control over the little book. I wonder how you got wind of it, for it was never meant to be known of beyond the first recipients' (*CL InteLex* 3372, 5 December 1917).

<sup>13</sup> Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*, translated by Douglas Ainslie (Boston: Nonpareil Books, 1978), 37.

sense or sentence is more various, running from one line to as many as nine, by my count. A first reader would not know who the ‘them’ are in the first line. ‘Counter’ or ‘desk’ would suggest that they are clerks, perhaps minor civil servants. But Yeats hardly knew such people well enough to allow them to interrupt his walk, even to the extent of his saying a few polite meaningless words. They were not the kind of people he would have met in the Stephen’s Green Club. The metre of this stanza is iambic trimeter, modified by a frequent change to anapestic, to make the ballad-measure more rapid. This note of easy discourse continues until the two last lines of the stanza, when the reference to the comedy of motley propels us into the sudden tragedy of ‘All changed, changed utterly: | A terrible beauty is born’. It is a remarkable moment in the poem. We have to ask how Citizen Yeats moved from denouncing the Rising, in letters to Lady Gregory, to such a transcendent acknowledgement of the opposite case, the case for its validity. The philosopher F. H. Bradley noted that ‘we are compelled to take partial truths as being utterly true’.<sup>14</sup> Yeats’s first response to the Rising was that it was damaging to the causes that Lady Gregory and he cherished.<sup>15</sup> Militant nationalism made cultural nationalism redundant. That made it deplorable, but it also made the judgment partial. Yeats’s later judgments between April and September acknowledged other conditions, other partialities:

<sup>14</sup> F. H. Bradley, *Essays on Truth and Reality* [1914] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 258.

<sup>15</sup> On 11 May 1916 Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory The Dublin tragedy has been a great sorrow and anxiety. ‘Cosgrave whom I saw a few months ago in connection with the Municipality Gallery project & found our best support has got many years imprisonment & to day I see that an old friend Henry Dixon—unless there are two of the name—who began with me the whole work of the literary movement has been shot in a barrack yard without trial of any kind. I have little doubt there have been many miscarriages of justice .... I see therefore no reason to believe that the delicate instrument of Justice is being worked with precision in Dublin. I am trying to write a poem on the men executed; “terrible beauty has been born again”. If the English conservative party had made a declaration that they did not intend to rescind the Home Rule Bill there would have been no rebellion. I had no idea that any public event could so deeply move me—& I am very despondent about the future. At the moment I feel that all the work of years has been overturned all the bringing together of classes, all the freeing of Irish literature & criticism from politics’ (*CL IntelLex* 2950 [11 May 1916]).

that is what makes the structure of the poem so difficult. It allows for the partialities, and, brings them to an end. The end may be yet another partiality, but it comes with imperative force, it cannot be repelled.

I concede that a simpler explanation of the transition in Yeats's poem is its movement from the comedy of social appearance to the sublime. Edmund Burke says, in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, that 'whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*'.<sup>16</sup> The main quality of the sublime is that it is not answerable to the standard criteria of reason, it cannot be held accountable, indeed it makes reason feel ashamed of itself. We can witness its signs, but we cannot domesticate them or subject them to a normative judgment. Yeats's middle style administers reasonable considerations until they are transcended by the sublime of the 'terrible beauty'. Pearse does not refute MacNeill, he transcends him. This is the structural principle of the poem, the mode of energy that propels the poem from first word to last: the picturesque or the beautiful is transcended by the sublime. Reason is confounded.

In the second stanza, starting with 'That woman's days', Yeats begins to be indicative, short of naming names. He doesn't name the Countess, but he gives her seven lines of description: she had been beautiful, had a sweet voice and rode to harriers, but later became shrill from argument. All he says about Pearse in two lines is that he ran a school and wrote poems. MacDonagh was his assistant, a promising young man. The man we know as John MacBride is given the most elaborate and the most personal description, still without being named, before being included in the ultimacy of 'the song'. At the end of the poem Yeats names Pearse, MacDonagh, MacBride, and Connolly, the last of whom he hasn't described. MacBride has been 'transformed utterly', as if his sins had been purged as he was

<sup>16</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. by Paul Guyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 33.

transformed into a figure of myth and legend. Again, the middle style describes, indeed praises the Countess, Pearse, and MacDonagh, without naming them, but in the end—but only in the end—these, too, are transcended by MacBride, who is harshly described until, with the word ‘Yet’, the stanza turns to acknowledge the higher reason-beyond-reason, the sublime tragedy of MacBride’s death-and-resurrection. The repetition of ‘He, too’ speaks insistently to those who would deny him his sublimity.

The third stanza begins with the most tendentious lines:

Hearts with one purpose alone  
Through summer and winter seem  
Enchanted to a stone  
To trouble the living stream. (*VP* 393)

Critics, at this point in their commentary, usually quote a passage from Yeats’s essay ‘J. M. Synge and the Ireland of His Time’ to show that he meant what he said. The passage reads, in part:

After a while, in a land that has given itself to agitation over—much, abstract thoughts are raised up between men’s minds and Nature, who never does the same thing twice, or makes one man like another, till minds, whose patriotism is perhaps great enough to carry them to the scaffold, cry down natural impulse with the morbid persistence of minds unsettled by some fixed idea .... They no longer love, for only life is loved, and at last a generation is like an hysterical woman who will make unmeasured accusations and believe impossible things, because of some logical deduction from a solitary thought which has turned a portion of her mind to stone (*E&I* 313–14)

It’s strange that Yeats, susceptible as he was to magical enchantments, should use the word ‘stone’ in a negative sense here, but he does, and he puts ‘enchanted’ in a strong position, the first word in its line. He repeats ‘stone’ twelve lines further down:

Too long a sacrifice  
Can make a stone of the heart. (*VP* 394)

It is not surprising that this motif caught Maud Gonne’s attention and became the gist of her dissent. ‘No I don’t like your poem’, she



said, and went on to become specific: ‘it isn’t worthy of you & above all it isn’t worthy of the subject’:

Though it reflects your present state of mind perhaps, it isn’t quite sincere enough, for you who have studied philosophy & know something of history know quite well that sacrifice has never yet turned a heart to stone though it has immortalised many & through it alone mankind can rise to God .... But you could never say that MacDonagh & Pearse & Conally were sterile fixed minds, each served Ireland, which was their share of the world, the part they were in contact with, with varied faculties and vivid energy!<sup>17</sup>

This criticism seems to me entirely just. Ireland was indeed ‘their share of the world’, the part they were in contact with’, so they could not be accused of having lived a fantasy. The justice of Maud Gonne’s comment did not make Yeats change a word of the poem. His motif of stone is itself a fixed idea, a prejudice. ‘Too long a sacrifice’. How long is too long? Three hundred years? Yeats leaves it to Heaven to say when enough is enough. The lines, in this third stanza, between the first reference to stone and the second and third, are those in which he personifies Nature, given a laudatory personal form in the essay on Synge as one who never does the same thing twice. Maud

<sup>17</sup> Maud Gonne, Letter of 8 November 1916 (*GYL* 384). ‘Share of the world’ draws upon Yeats’s frequent citations of what for him was a key phrase in Antoine Raftery’s poem the title of which is usually translated as ‘Mary Hynes, or the Posy Bright’. Raftery’s key line is translated as ‘O Amber Coolun, (my) share of the world’ by Douglas Hyde, in *Songs ascribed to Raftery* (Dublin, 1903), 11 and 229–33), and as ‘O amber hair, O my share of the world’ by Yeats via Lady Gregory: see e.g., in “‘Dust hath closed Helen’s eye’”: O star of light and O Sun in Harvest, | O Amber hair, O my share of the world’ (*Myth* 2005 15–16 and n. 11, 227–28. The key use is in ‘The Ragged Wood’, a poem written to Maud Gonne:

O hurry to the ragged wood, for there  
I will drive all those lovers out and cry—  
O my share of the world, O yellow hair!  
No one has ever loved but you and I. (*VP* 211).

Hyde further glosses ‘amber’: ‘it was as golden or amber hair that was on her’ (*Songs Ascribed to Raftery* 333, 335). Mad Gonne’s hair was variously described as being ‘bronze’ or auburn in colour, although when young it had been golden. Other citations of Raftery’s lines will be found in ‘The Literary Movement in Ireland’ (*UP* 2 189; *CW* 9 464); *The Speckled Bird* (*SB* 1976 55–56, 1898–90; *SB* 2003 44–45, 156–57); and in his reminiscences of Thoor Ballylee in ‘The Bounty of Sweden’ (*Au* 561–62; *CW* 3 411–12).

Gonne refers, accurately indeed, to Yeats's 'theory of constant change & becoming in the flux of things'. But these lines, in the poem, invoke not only Nature but Culture—horse and rider, besides birds, cloud, the living stream, and the sexual call of hens to moor-cocks. It is our part to 'murmur name upon name, | As a mother names her child | When sleep at last has come | On limbs that had run wild'. This murmuring of 'name upon name' is the ritual by which the rebels of Easter Week will be turned into heroes, martyrs, figures of a mythology companionable with Cuchulain. Many years later, in 'The Statues' and 'A General Introduction for My Work', Yeats found the right words for Pearse's prayer:

Sometimes I am told in commendation, if the newspaper is Irish, in condemnation if English, that my movement perished under the firing squads of 1916; sometimes that those firing squads made our realistic movement possible. If that statement is true, and it is only so in part, for romance was everywhere receding, it is because in the imagination of Pearse and his fellow soldiers the Sacrifice of the Mass had found the Red Branch in the tapestry; they went out to die calling upon Cuchulain:—

Fall, Hercules, from Heaven in tempests hurled  
To cleanse the beastly stable of this world.<sup>18</sup>

In 'Easter 1916' Yeats glances at a question: 'And what if excess of love | Bewildered them till they died?' I have heard David Lloyd, in a lecture at the Yeats Summer School in Sligo, questioning 'And what if', and allowing for its dismissive sense, as many of our undergraduates use the word 'whatever'.<sup>19</sup> On a doubtful balance, I take the phrasing

<sup>18</sup> *EC&I* 515.

<sup>19</sup> Lloyd's 2015 Yeats Summer School lecture was subsequently published in *Études Anglaises* 68. 4 (Octobre-Décembre 2015), 468–82 as 'The Poetics of Decision: Yeats: Benjamin And Schmitt'. The passage in question suggests that Yeats's 'What if' (e.g., in 'Meditations in Time of Civil War' in 'is a phrase of quite rebarbative ambiguity, whose prototype can be found in "Easter 1916": "What if excess of love | Bewildered them till they died?") There, the force of the "what if" can be interpreted in antithetical ways, to suggest either that it is a matter of indifference politically if their excessive love misled them or that it would make all the difference to the political meaning of the event—an irrational excess of love may be politically ill-advised and corrupting (see Lloyd 72). These readings are fundamentally incompatible, neither being capable of ironically

to mean: 'Even if we suppose that excess of love bewildered them till they died, I nonetheless write it out in a verse—'. This is the heroic excess that defined the Romantic Ireland of 'September 1913', the Ireland of Emmet, Tone, Lord Edward, and John O'Leary, even though it may also entail, as an equivocation, 'the delirium of the brave'. No matter. He doesn't need to answer his rhetorical question. 'I write it out in a verse' could not be more decisive.

I have referred to Yeats in his role, however ambiguous, as citizen. As poet, the poet of 'Easter 1916', his thinking had reached a point of sympathy with the executed leaders. 'The sublime' trumps the civic considerations he has been expressing; three times, indeed, culminating for final emphasis in the last lines of the poem. Lines 15 and 16, repeated at 39 and 50, and finally at 79 and 80: whatever he says three times in one poem, he means.

The structural principle of this poem, as I have called it, is the conflict between the amenities of nature and culture in the third stanza and the sublime which never leaves the other stanzas for long. It is the conflict between 'changed' and 'transformed', two words of different emphasis, a conflict enabled but not resolved by the word 'utterly' that intensifies each of them. Yeats is drawn to both values, but those in the beautiful third stanza do not transform. They change, but Yeats does not establish change as a value, he takes it for granted on the presumed authority of Nature. Change is what Nature does, therefore it is good. Clouds change their shape, yes, but it doesn't matter. Horse and rider may move in a different direction: it doesn't matter. The call of hens to moor-hens matters, but it doesn't transform. What matters is the sublime act that changes mere Patrick Pearse into Pearse, mere John MacBride into MacBride, the surnames that, as Helen Vendler has noted, these men 'will bear in the history books'.<sup>20</sup> Transformation is what culture does.

absorbing the other as the ethically higher alternative' (475). The citation is to Lloyd's own 'The Poetics of Politics: Yeats and the Founding of the State' in his *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* (Dublin: Lilliput Press and Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 59–87.

<sup>20</sup> Helen Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 20.

## IV

For people of my origin and generation, Yeats's 'Easter 1916' might well be an anthem. Not his most achieved poem, it oscillates between for and against, one perhaps and another, without quite engaging the conflict I have mentioned. Each value is given its due, but the conflict remains a principle, it does not fight for its cause. Citizen and poet remain apart. As a citizen, Yeats believed that if the British Government had renewed, as a promise in 1915, its intention of bringing forward Home Rule at the end of the War, there would have been no Rising. That is yet another perhaps. In *Vivid Faces* Roy Foster quotes part of a speech made by Redmond in Wexford a year before Easter 1916:

People talk of the wrongs done to Ireland by England in the past. God knows standing on this holy spot it is not likely any of us can ever forget, though God grant we may all forgive, the wrongs done to our fathers a hundred or two hundred years ago. *But do let us be a sensible and truthful people.* Do let us remember that we today of our generation are a free people. We have emancipated the farmer; we have housed the agricultural labourer; we have won religious liberty; we have won free education ... we have laid broad and deep the foundations of national prosperity and finally we have won an Irish parliament and an executive responsible to it.<sup>21</sup>

Foster comments that the Home Rule Bill 'gave the projected Irish parliament fairly wide powers of autonomy, while firmly retaining imperial supremacy'. He adds:

The bicameral Irish parliament was not to have power over matters affecting the Crown, peace and war, the army and navy etc., though they would control the police after six years, and could also claim control over matters such as old-age pensions and insurance. There would still be a Lord Lieutenant, with veto powers, and the Imperial parliament retained amendment powers. Revenue, apart from the Post Office, was to be initially managed through the Imperial Exchequer.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in R. F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890–1923* (New York: Norton, 2015), 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

If that is what Home Rule denoted, it seems to me a miserable gift. But I think my uncle, if he had had a vote, would have accepted it and voted for the Treaty predicated on the Home Rule Bill and the London agreement; accepted it as a first step toward independence, and assuming that other unspecified steps would follow. That was Michael Collins's position, but not de Valera's. Some would have rejected any treaty based on the exclusion of the Six Counties and the compulsory taking of the Oath of Allegiance to the imperial Crown.

There is a strange passage in *On the Boiler*, among the many strangenesses in that book, where Yeats is reflecting on his experience in the Senate and the bizarre people he met there. Then he goes on to say:

Yet their descendants, if they grow rich enough for the travel and leisure that make a finished man, will constitute our ruling class, and date their origin from the Post Office as American families date theirs from the *Mayflower*.<sup>23</sup>

I have wasted some idle moments in which I think that, had I stayed in the civil service—where I won my first job—I might have raised myself to become one of the ruling class to which Yeats refers. That class—Haughey, Lenihan, Dick Spring, Garret Fitzgerald—had much the same origin that I had, except that they had more money and came from more notable families. For the most part they were middle-class Catholics, often with a degree in law, which was my own first choice, the career I wanted for myself but for the obvious fact—which I discovered after my first week in Dublin—that my father could not have afforded to make me a barrister. All things considered, I date my origin from the Post Office. Not from the Civil War. The Post Office is my origin, even though I acknowledge that Eoin MacNeill might have prevailed had he been more assertive. A few days after John Bruton gave his lecture in an attempt to restore the faded reputation of John Redmond, Enda Kenny intervened to say that his party, Fine Gael, had a right to claim descent from Easter 1916.<sup>24</sup> He was justified in that claim. Many of the members

<sup>23</sup> *Ex* 413; *CW* 5 224.

<sup>24</sup> John Bruton had spoken widely and supportively in anticipation of the centenary of the passage of the Home Rule Bill on 18 September 1914, bringing upon

of what became Fine Gael, including Richard Mulcahy, had been in the republican movement, just like my uncle. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael did not yet exist in the Post Office, they arose from the split following the Treaty: they were born in the Civil War.

In conclusion: I hope—now I should say hoped—to see all the political parties, in 2016, celebrating without embarrassment their origin in the Post Office. And celebrating the fact that the Free State government and all subsequent governments in Ireland joined to retain democratic values, at least in principle if not always in practice, and to reject the Blueshirt forces that might have issued in Yeats's 'rule of kindred' or some other form of cruelty.

his own head a storm of vigorous protest. See his own blog for 18 September 2014 where he marks the Scottish Independence Referendum by contrasting it with Irish history (<http://johnbruton.com/2014/09/>) and indicates his presence at Woodenbridge to commemorate the centenary of John Redmond's speech the Irish Volunteers. The text is that of an Address he had delivered that day at 10am at a seminar organised by the Reform Group, in the Royal Irish Academy 'marking the exact centenary of the passage into law, for the first time ever, of an Irish Home Rule Act (18 September 1914)'. For Enda Kenny's immediate reaction see 'John Redmond: Irish PM calls for Home Rule leader memorial' (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-29277966>). Comment in the press continued: see Stephen Collins, 'John Bruton's argument about Home Rule and 1916 deserves serious consideration', *The Irish Times*, 16 August 2014. At the R.I.A launch of a biography of S. T. Cosgrave and in response to John Bruton's resurrection of the memory of the Home Ruler, John Redmond, the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, was 'happy also to pay tribute to Bruton's hero ... and the leaders of the Irish Party, "a patriotic party of very substantial achievements who embedded the principles of parliamentary democracy in our people". Its leaders, Isaac Butt, Charles Stewart Parnell, John Redmond and John Dillon "all deserve to be honoured in our collective memory". But if there is to be a hierarchy of national heroes, he appeared to suggest, these were heroes of the second class. Any idea that the Rising—"the central formative and defining act in the shaping of modern Ireland"—was unnecessary would not be part of his or the party's narrative. Inclusivity in this decade of commemoration is all very well, and very important, but not to the point of confusing the main message'. See 'Taoiseach Enda Kenny's firm answer on Fine Gael and 1916 Rising' (*The Irish Times*, 23 October 2014). In 'We should commemorate peace over violence: How we commemorate the past should reflect our aspirations for the future' John Bruton responded at length in *The Irish Times*, 29 October 2014, <http://www.irishtimes.com/special-reports/the-centenary-conversations/john-bruton-we-should-commemorate-peace-over-violence-1.2841580>



## The Invisible Hypnotist: Myth and Spectre in Some Post-1916 Poems and Plays by W. B. Yeats<sup>1</sup>

Anita Feldman

REVIEWING ROY FOSTER'S BOOK *Vivid Faces*, a distinguished Irish diplomat, John Swift, writes, 'Even today, for a substantial number of Irish citizens, it is not politically acceptable to question the ethics or wisdom of the 1916 leaders', and he ends his review as follows: 'In spite of the doubts expressed in Yeats's great poem, perhaps because of them, the poet came to the right conclusion: "We know their dream; enough | To know they dreamed and are dead"'.<sup>2</sup>

But, in the twenty-three years between the Rising and his own death, was that knowledge enough for Yeats? Is it enough for us now? I'd answer no to both questions. From *The Dreaming of the Bones* (1919) to 'The Man and the Echo' (1938), Yeats's plays and poems continued, throughout his life, to reflect his response to the rebellion and its aftermath. And we have only to consider recent cultural developments, from the passionate intensity of populist movements

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [aef1@nyu.edu](mailto:aef1@nyu.edu)? Apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

<sup>2</sup> 'Comprehending the Irish Revolutionary Generations', in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Dublin, Spring 2016, 95–96.



to the resurgence of religious fundamentalism, to see the relevance to our own time of such works as *The Resurrection*.<sup>3</sup>

As for the dreams of the dead, 'Easter 1916' was neither the first nor the last work in which Yeats wrote about them. The title of *Responsibilities*, published two years before the Rising, casts doubt on the finality of the rebels' dreams by prefiguring that book's epigraph, 'In dreams begins responsibility'. In that book and those that followed it, the dreams of the living incur responsibilities to the heroic dead, who, in *Responsibilities*, include John O'Leary, Robert Emmett, Wolfe Tone, and Charles Stewart Parnell. But some readers of Yeats's poem 'The Stare's Nest by My Window' (1922) may also wonder how the dream of the 1916 rebels differed from the 'fantasies' which, between the Rising and the Civil War of 1921–1923, 'had fed the heart' of Ireland and made it brutal. The dead, through the dreams that survive them, may incur responsibilities to the living.<sup>4</sup> The epigraph to *Responsibilities* and the lines Swift quotes from 'Easter 1916', then, constitute a truth and its counter-truth, and the tension between them plays out in Yeats's most complex and accomplished work, from 'The Wild Swans at Coole' in 1917 to the final poems and plays.

I attempt in this essay to show the links between Yeats's efforts, pre-1916, to meet the 'seeming needs of [his] fool-driven land' (*VP* 267) and his rejection—both before and after 1916—of the limitations those efforts imposed on him. As Yeats wrote about his earliest published writings in a letter of 1932 to the writer and editor Horace Reynolds, 'I was a propagandist, and I hated being one. ... I recall ... when revising for some reprint my essay upon the Celtic movement ... I saw clearly the unrealities and half-truths propaganda had involved me in, and the way out' (*CW7* xviii). But, despite his

<sup>3</sup> See Afterword below 121.

<sup>4</sup> In his article 'Dark Liturgy, Bloody Praxis: The 1916 Rising', in the Spring 2016 issue of *Studies*, Seamus Murphy, S. J. also makes this point, describing the 'fantasies' Yeats refers to in 'The Stare's Nest by My Window' as the Rising's 'spiritual food' (21). But see Roy Foster's account of Yeats's speech condemning 'the doings of the British military mercenaries in Ireland' at an Oxford Union debate in 1920 (*YA20* 78). That condemnation could identify English politicians, in addition to Irish rebels, with the 'we' of the poem.

perception of that ‘way out’, the ‘schoolboy thoughts’ of Yeats’s mid-nineteenth-century nationalist forebears had, with the execution of the 1916 rebels, taken on a life of their own in Ireland. That life shaped a history in which Yeats’s eloquent Cuchulain was conflated with Padraic Pearse’s militant one, and the image of Ireland as the Poor Old Woman, Cathleen ni Houlihan, took on the sacred aura of the Shelleyan and Rosicrucian images of Intellectual Beauty and the Secret Rose, as Yeats had thought and written of them in the eighteen nineties. In line with these developments, the most beautiful of the ‘three sorrowful stories’ of Irish tradition, ‘The Fate of the Children of Lir’, had taken a new form in a children’s version published in 1910, featuring illustrations by Maud Gonne and a happy ending devised, it seems, by Gonne’s nationalist friend Ella Young, who is named as the author of the book.

Yeats had, early on, trusted his readers and audiences to interpret his work, undiluted by explanation, through a process he described in a preface published ‘a couple of years’ after the Irish Literary Theatre production, in 1899, of his play *The Countess Cathleen*: ‘I must leave my myths and symbols to explain themselves as the years go by and one poem lights up another, and the stories that friends, and one friend in particular, have gathered for me, and I have gathered for myself in many cottages, find their way into the light’ (VP 847). But the words ‘all’s changed’ in ‘The Wild Swans at Coole’ came true for Yeats in a way he perhaps had not foreseen in 1917, when he wrote the poem. By the 1920s and ‘30s, I’d argue, history had transformed those myths and symbols in ways that he could not ignore and had posed a challenge to his powers of intellect and imagination that he could not refuse.

I have considered his response to that challenge, both before and after the Rising, in the light of several entries in the journal Yeats kept between 1908 and 1914—especially Entry 33, dated 12 February 1909, in the volume published in 1926 as *Estrangement*.

This entry posits a knowledge that, merging myth with history, predates the Rising, is confirmed in its aftermath, and blurs the boundaries between the living and the dead: the knowledge that ‘All civilization is held together by a series of suggestions made by an

invisible hypnotist, artificially created illusions’—and its corollary, that ‘the knowledge of reality is always by some means or other a secret knowledge. It is a kind of death’ (*Mem* 166; *Au* 482; *CW*3 356).

This statement raises questions about history: Did the Rising revive Romantic Ireland? Or did the dreams of the rebels live on as artificially created illusions? The final lines of Yeats’s play *The Herne’s Egg* (1938) are ‘All that trouble and nothing to show for it, | Nothing but just another donkey’ (*VPI* 1040; *CW*2 538). Recalling those lines, some readers, at least, may associate them with the life of the Irish Free State, born of ‘all that trouble’—the rebellion, the crimes of the Black and Tan soldiery sent to suppress it, the civil war—a birth that produced ‘nothing but just another donkey’: nothing, that is, but another ignoble nation state, a notably unfree one in which the church controlled education, divorce was impossible and contraception illegal, and a censorship law limited Irish readers’ access to literature. The first three restrictions—church control of education, of marriage, and of reproduction—were common elsewhere at the time, but the censorship law in the Free State was especially harmful, giving legal authorization to the intellectual isolation and prudishness of the public.<sup>5</sup> The bill, which was being considered in 1928, Yeats’s last year as a Senator, passed in 1929, despite the vehement objections to it that Yeats published at the time, in which he pointed out that ‘no government has the right, whether to flatter fanatics or in mere vagueness of mind, to forge an instrument of tyranny and say that it will never be used’.

The prudishness of the Irish public persisted into the 1930s.<sup>6</sup> As Kevin Boyle reports in his Preface to *Banned in Ireland*, a book

<sup>5</sup> Yeats quotes from the 1928 draft of the Bill in ‘The Irish Censorship’, his *Spectator* article (29 September 1928): see *SS* 175 and ff. at 176–77, and *CW*10 214 and ff. at 215.

<sup>6</sup> <sup>5</sup> The first performance of *The Resurrection* on 30 July 1934 was at the Abbey Theatre: Yeats wrote in *Wheels and Butterflies* (1934) that ‘Like *The Cat and the Moon* it was not intended for the public theatre. I permitted it there after great hesitation’: see *VPI* 1308; *CW*2 906. See also his arguments in ‘The Censorship and Thomas Aquinas’ (*CW*10 211–13), ‘The Irish Censorship’ (*ibid.*, 214–18), his Senate speech on divorce (*SS* 97–98) and his letter of 9 December 1936 to Dorothy Wellesley expressing relief that *The Herne’s Egg* would not be produced at the Abbey (*CL InteLex* 6746; *L* 871). See also the next article in this volume,

published in 1990, the Censorship of Publications Bill passed by the Irish senate in 1929 continued, as late as 1970, to allow novels by such writers as John McGahern, Liam O'Flaherty, and Edna O'Brien to be 'banned from circulation in Ireland by the state Censorship of Publications Board'. According to Boyle, the public had failed to defend those writers. As of 1990, 'The machinery of literary censorship [was] still in place'.<sup>7</sup>

And yet today's Ireland has emerged as something much better than the Free State of the 1920s and '30s. Maybe that earlier Ireland, in defeating Yeats's political hopes, strengthened his imagination, allowing him and the generations that lived after him to reconsider the illusions identified, in his 1909 diary, as the creations of an invisible (hence irresponsible) hypnotist.<sup>8</sup>

Those illusions were one thing, Yeats's artistry another. In an entry dated 12 March 1909, the diarist of 'Estrangement' is tempted to see himself and the writers of his movement as magicians, evoking images that can influence events by influencing the feelings of the Irish people. This temptation arises from Yeats's response to the precedent established by Young Ireland, a movement associated with Thomas Davis and the writers published in the magazine *The Nation*, founded in 1842. 'The Young Ireland poets', Yeats writes, created

sensible images for the affections, vivid enough to follow men to the scaffold ... Our own movement began by trying to do the same thing in

"Satan, Smut & Co.", Yeats and the Suppression of Evil Literature in the Early Years of the Free State', 123-212, below.

<sup>7</sup> See Julia Carlson ed., *Banned in Ireland: Censorship and the Irish Writer*, edited for Article 90 (London: Routledge, 1990, with a preface by Kevin Boyle), vii, viii.

<sup>8</sup> Yeats in 1909 would probably have agreed with Gustave Le Bon (*The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, published in an English translation in 1895 [London: Macmillan; republished New York: The Viking Press, 1960]) that, 'When a civilization is analyzed it is seen that, in reality, it is the marvelous and the legendary that are its true supports ... [I]n history, ... the unreal is always of greater moment than the real', that 'history is scarcely capable of preserving the memory of anything except myths', and that 'the crowd demands a god before everything else'. (67-8, 49, 75). Social media, in our time, offer new evidence for Le Bon's analysis of the power exerted by illusion, suggestion, repetition, and contagion on minds that, as Le Bon points out, do not need to be present in the same space to constitute a crowd. See also 24-48, 57-73, 108-10, 118, 129-40, 149, 160-66, and 176.

a more profound and enduring way ... [Lionel] Johnson's work and later, Lady Gregory's work, carried on the dream in a different form ... (*Mem* 184–85)

Yeats resists this temptation, remembering that

it was only when Synge began to write that I saw that our movement would have to give up the deliberate creation of a kind of Holy City in the imagination, and express the individual. The Irish people were not educated enough to accept images more profound, more true of human nature as a whole, than the schoolboy thoughts of Young Ireland.

The diarist does, however, end the entry with the hope that 'a school of journalists with very simple moral ideas' could 'build up an historical and literary nationalism as powerful as the old and nobler. They could then bid the people love and not hate' (*ibid.*, 'Estrangement' No. LIII; *Au* 494; *CW3* 364–65).

Seven years later, it seemed that, despite the sorrow and remorse Yeats felt when the leaders of the Rising were executed, at least some of his hopes for the Irish people might be realized. 'We have lost the ablest and most fine-natured of our young men', he wrote in a letter to John Quinn dated 23 May [1916]. 'I keep going over the past in my mind and wondering if I could have done anything to turn those young men in some other direction' (*CL InteLex* 2960; *L* 614). In 'Easter 1916', however, composed five months after the Rising, he portrays its leaders creating, through the 'terrible beauty' born of their martyrdom, the powerful historical nationalism he and his colleagues had dreamed of, and with it the possibility, at least, of a nobler and equally powerful literary nationalism.

#### SUBLIMITY, STYLE, SELF-CONQUEST

Denis Donoghue's comments about the phrase 'a terrible beauty' have some bearing on this possibility, as Yeats wrote and thought of it. This phrase, Donoghue writes, defines the Rising as an example of the sublime, 'that experience of astonishment, terror, dread, and ultimate pleasure that Edmund Burke described in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757): "Whatever is qualified to cause terror is a foundation capable of the sublime"'.

He points out that ‘Many of the ordinary people of Ireland, I judge, felt a sense of the sublime, even if they never heard of the word, when they thought of the “sixteen dead men”’. As Donoghue describes this aesthetic category, it makes considerations of individual character and intention irrelevant: ‘It will not make any difference to John MacBride’s martyrdom’, he writes, ‘if you keep saying that he was a drunk and that he abused Maud Gonne’s daughter Iseult. Yeats knew this, and it made no difference; that is what his poem is about’.<sup>9</sup> To the segment of the Irish public mentioned in Swift’s review of *Vivid Faces*, this knowledge probably did make no difference; neither did the knowledge that, as ‘Easter 1916’ tells us, Thomas MacDonagh’s thought was ‘daring and sweet’ and that ‘he might have won fame’ as a poet.

The effect of the Rising on Yeats’s life as a writer, however, cannot be summed up by a reading of ‘Easter 1916’. Just as that poem is not Yeats’s first or last word on the dreams of the dead, it is not the only evidence we have of the relation of myth to history and to artistry, in Yeats’ post-1916 thought and work. Other evidence, later and earlier than the Rising, appears in two other passages containing the phrase ‘a terrible beauty’. The most striking is in Yeats’s memoir ‘The Tragic Generation’ (1922), on the ‘terrible beauty’ of a story by Oscar Wilde—a story in which the beneficiaries of Christ’s pity deny its power to redeem their souls, despite the miracles that have rescued them from disease and death.<sup>10</sup> Yeats first heard the story, he writes, from an actor who, having visited Oscar Wilde in Paris, told Yeats that Wilde had ‘written what he calls the best short story in the world, and will have it that he repeats it to himself on getting out of bed and before every meal’. Yeats, however, recalling the story long after he first heard it, writes that, when Wilde published it, he had ‘spoiled it with the verbal decoration of his epoch’, and Yeats had to ‘repeat it to himself as he first heard it’, before he could ‘see its terrible beauty’ (*Au* 287; *CW3* 224).

<sup>9</sup> *The New York Review of Books*, April 7, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> They are like the Greek in Yeats’s play *The Resurrection* (1931) who, belonging to the pre-Christian world, is convinced that ‘Man’, in his relations with divinity, ‘does not surrender his soul. He keeps his privacy’ (*VP1* 919; *CW2* 487).

This account, I believe, expresses an insight that predates the Rising and remains permanent in Yeats's thought: art can embody myth but cannot be reduced to it. Style matters. This insight is articulated in one of the 1909 diary entries included, in 1928, in *The Death of Synge*. Entry 23 in that book, uniting two undated entries written no later than 1914, indicates that, at least two years before the Rising, Yeats no longer saw literary art as the evocation of images that could change events by changing feelings. Instead, he placed that art in a system of correspondences, of analogies between two ways of being: 'The element which in men of action corresponds to style in literature is the moral element', he writes.

Davis showed this moral element not in his verse merely—I doubt if that could have [had] much effect alone—but in his action, in his defence, for instance, of the rights of his political opponents of the Royal Irish Academy. Men are dominated by self-conquest; ... The self-conquest of the writer who is not a man of action is style (*Mem* 212; *Au* 516; *CW3* 381–82).

Men of action and literary men, as this passage portrays them, take different paths to immortality. The status of the Rising, as a sublime and even sacred event, does suggest that under the right conditions those paths could appear, at least, to meet. Yet self-conquest is not quite the same as self-sacrifice, accepting martyrdom not quite the same as seeking it. The example Yeats gives in this passage—that of defending a political opponent's rights—conquers a different self from the one that Pearse, for example, revealed in his most militant speeches and writings.

Was the Rising, then, an event that placed its leaders beyond human judgement? Its pairing of beauty with terror does give it the sublimity of natural events, which are exempt from that judgement. But, unlike tidal waves and bolts of lightning, works of art, martyrdoms, and wars do arise from human motives and are subject to aesthetic and ethical judgements. This brings me to the examples of beauty paired with terror that Edward Dowden listed in his biography of Percy Bysshe Shelley, and to Yeats's representations of and comments on such pairings in his poems 'The People' (1914) 'Crazy Jane Reproved' (1931), and 'Meru'. (1934), and, under the heading of myth, his play *The Resurrection* (1931).

Yeats, as a young man, knew both Edward Dowden and Dowden's biography of Shelley, and in his memoir *Reveries Over Childhood and Youth*, he recalls that 'once after breakfast Dowden read us some chapters of the unpublished *Life of Shelley* and I ... was delighted with all he read' (*Au* 87; *CW*3 95). It would be surprising if he did not know a passage in an early chapter of that book—a chapter Dowden may even have read to Yeats—that describes the sublimity of both natural and human events, and of human hopes and fears:

At all times what was strange and wonderful delighted Shelley; but in after years it was the wonder and strangeness of the beauty and terror which manifest themselves through sea and sky, through love and death, through the highest hopes and fears of humanity.<sup>11</sup>

In 'The People', a poem he composed in 1915, Yeats attributes the first kind of sublimity to Maud Gonne, in lines saying that, because she 'has not lived in thought but deed', she possesses a purity—'the purity of a natural force'—that exempts her from the judgements of 'the analytic mind' (*VP* 351). He also confirms the power of that purity in the last lines of the poem, where he describes how he had complained to Gonne of the 'daily spite' and defamation visited on him by the people of Dublin, and how she had reproofed him for his complaint by saying that, despite her own, even worse treatment by them, she had never complained of the people. The poem ends, 'because my heart leaped at her words | I was abashed, and now they come to mind, | After nine years, I sink my head abashed'. Yet, as the speaker of the poem, Yeats has asserted his right to judgement in the lines just before those acknowledging the power of Gonne's reproof:

You, that have not lived in thought but deed  
 Can have the purity of a natural force,  
 But I, whose virtues are the definitions  
 Of the analytic mind, can neither close  
 The eye of the mind nor keep my tongue from speech. (*VP* 351)

<sup>11</sup> Edward Dowden, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1886, I, 94 [in Ch. 3, 'Oxford continued']). On Yeats and a source for 'terrible beauty' in J. S. Le Fanu's 'The Legend of the Glaiwe', see also *YA*18 55.



Later developments will show that, for a person who has ‘lived in thought’, ‘the definitions of the analytic mind’ are inescapable. Yeats’s later view of ‘the beauty and terror which manifest themselves through sea and sky’—the sublimity, that is, of natural forces—appears in the poem ‘Crazy Jane Reproved’, which begins ‘I care not what the sailors say’ and goes on to exalt the superiority of artistic craft, in the lining of a seashell, to roaring and ranting, in ‘All that storm that blots the day’ (*VP* 509). Yeats will not continue to criticize Dublin, ‘this unmannerly town’, on personal grounds, as he does in ‘The People’, but by 1922, in his memoir ‘The Stirring of the Bones’, he will condemn the narrowness and fanaticism of political Ireland (*Au* 361; *CW3* 272–73). Later, the Greek in his play *The Resurrection* (1931) will compare a crowd of Dionysian worshippers to ‘a pack of wolves’.<sup>12</sup> And, in ‘Meru’ (1935), contrasting the creations of the invisible hypnotist to the secret knowledge that is ‘a kind of death’, the speaker of the poem will identify thought as ‘man’s life’, for the same reason that the speaker, in ‘The People’, has defined himself as a man who has ‘lived in thought’. He cannot reject ‘the definitions | Of the analytic mind’ any more than Oedipus, as he appears in *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (1929), can stop his search for the man whose crime has visited divine punishment on his city. ‘When it was already certain that he must bring himself under his own curse’, Yeats asks, ‘did he not still question?’ (*CW14* 21; *AVB* 28).

Given Yeats’s association of Oedipus with truth and Christ with pity, this rhetorical question recalls the one that begins the 1909 diary entries published in 1928 as *The Death of Synge*: ‘Why does the struggle to come at truth take away our pity, and the struggle to overcome our passions restore it again?’ (*Mem* 196; *Au* 499; *CW3* 369). But by 1929 Yeats recognizes that Oedipus’ struggle to come at truth arises from his pity—not for himself but for his people, who are suffering for his crimes. He now imagines Christ and Oedipus

<sup>12</sup> *VP* 905; *CW2* 482. This recalls the thought expressed in Walter Pater’s *Plato and Platonism* (London: Macmillan, 1931) that the collective mind of the Athenian public, as it shaped the strategies of the Sophists, resembles ‘a wild beast’ and is a vehicle for ‘disintegrating Heraclitean fire’ (107); WBV owned and marked the 1893 edition of this work (*YL* 1538, 202).

as ‘the two scales of a balance’ (CW14 21, AVB 29), and in ‘Meru’ (VP 563) he will personify humanity—or ‘man’—as ‘ravaging, raging, and uprooting that he may come | into the desolation of reality’—that is, taking on the rage of a wild beast, which abates only when he arrives at the knowledge that is ‘in some measure ... a kind of death’. In giving the passion for truth the power to save or destroy civilizations, he has changed the balance of power between truth and pity and between two other scales, the desire to invest the creations of the invisible hypnotist with ‘the purity of a natural force’ and the recognition that, like other human creations, they are subject to ‘the definitions of the analytic mind’. The sublimity of a storm at sea or an act of martyrdom may, for a time, blot out the demands of artistry or intellect, but those demands, in the long run, do make a difference. In this context, the discontinuity between the ‘terrible beauty’ of Wilde’s original story and the version spoiled by his style—or the contrast between ‘the purity of a natural force’ and ‘the definitions of the analytic mind’—might correspond to the contrast between the audacity and courage of the 1916 rebels and the reality of the Free State.<sup>13</sup> The severed heads that sing in *The King of the Great Clock Tower* ([1934]) and *A Full Moon in March* (VPI 998, 1002–05; CW2 498, 507) remind the audience of this discontinuity, and of the difference between the heroic dead and the ‘living wretches’ who, in a song from *The King of the Great Clock Tower*, usurp their prerogatives (CW2 498). If the rebels had lived, their actual ideas and intentions might have evolved as something different from the ones expressed in their writings and in the formation of the Free State. Declan Kiberd suggests this possibility in his recognition of the latent motives of the rebels, who, he writes, ‘sought to give voice to a desire so deeply buried within them as to as to be scarcely conscious ... In the world of the insurrectionist, expression precedes conceptualization’, and Yeats, Kiberd continues, ‘understood these ambiguities better than anyone.

<sup>13</sup> On Yeats and Wilde’s orality, see Deirdre Toomey, ‘The Story-Teller at Fault’, in C. George Sandulescu ed., *Rediscovering Oscar Wilde* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Limited, 1994), 405–20. For the oral versions of Wilde’s tales, see Guillot de Saix, *Les Songes merveilleux du Dormeur éveillé. Le chant du cygne: contes parlés d’Oscar Wilde* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1942).

He knew that every dream may be the beginning of responsibilities, projecting a claim on the future as well as a radical break with the past'.<sup>14</sup> But, no matter how those dead might have shaped Ireland's future, Yeats as a living poet was painfully aware that the myths he revived had entered history in ways he could not predict or control. His Cuchulain was not Padraic Pearse's. This awareness surfaces in the plays of the 1930's, especially the last play of his Cuchulain cycle, and in the poems of the 1920s and '30s: the sequences 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' and 'Meditations in Time of Civil War', 'Parnell's Funeral', and 'The Man and the Echo'.

Toward the end of his life, however, in his last memoir, *Dramatis Personae* (1935), Yeats seems to resolve the disparities between Pearse's Cuchulain and his in a metaphor that aligns the heroism of those who 'laugh into the face of death' with the courage of the writer who 'must die every day he lives, be reborn, as it is said in the Burial Service, an incorruptible self, that self opposite of all that he has named "himself"'. (*Au* 457; *CW3* 336). To compare the work of writers to the death of heroes is a bit of a stretch, I admit, but such metaphors, especially as they take narrative form in Yeats's plays, sustain the flexibility, scope, and strength of his work, enabling him to reach back to his English Romantic predecessors—specifically to the William Wordsworth of the *Prelude*, as M. H. Abrams has described it. That work, in Abrams' analysis, is 'an involuted poem about its own genesis—a prelude to itself .... Its temporal beginning ... is Wordsworth's entrance upon the stage of his life at which it ends'. Yeats's plays about Cuchulain, beginning with *At the Hawk's Well* (1916–1917), are similarly autobiographical and recursive. In them, however, as in Yeats's other plays, 'the spirit, the protagonist of the story', may also pass 'through bewildering metamorphoses ... or "shapes of consciousness" ... as well as multiple human personae'.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Declan Kiberd, 'Acting on Instinct: Dublin, Shakespeare, and the "radical improvisers" of the Easter Rising', *TLS*, 22 April 2016, 14–15. See also James Connolly's Marxist analysis of Ireland's past and his program for its future in *The Re-Conquest of Ireland* (1915), a pamphlet reprinted in 1972 with an introduction by A. Raftery (New Books Publications, Dublin and Belfast).

<sup>15</sup> *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), 79 and 230–31.

All the personages of *At the Hawk's Well* (1917), for example—The Old Man at the dry, leaf-choked well, waiting for the waters of immortality to rise, the Young Man pursuing the hawk-possessed Guardian of the Well, the Guardian herself, and even the Chorus—are ‘shapes of consciousness’ belonging to a single protagonist whose action, when he wears the mask of the Young Man, signals his power to face and take responsibility for the unacknowledged desires and acts of the Old Man. The Young Man is willing to pierce his foot to keep himself awake when the waters rise, an acceptance of pain that signals his kinship with Oedipus, the hero with the pierced foot who is tested by Apollo and riddled by the Sphinx (*VPI* 406; *CW2* 302). And Yeats, as the author of the play, is willing to face the dangerous but alluring, deathlike but exhilarating knowledge of reality that the Young Man’s pursuit of the Hawk Woman enacts. The Old Man sees the Young Man as capable of murder and betrayal, ‘wild for the love of women | and for the shedding of men’s blood’; both Yeats and the audience know that the Old Man is, objectively, right—the audience because they have seen or read *On Baile’s Strand*, Yeats because the events of his life have revealed it to him.

But the context for those events, I think, is not Yeats’s private or public life, as a biographer or historian might portray it. It is his life as the poet of personal utterance he describes in his first memoir, *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*, who will learn that his energies and imagination can only be released through a subjective struggle with his passions and his fate—a struggle that enables him to ‘believe enough in what one feels to know what the feeling is’, and to distinguish that knowledge from ‘romantic convention’ and ‘unconscious drama’ (*Au* 103; *CW3* 105).<sup>16</sup>

The intense ambivalence of Yeats’s relation to his Irish audience is at least as important, in that struggle, as his relation to his family and friends, his lovers and his wife. The diarist of ‘Estrangement’ begins

<sup>16</sup> See Warwick Gould’s essay ‘An Empty Theatre?: Yeats as Minstrel in *Responsibilities*’ on the relation between Yeats’s experience as a playwright and his achievement as a poet of personal utterance (*Studies on W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Jacqueline Genet (Caen: Groupe de Recherches d’Etudes anglo-irlandaise du C.N.R.S., 1989)).

with a simple opposition, expressed in the hope that his literary and dramatic movement will somehow turn this audience from hatred to love—that is, from hatred of England to love of Ireland. But he ends, in his late (1937) essay ‘A General Introduction for my Work’ with an expression of unresolvable ambivalence—Catullus’ ‘*Odi et amo*’—toward both nations: ‘My hatred tortures me with love, my love with hate’ (*E&I* 519); with double-edged images—‘cold and passionate’ dawn, the ‘abounding, glittering jet’, ‘tragic joy’—that reach back to Sappho’s ‘O bitter sweetness’; and with a system of thought that, defining consciousness as conflict, replaces the straight line of progress and the circular line of perfection with a spiral that is repeatedly reversed, destroyed, and renewed.

In the rest of this essay, therefore, I shall look to Yeats’s metaphors and metaphorical narratives in an attempt to answer a large question: What can Yeats’s writings tell us about Irish cultural identity, a century after Padraic Pearse proclaimed ‘a Sovereign Independent State’ from the steps of the Dublin Post Office? That answer, I’d argue, is shaped by Yeats’s experience as an Anglo-Irish writer who found his patrons among Ascendancy landowners, though he was not one of them,<sup>17</sup> and as a cultural nationalist whose shock, ambivalence, and disillusion, immediately following the Rising, resurfaced during the military actions that followed it, continued into his later life, and confirmed the beliefs expressed in the two sources of my title: Entry 33 in ‘Estrangement’, with its image of the invisible hypnotist evoking the illusions that, in the form of myths, hold civilizations together; and a letter of 17 April 1929 to T. Sturge Moore in which Yeats wrote that ‘Science is the criticism of myth, and when the criticism is finished there is not even a drift of ashes on the pyre ... [A] Myth that cannot be so consumed becomes a spectre’ (*TSMC* 153–54). If Yeats uses the word spectre, in this letter, as William Blake did in his prophetic poem ‘Jerusalem’, it is ‘the Reasoning Power in Man ... when separated from Imagination ... it frames laws and Moralities | To destroy Imagination, the Divine Body, by Martyrdoms and Wars’ (74:10).

<sup>17</sup> On the financial difficulties of Yeats’s family, see *L1* 65–68.

This definition suggests that Yeats, as the author of the 1909 diaries (1908–1914) and ‘Anima Mundi’ (1917), sees ‘literature’ as the aspect of ‘the reasoning power in man’ that, neglecting imagination, tempts writers to surrender ‘life for a logical process’. He therefore resolves that, in his diary, he will ‘keep one note from leading on to another’, allowing every one of them to ‘come as a casual thought’, so that ‘it will be [his] life’ (*Mem* V 139; *Estrangement* 1, *Au* 461; *CW3* 341). And in ‘Anima Mundi’, some eight years later, his distinction between life and logic resurfaces in a distinction between two states of mind: the mind that ‘grasps objects simultaneously’ and perceives ‘harmonies, symbols, and patterns’ (*Myth* 356; *CW5* 25) and ‘the mind that sees objects one after another’—‘our reason’, which is ‘but an instrument created and sharpened by those objects’ (*Myth* 362–63; *CW5* 29–30).

In *A Vision* that linear, instrumental mind shows itself in the glance, distinct from the gaze (*AVB* 276–77). In Yeats’s last two plays, it takes the form of the knife that, in the hands of the Old Man in *Purgatory*, has stabbed his father and his son to death (*VPI* 1048; *CW2* 543) and that the Blind Man in *The Death of Cuchulain* uses to behead the fatally wounded hero (*VPI* 1060; *CW2* 552). And, toward the end of ‘Anima Mundi’, Yeats identifies the nonlinear mind with freedom, or ‘the Condition of Fire’, or ‘rhythmic body’, which, he writes, should not become an object of worship as ‘a thing or a thought’. ‘Most prayers’, he writes, ‘call it man or woman or child’, and he accounts for this by quoting Blake’s words: ‘Mercy has a human heart, | Pity a human face’ (*Myth* 364; *CW5* 30). As I’ll suggest in my analysis of *The Resurrection*, these ideas influence the ending of that play.

#### A MERE STORY: ODOUR OF BLOOD

Yeats’s awareness of myth as illusion surfaces in entry LXI of the 1909 diary (entry 33 of ‘Estrangement’; *Mem* 166; *Au* 481–82; *CW3* 356), resurfacing, twenty-three years later, in the first two quatrains of ‘Meru’ (1934). Yeats’s awareness of myths that persist as spectres, however, is directly expressed, as far as I know, in only one place, the

letter of 1929 to T. Sturge Moore. But I believe that the creation of myths and the persistence of their spectral shadows, as Yeats perceives them, clarify the action of *The Resurrection* (1926–1931) and *The Death of Cuchulain* (1938–1939), his revisions of ‘The Wild Swans at Coole’ (1917), a passage in ‘Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen’, and his identification with Leda in ‘Leda and the Swan’ (1924).

For Yeats, beliefs are necessary but not sufficient for the creation of myths, and his biographical myths emerge from the connections between his metaphors, implied or stated, and his practice as a poet and playwright. The invisible hypnotist in entry LXI of the diary, for example, resembles Yeats in his early magical experiments—that is, he uses symbols to evoke expressions. ‘Every symbol is an evocation’, he writes,

which produces its equivalent expression in all worlds. The Incarnation involved modern science and modern efficiency, and also modern lyric feeling which gives body to the most spiritual emotions ... The historical truth of the Incarnation is indifferent, though the belief in that truth is essential to the power of the evocation. (*Mem* 166; *Au* 482; *CW*3 356)

But Yeats’s practice as the author of *The Resurrection*, the first play I’ll consider here, is based on another (undated) entry from the 1909 diary—entry XXX (18 in ‘Estrangement’) in which the hypnotist’s evocations are expressed as philosophical statements, transformed, over time, into sacred narratives. ‘In Christianity’, the entry begins, ‘what was philosophy in Eastern Asia became life-biography, drama. A play passes through the same process in being written. At first, *if it has psychological depth* [my emphasis], there is a bundle of ideas, something that can be stated in philosophical terms; my *Countess Cathleen*, for instance, was once the moral question, may a soul sacrifice itself for a good end?’ But then, as Yeats describes the playwriting process, the statements of abstract thinkers gradually become ‘the mere expression of one character or another’, and finally, when ‘it is completely life, ... it seems to the hasty reader a mere story’. The entry ends with a question, ‘Was the Bhagavad Gita the “scenario” from which the Gospels were made?’ With that question, implying a comparison between historical processes and the writing of a play, Yeats identifies the invisible hypnotist as a creator whose

narratives take on substance insofar as they have psychological—not philosophical—depth (*Mem* 150; *Au* 468; *CW3* 346).

Yeats began to write *The Resurrection* in 1925 or 1926, near the time when his 1909 diary entries were being selected and edited for publication (*Life* 2 314 and 329), and those entries would have recalled the desires and passions of the intervening years. In the mid-1920s, as in 1909, the reference to his play *The Countess Cathleen* (1889–1892) in entry LXI of the diary (*Mem* 166), would have reminded him that, in the early 1890's, he had identified Maud Gonne with the main personage in one of the stories he had gathered in *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales* (1888), a high-born woman who sells her soul to provide food for her famine-struck people. That reference would also have reminded him of the poems about Gonne ('No Second Troy', 'Words', 'King and No King', 'Peace', 'A Woman Homer Sung', and 'Against Unworthy Praise') that he began between September 1908 and May 1910. Myth and autobiography animate these poems with a specificity new to Yeats. In 'No Second Troy' he identifies Gonne with Helen of Troy; according to Foster, Gonne and Yeats finally became lovers in December 1908, about the time he wrote that poem, which is the first entry in the diary but is omitted from 'Estrangement' [*Mem* 137; *Life* 1 388 and 393]). The other poems also refer to their relationship and appear in the diary, though in draft versions (*Mem* 142–43, 172–73, 236, 244–46).

By the mid-1920s, however, the 1909 diary would have evoked political acts, in addition to personal obsessions: Gonne's militancy, the victimage and transfiguration of the 1916 rebels, and Yeats's bitter lines, in 'The Fisherman' (1914; *VP* 347), about the contrast between 'what [he] had hoped 'twould be | to write for [his] own race' and 'the reality' of the Abbey audience that had rejected and reviled J. M. Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*. In *Estrangement* (1926), though not in the diary, the entry about the knowledge of reality 'as a kind of death' is immediately followed by one in which Yeats blames 'that coterie of patriots' in the Abbey audience for Synge's 'dying at this moment of their bitterness and ignorance, as I believe' ('Estrangement' No. XXXIV; *Mem* 161; *Au* 412; *CW3* 356). Here Synge as sacrificial victim takes on the aura of other martyred immortals, like John Keats



in Percy Shelley's 'Adonais' or Charles Parnell in Yeats's 'His Dream' (1908), which appears in an early version in the 1909 diary (*Mem* 231). More than two decades later, the rituals of sacrificial victimage reappear in 'Parnell's Funeral' (*VP* 531). Soon after an early draft of 'His Dream' appears in the diary, Yeats begins to represent creative power, metaphorically, as sexual power, in a poem in which Synge appears as 'Great Juan'—or Don Giovanni—entering Hell as crowds of eunuchs 'rail and sweat | Staring upon his sinewy thigh' ('On Those that Hated "The Playboy of the Western World"' (*Mem* 176, 244; *Au* 486; *CW3* 359; *VP* 294)].<sup>18</sup>

The mythical and autobiographical associations of entries 33 and 34 in 'Estrangement' similarly influence the themes of pity, victimage, and blood sacrifice in *The Resurrection*, and, as in entry 18 of 'Estrangement', the ideas stated by the characters recede before the process that shapes the play's setting, dialogue, and action (*Au* 411–12; *CW3* 356 and 346). In his Introduction to *The Resurrection* Yeats defines myth, in abstract terms, as 'one of those statements our nature is compelled to make and employ as a truth though there cannot be sufficient evidence' (*Ex* 392). In the play, these become the 'bundle of ideas' expressed by 'one character or another', who are identified only as The Jew, The Greek, and The Syrian, and who, throughout the onstage action, debate the divinity of Jesus.

By the end of the play, however, the figure of Christ has been evoked and animated by the passions that shape both individual and collective myths. For the diarist of 1909, as for the poet of the final lines in the chorus of *The Resurrection*, desire and passion overpower

<sup>18</sup> This metaphor resurfaces much later, when, in 'Words for Music Perhaps', Crazy Jane's lover, Jack the Journeyman, bears a name that, like Juan and Giovanni, is a variant of Synge's first name. 'Crazy Jane and the Bishop', the poem that precedes 'Crazy Jane Reproved' in 'Words for Music Perhaps', tells us that the Bishop was not even a parish priest when he banished Jane's lover, years before; this fact suggests that the hatred visited on Synge's *Playboy* in 1907 has been validated by the Church and directed to Jane in 1930 (*VP* 308–9). Consider, also, the connection between Jane's name—Cracked Mary—in the early MSS of the sequence, and the next-to-last section of 'Anima Mundi', in which Yeats quotes Shelley: 'our minds are mirrors of the fire for which all men thirst', asks 'What or who has cracked the mirror?' and announces his intention to search for the answer to that question in his study of 'the only self that I can know, myself' (*Myth* 364).

thought—initially, at least—as the driving forces of myth, biography, and history: ‘Whatever flames upon the night | Man’s own resinous heart has fed’. And in the play’s final moments, its action is not resolved by the visible onstage actors but by the invisible crowd who are celebrating the rites of Dionysus in the streets of Jerusalem.

The choices Yeats makes in structuring his play, I’d argue, take account of the fact that attention controls perception, a fact that may also have influenced Le Bon’s belief in the invisible as a crucial force in history. As Le Bon points out on the first page of *The Crowd*, ‘the memorable events of history are the visible effects of the invisible changes of human thought. The reason these great events are so rare is that there is nothing so stable in a race as the inherited ground work of its thoughts’. His own time, Le Bon continues, ‘is one of these critical moments in which the thought of mankind is undergoing a process of transformation’.<sup>19</sup> As Yeats sees Ireland, post-1916, it too is passing through one of those critical moments, and, positing an analogy between the processes of history and the writing of a play, he has turned his own attention, in *The Resurrection*, from the power of the poet as invisible hypnotist to the power of the crowd as invisible dramatist. Fascinated by this power, the play’s main onstage actor, the Greek, cannot ignore the rites of the offstage crowd, despite—or more likely because of—his contempt for the frenzy of those celebrating them, and this tension between the heart and mind of the Greek mirrors the tension between the play’s offstage and onstage (or invisible and visible) action.

Its visible action is set in a room next to the one—invisible to the audience but visible to the three onstage characters—where the disciples are hiding from a mob that is said to be hunting and killing all the known followers of Jesus. At the beginning of the play, the Hebrew, according to a stage direction, is ‘discovered alone onstage’. He is soon joined by the Greek, who ‘enters through the audience from the left’, as the Syrian does when he joins the other two characters. These entries through the audience bring that audience into the performance space, and this small move toward ritual theatre is expanded, later in the play, by the conventions of Nō drama, which

<sup>19</sup> See 67, n. 8 above.

had interested Yeats as early as 1907. (By 1926 Nō had influenced most of his plays in some way.)

Those alien theatrical conventions disrupt the established order of things in the Dublin ‘house’, the Abbey Theatre, where *The Resurrection* was first performed, and the first dialogue of the play, between the Greek and the Hebrew, tells of further disruptions outside the house, where, the Greek has heard, Jesus’ tomb is empty and the dead are breaking out of the cemetery. As in Nō drama, sound rather than sight establishes the contrast between outside and inside, the offstage and onstage space.<sup>20</sup> The play’s dialogue begins with a question about a noise in the street outside, when the Hebrew asks the Greek, ‘Did you find out what the noise was?’ For the audience, ‘the noise’ is the faint drum taps (or rattle sounds) made by the musicians onstage. Continuing, intermittently, as background to the conversation of the actors, these sounds portray an action that remains offstage until the last moments of the play.

The onstage action continues as the Greek summarizes what he has heard from a rabbi he has questioned. The noise they’ve been hearing, he tells the Hebrew, comes from a group of ignorant and excitable Alexandrian Greeks, worshippers of Dionysus, who ‘have been out among the fields tearing a goat to pieces and drinking its blood’, then ‘parading the streets with rattles and drums’ and are now ‘wandering through the streets like a pack of wolves’.<sup>21</sup> Another mob in the streets—the one that has been hunting all the known followers of Jesus—has been ‘so terrified’ of the Dionysians’ ‘frenzy that it has left them alone, or, as seemed more likely, so busy hunting Christians

<sup>20</sup> Some of these comments are based on my unpublished presentation on Nō, ‘Experiencing Noh: Stages, Soundscapes, Mindscales’, at Fordham University in New York on 2 November 2002. See also Edward Marx’s essay ‘No Dancing’, in *YAI* 7 51–93.

<sup>21</sup> In addition to evoking Pater’s *Plato and Platonism*, the phrase ‘pack of wolves’ may have local resonances, recalling the comment attributed to Goethe in entry 35 of ‘Estrangement’: about ‘Those who accuse Synge of some base motive ... It is of such as these Goethe thought when he said, “The Irish always seem to me to me like a pack of hounds dragging down some noble stag”’ (*Mem* 163; *Au* 483; *CW* 3 357). See also Le Bon, *op. cit.*: ‘The ferocity of crowds’ is ‘related to that of the huntsmen who gather ... for ... the killing of a luckless stag by their hounds’ (57).

it had time for nothing else', and the Roman authorities were afraid to interfere (*VPI* 905; *CW2* 482).

The Hebrew, who is concentrating on the threat the anti-Christian mob poses to the disciples, tells the Greek that, if the mob enters the house, he will fight them until he is killed; the Greek will then take over, giving the disciples time to escape over the roofs of neighboring houses. The Greek accepts this plan but continues to be fascinated by a different mob, the celebrants in the street outside. He says he can see them through a window, and a stage direction reveals that the window is an imagined opening in the stage's invisible fourth wall, which allows the Greek to stand 'facing the audience, looking out over their heads' (*VPI* 913; *CW2* 486). This stage direction places the unseen but audible worshippers of Dionysus in the part of the theatre where the audience is seated, and, as the Greek continues to describe the bizarre rituals of those degraded Alexandrians, his impatient contempt for them is directed toward the seats occupied by the audience, and, by implication, toward the audience itself. The only other links between the unseen Alexandrians and the visible actors onstage are the laughter of the Greek at the idea that a god can suffer the bodily humiliations of human life and the drum and rattle sounds made by the musicians. The onstage characters, at first, mistake these sounds for one another's laughter but attribute them, later on, to the Alexandrians in the street.<sup>22</sup>

As the action of the play continues, the Syrian, who seems to be 'ill or drunk', appears in the audience and is helped onto the stage by the Greek, who has sent him to Jesus' tomb to disprove the rumour that the tomb is empty and that Jesus has risen from the dead. The Syrian reports, instead, that the tomb is indeed empty and repeats the story that 'a man all shining' had stood at its door 'and cried out that Christ had risen'. When the Greek and the Hebrew, unbelieving, attempt to keep the Syrian from telling Jesus' disciples what he has heard, the Syrian asks,

<sup>22</sup> See Giorgio Melchiori's comments on 'the Nietzschean concept of Laughter announcing the advent of the Superman', in *The Whole Mystery of Art* (London: Kegan Paul, 1960), 41–42.

What if there is always something that lies outside knowledge, outside order? What if, at the moment when knowledge and order seem complete, that something appears?

[*He begins to laugh*]. (*CW2* 490; cf., *VPI* 925)

These questions are answered, to the extent they can be answered, when the musicians onstage go silent, as do the imagined celebrants offstage. The celebrants' dancing, the Greek reports, grows 'quicker and quicker', then stops. The Greek asks, 'Why are they all suddenly motionless? Why are those unseeing eyes turned upon this house? Is there something strange about this house?'<sup>23</sup>

A curtain 'at the back of the stage, toward the right' begins to move, and that 'something beyond reason' parts the curtain and enters the stage as 'the figure of Christ' (*VPI* 928–29; *CW2* 491).

At this point in the play, its sound effects, like those of Nō, have created two spaces, one on and one off the stage, where objects change and are changed by the audience's thought. This process resembles the meditation practices of Tibetan monks seeking 'a sight of the physical form' of their god, as Yeats describes them in a late (1935) essay, 'The Mandukya Upanishad', and the concluding metaphor in that description, quoted below, suggests that Yeats's play, in a comparable process, has allowed an invisible mob in an imagined Jerusalem street to possess the minds of an actual audience in a Dublin theatre:

When the ascetic meditates upon ... an object, ... this object slowly transforms and is transformed by his thought until they are one. When he meditates upon an image of God, he begins with thought, God subjectively conceived, and this thought is slowly transformed by, and transforms its object, divine reality, until suddenly superseded by the unity of thought and fact. Yet he is not aware of all this, ... the event is unforeseen, has taken place in what we call, because we are in the stalls and watch the play, the unconscious. (*E&I* 479–80; *CW5* 159–60)

<sup>23</sup> This last question had an uncanny effect, for me at least, at a performance of the play in New York City's Grace Episcopal Church some years ago.

As Yeats describes this experience, the attention of the ascetic shifts from the image of God to 'divine reality', as the attention of the audience shifts from the onstage to the offstage action of the play. The faith of the ascetic in divine reality, like the suspension of disbelief manifested by theatregoers (and by hypnotized subjects) allows the image of his god to appear to him, surfacing from his unconscious, as, in the action of the play, the figure of Christ surfaces from the desires of the invisible Dionysian crowd. The play's staging, by placing that crowd in the space occupied by the audience, makes it possible for the audience to identify the crowd's desire—and, by implication, their own desire—as the force that materializes and animates the Christ figure on the stage. This process begins with the silence of the musicians and continues when the audience imagines the offstage dancers suddenly becoming still and gazing at the imagined house where the play's action is taking place, as the audience gazes at the stage scene representing a room inside that house. Then, consistent with the etymology of the word metaphor—a transference—the energy of the motionless dance, along with the rhythm of the unheard music, is transferred to the image of Christ, embodied in the actor on the stage.

At this, the climactic moment of the play, the figure of Christ appears, at first, to be a thought materialized. He is an actor like the other actors, but he portrays a murdered god risen from the dead. And, as the audience physically occupies the same space where, in their imaginations, the rites of Dionysus have been celebrated, the image of Christ replaces that of the resurrected pagan god, the strangeness of Dionysus becomes familiar to them, and so does the strangeness of Christ, as they share, in imagination, the shock experienced by the Greek who has touched the body of the Christ figure represented on the stage. The figure of the phantom with a beating heart, dominating the onstage action and uniting thought with fact, prepares the audience for the last words of the play: 'Man has begun to die. ... Your words are clear at last, O Heraclitus: God and man die each other's life, live each other's death'. (*VPI* 931; *CW2* 492)

But these words, spoken by the Greek, are not adequate to the expectations of the audience. Appearing, finally, in a form that confounds the expectations of his Greek and Hebrew followers, the Christ figure is not, as the Greek has insisted he must be, either a thing or a thought, a body ‘hard ... like a statue’ or a phantom without flesh and blood; nor is he, in the words of the Hebrew, ‘Nothing more than a man, the best man who ever lived. Nobody before him had so pitied human misery’ (*CW2* 491, 484). To the audience, whose expectations differ from those of the Greek and the Hebrew, he is a god whose pity, like Christ’s, responds with a promise and a story to the ‘darkening thought’ of a dying world: a promise of eternal life and perfect justice and a story of murder and rebirth that answers the desires of the most miserable, oppressed, and marginalized inhabitants of that world. Hence the shattering strangeness of the Christ image, to the Greek in Jerusalem, becomes strangely familiar to the audience in Dublin.

Despite its nominal setting in Jerusalem, the play’s account of myth, as ‘something that lies outside order, outside knowledge’, implies an analogy in which the misery and oppression of Irish Ireland and the pity that answered it have re-entered history with the Easter Rising.<sup>24</sup> As the final song of the play has it,

Odour of blood when Christ was slain  
 Made all Platonic tolerance vain  
 And vain all Doric discipline (*VP1* 931; *CW2* 492; *VP* 438)

These words, however, emphasize the distance of the Christ figure on the stage from either the main actor in a Nō play or the Blakean figure of Christ. The words of the Greek, when he touches the body of this figure and feels the heart beating, recall the thought of the Nō

<sup>24</sup> As Kiberd writes, ‘One needs a self in order to narrate one’s story, but how can one even presume to know that self until the story is told?’ This is ‘the question identified by [Thomas] MacDonagh: how to present the unknown except in the flawed, shop-soiled language of the known?’ O’Casey eventually solved this technical problem by keeping his rebels offstage or edge-of-stage. Yeats, a more radical experimental artist, understood this as the central problem posed by revolution’, Kiberd then quotes the Syrian’s question, quoted above, as evidence of this understanding. See Declan Kiberd, ‘Acting on Instinct’, *op. cit.*, 14–15.

master Motokiyō Zeami (1363–1443), who admonishes his actors in one of his treatises that, when they are portraying a ghost, they should remember that ‘the outward form is that of a ghost; but within is the heart of a man’.<sup>25</sup> The figure of Jesus in *The Resurrection*, however, is all outward form, all god. In Nō, the humanity of the ghost is expressed in the culminating dance of the main actor, in the drumbeat that joins his beating heart to the hearts of the audience, and in the words of the musicians onstage, telling his story. But the god figure in *The Resurrection* is silent; the Greek sees and describes the disciples’ response to Christ’s presence when the figure representing him has passed into their room, but the figure’s humanity has no visible or audible expression in the play itself. For the audience, that humanity resides only in the ‘odour of blood’, and the evocations of Christ’s ‘Galilean turbulence’ and ‘pity for man’s darkening thought’ in the words of the chorus’ final song and in the thoughts and memories the audience have brought to the theatre.

In the civilization that arose from the ruins of the classical world, the bloody sacrifice of the Dionysian rites was replaced, in time, by the symbolism of the Christian Eucharist, named, in Byzantium, ‘the bloodless sacrifice’.<sup>26</sup> For the play’s characters, however, this development is centuries in the future. To the audience in the theatre, as to Christ’s contemporaries at the time of the play, the figure of Christ is all god, all myth. In the terms and the time of the play, the Greek, who expresses the accepted belief of his time, expects the resurrected Christ to appear as ‘a thing or a thought’, not as a god who is both fully divine and fully human. And the songs of the chorus, which could attempt to speak for Christ, express instead

<sup>25</sup> Quoted by Arthur Waley in *The Nō Plays of Japan* (New York: Grove Press, 1957, first published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York, in 1922), 25.

<sup>26</sup> The phrase appears as ‘the bloodless sacrifices’ in Harold Swainson’s translation of Paul the Silentiary’s ‘Ode’ in Homeric hexameters celebrating the reopening of the main church in Constantinople in 537 C.E.: ‘For as much of the great church by the eastern arch as was set apart for the bloodless sacrifices is bounded not with ivory or cut stone or bronze, but it is all fenced under a cover of silver’. It is translated in *The Church of Sancta Sophia, Constantinople: A Study of Byzantine Building*, by Harold Swainson and William Richard Lethaby (London: Macmillan, 1894), 46, which was republished in an unabridged facsimile edition by Adamant Media in their Elibron Classics series in 2005.



a return to beginnings that appears as either a mechanical turn of the wheel of history or as the ‘fabulous, formless darkness’ the cultivated author of an ancient manuscript saw in Christianity.<sup>27</sup>

The words ‘Man has begun to die’, like the words of ‘The Stare’s Nest by My Widow’, resonate with events that were still recent in Ireland in 1934, when the play was first produced. But the martyrdom of the Easter rebels, by then, had obliterated their humanity and established as the thought of the newly born state the fixed ideas prevalent among the ‘little groups’ of Irish nationalists Yeats met in the 1890s, who, as he describes them in ‘The Stirring of the Bones’ (1922) ‘had the intensity and narrowness of theological sects’ for whom ‘Nationality was like religion, few could be saved, and meditation had but one theme, the perfect nation and its perfect service’ (*Au* 361–62; *CW3* 272–73). In the Free State of the 1920s, as in the play Yeats completed in 1931, man—or the risen human imagination, which Blake identified with the redemptive power of Christ—had begun to die into that perfect service.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *AVB* 278; *CW14* 202 and n. 60, which sets out various putative sources and vectors that put Yeats in touch with these words of the fourth century neo-Platonist Antoninus. E. R. Dodds, the author of *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968) credits himself for being the person who told Yeats about Antoninus’s passage: see his *Missing Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 60.

<sup>28</sup> See ‘Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places’ (1914) for Yeats and Blake on Christ as ‘the risen human imagination’ (*Ex* 44; *CW5* 56). See also Foster’s account of Yeats, as the author of ‘The Stirring of the Bones’, projecting his view of the early 1920s into his account of events in 1897 and ’98 (*Life* 2 202). In his essay ‘If I were Four and Twenty’ (1919), Yeats discusses, among other things, his wish that Irish leaders would become more religious (*Ex* 263–68). ‘The Stirring of the Bones’, published some three years later, suggests that those leaders, if his wish had come true, might have turned from their ‘perfect service’ to a more human and grounded, less narrow and abstract image of redemption. Seamus Murphy, S. J., in his article on the Rising, does not mention *The Resurrection*, although he refers to several of Yeats’s poems to support his assertion that the bloodthirsty god of the Easter rebels is not Christ but a pagan deity like Mars or Odin. Yeats, in comparing Irish nationalism to early Christianity, sees this too, but through a different lens. (Murphy, *loc. cit.*, n. 3 above 18, 25, 27.)

## PROVINCIALISMS, CURABLE AND INCURABLE

As Yeats was to write in the mid-1930's, in his final memoir, *Dramatis Personae*, his experience in the theatres of Dublin and the cottages of Gort had taught him that 'in Ireland symbols are realities', and that the supernatural is 'the most violent force in history' (*Au* 400, 416; *CW3* 309, 299). By then his life as a writer had confirmed that certain obvious distinctions—between truth and falsehood, knowledge and ignorance—had given way to others that were more difficult to identify, between truths and counter-truths, dead mythologies and living ones. This last distinction, as it connects with his life as an Irish writer, is illustrated in a short essay Yeats wrote in 1926 'to introduce to the Irish reading public' Arland Ussher's translation from Gaelic of a poem Yeats describes, in that introduction, as 'vital, extravagant, immoral [and] preposterous'. This poem is 'The Midnight Court', by Brian Mac Giolla Meidhre (Brian Merriman), a poet active around 1780. Yeats writes, on the authority of the scholar Robin Flower, that 'this poem which is so characteristically Gaelic and medieval is founded upon Swift's "Cadenus and Vanessa", and he praises Swift's poem—but faintly—by saying that 'it has the precision of fine prose' (*Ex* 281, n. 2; *CW6* 291–92).

Yeats's hopes for a distinctively Irish poetry emerge in this essay when he describes how Merriman changed Swift's dead mythology into a living one by infusing Swift's poem with Irish speech, tradition, and circumstances: Merriman put Eevell of Craglee, 'the chief of Munster spirits', in the place of Swift's figure of Venus as the adjudicator of a trial in which men and women argue their cases against each other. As Merriman, 'forgetting Swift', localizes or Irishizes his poem,<sup>29</sup> his leading male character commends 'love-gotten children' and urges Eevell to abolish marriage. And his leading woman character, outdoing even this preposterous immorality, demands that 'all the handsome young priests be compelled to marry'.

<sup>29</sup> The word 'Irishizes' is borrowed from the prospectus of the ACIS conference where the first version of this essay was presented, at Drew University, New Jersey, on 2 October 2010.

Toward the end of his essay, Yeats places Merriman, potentially, in the mainstream of both Irish and English literary history, giving the author of 'The Midnight Court' a lineage that goes back to Shakespeare and to 'old dialogues where Oisín railed at [Saint] Patrick', along with 'something that makes his words ... more than the last song of Irish paganism'. That something, Yeats asserts, foreshadows Burns and Blake and suggests the possibility that Merriman, 'had political circumstances been different, might have founded a modern Gaelic literature'. Yeats then ends his essay with a comment on another Irish writer, a poet named Mac Conmara, asserting that, though his poem has 'historical importance, ... [he] knew Irish and Latin only, knew nothing of his own age, saw vividly but could not reflect upon what he saw, so remained an amusing provincial figure' (*Ex* 285–86; *CW6* 162–63).

These assertions help to define the word spectre, as Yeats uses it to describe the historical and personal dynamics of mythmaking in his letter of 1929 to T. Sturge Moore, the fuller context of a remark quoted above (at p. 78):

Long ago I used to puzzle poor Maud Gonne by always avowing ultimate defeat as a test—our literary movement would be worthless but for its defeat. Science is the criticism of myth .... and when the criticism is finished there is not even a drift of ashes on the pyre. Sexual desire dies because every touch consumes the Myth, and yet a Myth that cannot be so consumed becomes a spectre .... Chaucer was the end in his day, Dante in his, incoherent Blake in his. There is no improvement only a series of sudden fires each though fainter as necessary as that before it. We free ourselves from obsession that we may be nothing. The last kiss is given to the void. (*TSMC* 153–54)

Here Yeats places the spectre in literary history, a context he had introduced in 'The Midnight Court' three years before, when he contrasted Merriman with Mac Conmara. In that essay, he had posited two ways of failing, for Irish writers who aspire to a place in the history shaped by Chaucer, Dante, and Blake. Writers like Merriman, who deserve such a place, lose it because of political circumstances that limit their development and their recognition; others, like Mac Conmara, fail because of the intellectual limitations their isolation imposes on their work. In his letter, however, Yeats

describes how English and European writers have entered that wider history, fulfilling and exhausting their imaginations and intellects as a lover exhausts his desire. In the cultural and political context Yeats posits in 'The Midnight Court', the letter implies that Irish writers, if they cannot do this, must accept the limitations a provincial culture imposes on them.

In his memoir 'Four Years: 1887–1891' Yeats portrays himself as a young poet well aware of those limitations. Lacking precedents in Ireland, he must either 'give up [his] Irish subject matter or attempt to found a new tradition' in an Irish nation that 'was not born at all'. Comparing himself to his colleagues in London, he writes that 'Le Gallienne and Davidson, and even Symons, were provincial at their setting out, but their provincialism was curable, mine incurable; ...' Yet, unlike Mac Conmara, Yeats was able to understand his own age, though that understanding developed slowly. Recalling his early ideas on the founding of an Irish tradition, he writes: 'I saw ... that Swinburne in one way, Browning in another, and Tennyson in a third, had filled their work with what I called "impurities", curiosities about politics, about science, about history, about religion; and that we must create once more the pure work' (*Au* 167; *CW3* 148–49).

Twenty years later, however, entries 83 to 86 of the 1909 diaries reveal that Yeats was ready to forego 'the pure work' if his movement could, by doing so, 'conquer the people' of Ireland. In entry 83, dated 9 February, he describes Wordsworth as one of the impure artists who, unlike Keats and Shelley, 'mixed up popular morality with their work'. Now, however, he sees what he had failed to see in his youth: that 'the moral element in poetry' is 'the means whereby' it is 'accepted into the social order and become[s] a part of life'. Accepting that fact, he now describes 'Supreme art' as 'a statement of certain heroic and religious truths passed on from age to age, modified by individual genius but never abandoned', and he asserts, in entries 84 and 85, that 'No art can conquer the people alone—the people are conquered by an ideal of life upheld by authority' and that 'The Abbey Theatre will fail to do its full work because there is no accepted authority to explain why the more difficult pleasure is the nobler pleasure' (*Mem* 179–80; *Au* 418–21; *CW3* 361–62).

It is difficult to think that any such authority, in the Ireland of the 1920s, would have upheld the ideal of life that Yeats, in 1909, had in mind. What he and other Irish writers could uphold, however, was something quite different: an art that Yeats's *Ille* in his dialogue 'Ego Dominus Tuus', had defined as 'but a vision of reality' (1915; *VP* 367). This vision of reality may be described in two ways: as a work that can 'make and employ as a truth' what evidence cannot support, but desire can; or as a work that gets its authority, as Merriman's did, from the manifest skill and audacity that gave it form and from the cultivated readers and audiences who recognized its value—work that, as Roy Foster observes, 'balances vision and concreteness with an equal audacity' (*Life* 2 217). The resistance of the wider world might test that value, but, having passed that test, the acceptance of the work would not be based on its purity or impurity (however those words were defined) or its 'heroic and religious truths passed down from age to age' but on a vivid and daring artistry that would attract new readers, audiences, and imitators until the criticism of myth destroyed all but that artistry.

For Irish audiences, however, in Ireland and elsewhere, the embrace of the myth would be more powerful than it was for other audiences, and the acceptance of the artist's vision more dependent on myth. The analysis in 'Four Years' of Yeats's situation as an Irish poet, along with the 1926 essay on Merriman and the 1929 letter on myth and spectre suggest that, to succeed with Irish audiences, the writers of Yeats's movement would have had to bring the literature of Ireland into the history of their own time, distinguishing between what was alive and timeless in Irish civilization and what was merely topical and acceptable. Its readers and audiences, moreover, would have had to recognize this achievement. This could not happen in Yeats's lifetime, because the founders and followers of his movement were subject to cultural circumstances as limiting as the political circumstances that caused Merriman to be isolated and forgotten.

As the fall of Parnell and the reception of Synge's *Playboy* showed, Irish readers and audiences were powerfully influenced, in the first three decades of the twentieth century, by the same desires that ruled the Dionysian worshippers in *The Resurrection*. By 1916, the abject

circumstances of the Irish people demanded a supernatural savior, not a dramatist or a poet. And Irish readers and audiences were not ready to break the obsessions arising from that demand, which would outlast Yeats's movement.

A century later, in the light of this history, readers and audiences can perhaps take a fresh look at the interplay of myth and spectre in specific works by Yeats. To attempt this, I'll consider his swan images, one of their somewhat neglected sources, and the projects associated with them.

#### 'MY SOUL'S FIRST SHAPE'

This brings me to the image of the singing bird described by the dying Cuchulain, toward the end of Yeats's final play, as the 'first shape' of his soul: 'There floats out there', he says, 'The shape that I shall take when I am dead, | My soul's first shape, a soft feathery shape, | And is not that a strange shape for the soul | Of a great fighting man?' (*CW2* 552). But what if the word 'first' in 'my soul's first shape', and the statement 'It is about to sing' suggest that Cuchulain, after his death, will not take on a new form but will return to an earlier one? If so, the source of the image, I'd argue, is not the traditional legend of Cuchulain but one of the 'three sorrowful stories' of Irish tradition: the tale of the Children of Lir, robbed, by a wicked spell, of their homes and their human bodies and changed from inheritors of a royal estate to wandering swans with human voices. The version of this tale that is published over Yeats's name in the 1898 A. L. Burt edition of *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, the augmented version of *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888), recalls a history in which, for a conquered and scattered people, music and song have become their only ties to their home and their history.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> As Warwick Gould kindly informed me in an e-mail (5 May 2017), 'The Fate of the Children of Lir' was added to the American pirated edition of *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales* (New York: A. L. Burt Company, [1898]; *Wade* 212A, hereafter *IFFT*) under circumstances as yet unknown, despite that book's being described on the title pages as 'Edited and Selected by W. B. Yeats'. It is basically a new edition of *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, which was indeed 'edited and selected' by Yeats (London: Walter Scott, 1888). 'The Fate of the Children

Three details in the story give it a metaphorical or allegorical dimension, relating it to Irish cultural history and to Yeats's vision of the ruined grounds of Coole, in 'Coole Park, 1929'. The first of these details is that, as the story appears in Burt's pirated 1898 edition of *Yeats's Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, the spell allows the swans to retain a single aspect of their former state, the surpassing beauty of their songs. When one of the children begs the step-mother who has cast the spell to 'assign an end to the ruin and woe which thou hast brought upon us', the stepmother laughs and says, '... [N]one shall have power to bring you out of these forms. Nine hundred years shall you wander over the lakes and streams of Erin'. But then 'repentance seize[s] her for the evil she had done', and she modifies it in words that evoke the strong lyrical tradition that survived in Ireland, despite its centuries of ruin and woe: 'This only I will grant unto you', she says, 'that you shall retain your own speech and there shall be no music in the world equal to yours, the plaintive music you shall sing'. (*IFFT* 3) A second evocative detail is the description of the swan children's ruined home, when they return to it after three centuries of wandering: 'They flew to the hill of the White Field and found all desolate and empty, with nothing but unroofed green raths and forests of nettles', a description that resurfaces in 'Coole Park, 1929' when the speaker of the poem foresees the ruin awaiting the Great House at Coole, 'When nettles

of Lir' was added as the first story in the pirated Burt edition, having been taken from the translation by Eugene O'Curry, first published in 1883, with five other additions to Yeats's text that appeared in Joseph Jacobs's *More Celtic Fairy Tales* (London: David Nutt, 1894), together with the original illustrations by John D. Batten. The story was the first in *More Celtic Fairy Tales*, as it was in Burt's edition of *IFFT*, and *More Celtic Fairy Tales* is now accessible online at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433068197999>. Jacobs's earlier volume had been *Celtic Fairy Tales* (1892) from the same publisher. The two collections have been republished in a single volume (and with the Batten illustrations) as *Celtic Fairy Tales*, selected and ed. by Joseph Jacobs (London: Bracken Books, 1990). Jacobs was the Editor of the journal *Folk-Lore*, and his work was well-known to Yeats. For the latest printing of the Burt pirated text see *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, ed. and selected by W. B. Yeats (New York: Dorset Press, 1986), 1–9. For the full bibliographical story, see Colin Smythe, 'A. L. Burt's 1898 Edition of *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales* "Edited by W. B. Yeats"', *YA12* 248–52 now also found at <http://colinsmythe.co.uk/l-burts-1898-edition-irish-fairy-folk-tales/>

wave upon a shapeless mound | And saplings root among the broken stones' (*IFFT* 7; *VP* 488). A third is the swans' recognition that they have outlived their own history: 'Now has come the greatest of our pain | That there lives no man who knowest us | In the house where we were born'. In the context of Irish history, and of Yeats's sequence 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', this is a recognition foretelling the destruction not only of Coole but of the minds and memories sustaining the 'many ingenious lovely things' that were associated with Coole for Yeats and for Augusta Gregory, John Synge and the other writers of the Irish literary and dramatic movement (*IFFT* 8; *VP* 431).

Although 'The Fate of the Children of Lir' doesn't appear in *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, its place at the beginning of the 1898 Burt edition gives it the important role of epigraph or prologue to the other tales. Perhaps Burt recognized its significance to Yeats's Irish-American readers as a story of wandering and exile, but it is more likely that he simply followed its deployment as the first story in Jacobs' *More Celtic Fairy Tales* (1894). The story had a comparable importance for Yeats, apparently, in the five years (1887–1892) when he was writing despatches for *The Boston Pilot* and *The Providence Sunday Journal* and forty-five years later, in 1934, when Horace Reynolds collected those despatches and republished them in a book titled *Letters to the New Island*, with a cover design by Sturge Moore centering on the iconography of the swan children.

It was Reynolds who steered Sturge Moore toward that iconography, writing to him of his hope for a design

developed from some symbol or motif expressive of the ideas that were in Mr Yeats's mind at the time he wrote those articles [1887–1892]. In these papers Mr. Yeats wrote much of Todhunter's plays and poems, including the Children of Lir. Because of that and because of the Irish reverence and fondness for the swan I have thought that might be an appropriate figure. As of course you know, the swan children of Lir were three.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Letter from Reynolds to Sturge Moore, Senate House Library, University of London, Sturge Moore Papers, 9/52, also quoted in *CW7* xxi, n. 13.



As Bornstein and Witemeyer point out, Reynolds later apologized for miscounting the swans in the story.<sup>32</sup> Sturge Moore responded that it was

Too late for the alteration in the number of Swans to be made. So that it is necessary to suppose that Fianoula is hidden behind her brothers, which in those times might have been supposed to have been her proper place.<sup>33</sup>

The editors of the volume in the *Collected Works* suggest that Sturge Moore

combined the motifs of Irish lore and poetic drama in an emblematic design ... that shows the swan children of Lir swimming under a theatrical curtain toward a row of footlights. Above and below the swans are envelopes, presumably symbolizing letters, sealed with masks of comedy and tragedy. The idea of poetic drama is followed out in the laurel wreaths on the spine. The design does not appear to have been submitted to Yeats for his approval. (*CW7* xix, xx)

Yeats had initially expressed his doubts about Reynolds's recoveries of abandoned early journalism but, when confronted with the texts, confessed that 'these essays, which I have not seen for many years, fill me with curiosity', especially in their evidences of his 'early preoccupation with the theatre' (the subject of his preface for Reynold's assemblage).<sup>34</sup> His fascination with the Children of Lir story is found in at least two of the articles and reviews for American consumption, and one of these, 'Dr. Todhunter's Latest Volume of Poems', is so wide-ranging in its coverage of that *topos* that Reynolds with some justice retitled it 'The Children of Lir'.<sup>35</sup> In that book review published in 1889, nine years before 'The Fate of the Children

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Reynolds to Sturge Moore, Senate House Library, University of London, Sturge Moore Papers, 9/60, also quoted in *CW7* xxi, n. 13

<sup>33</sup> Houghton 276, 31 March 1933, quoted in *CW7* xxi, n. 13.

<sup>34</sup> *LNI* xiii, [vii]; *CW7* 5, 3.

<sup>35</sup> See *LNI* 174–92; *CW7* 78–90. 'Dr. Todhunter's Latest Volume of Poems' first appeared in *The Providence Sunday Journal*, 10 February 1889. In 'Irish Writers ought to take Irish Subjects', one of Yeats's regular 'The Celt in London' columns for *The Boston Pilot* (17 May 1890), retitled by Reynolds 'Ireland's Heroic Age', Yeats numbers the 'Children of Lir' among the 'most famous old stories (of which he calls for an anthology): see *LNI* 104–12 (108); *CW7* 31–35 (33).

of Lir' was inserted by Burt as the first story in his Irish fairy and folk tale collection, Yeats praised it as 'one legend supreme in innocence and beauty and tenderness', and noted that, though long neglected, it was now the subject of a fresco by an Irish artist and poems published or to be published by such writers as Katherine Tynan, John Todhunter, and Douglas Hyde.<sup>36</sup>

But, as Reynolds wrote in his introduction to the 1934 edition of *Letters to the New Island*, Yeats's art served different powers than those of the Irish writers who 'had made a goddess of Ireland', calling her 'Cathleen ni Houlihan, Dark Rosaleen, and other names of endearment'. Yeats, Reynolds wrote, 'worshipped at other shrines'. He and Shelley had named the objects of their worship The Intellectual Beauty and The Secret Rose ... [N]ationalism was precious' to him 'not so much because it served Ireland but because it well served Art. Ireland came not before, but after, Art' (*LNI* 25; *CW*7 169).

Yeats's letter to Reynolds, dated 24 December 1932, supports this view and illuminates two things that have puzzled me: the presence, in Moore's cover design, of those theatrical masks and curtains; and a passage about the veils of Aoife, in *The Death of Cuchulain*.

I wrote prose badly, *The Celtic Twilight*, written before I had finished the last of the articles in this book, excepted, and that more for its matter than its form; prose, unlike verse, had not those simple forms that like a masquer's mask protect us with their anonymity. (*LNI* xiii; *CW*7 5)

<sup>36</sup> See *LNI* 178; *CW*7 81. Yeats is using Todhunter's 'Doom of the Children of Lir' as a point of departure for a wider-ranging consideration of modern versions of the legend: Todhunter had collected his poem in the volume under review, *The Banshee and Other Poems* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1888), 10–83, where Fionnuala is spelled 'Fianoula'. By 1898 references to the swan-children of Lir, along with references to blossoming apple boughs, figured prominently in the rituals of the mystical order, the Castle of Heroes, that Yeats—with Gonne and others—planned to found in Ireland. For descriptions of these rituals, see Lucy Shepard Kalogera's *Yeats's Celtic Mysteries*, Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1977, 205, 225–26, and for the role of the children of Lir story as 'a trope for the Irish literary revival', see Amy Clanton's 'Ritual Art: Political, Social, and Religious Subversion in Dramatic Works of William Butler Yeats and Aleister Crowley', *FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts: Rites and Rituals* 17 (Autumn 2013), 5, <http://www.forumjournal.org/article/view/684>

Writing of the reviews in *Letters to the New Island*, Yeats supports Reynolds' analysis of his motives as an Irish writer by admitting (in a passage I briefly quoted at the beginning of this essay) that, in those early reviews, he 'knew better than he wrote'.

I was a propagandist, and hated being one. It seems to me that I remember almost the day and hour when revising for some reprint my essay upon the Celtic movement (in 'Ideas of Good and Evil') I saw clearly the unrealities and half-truths propaganda had involved me in, and the way out.<sup>37</sup>

That 'way out', I believe, was Yeats's turn to a dramatic art latent in the poetry of personal utterance that he desired even in his twenties, when he first began to write and publish. I'd also suggest that his praise of the innocence, beauty, and tenderness of the Children of Lir legend was part of his role as a propagandist, and his response to its tragic vision was part of 'the way out'. As for the passage that puzzled me in *The Death of Cuchulain*, it is the reference to Aoife's veils, which she uses to bind Cuchulain, and which he urges her not to spoil with his blood, because her 'veils are beautiful, some with threads of gold'. (*VPI* 1058; *CW2* 550–51). Toward the end of his letter to Reynolds, he writes, 'All one's life one struggles toward reality, finding always but new veils. One knows everything in one's mind. It is the words, children of the occasion, that betray'.<sup>38</sup> Some of those veils (or words), though, are beautiful. If they were not, the struggle for reality would not be, 'of all things not impossible, what is most difficult', and Cuchulain would never meet his daimon or find an obstacle worthy of his strength. As Yeats writes in 'Anima Hominis', 'When I think of life as a struggle with the Daimon who would ever set us to the hardest work among those not impossible, I understand why there is a deep enmity between a man and his destiny, and why a man loves nothing but his destiny' (*Myth* 336; *CW5* 11). These facts and thoughts, along with a small change in the wording of 'The Wild Swans at Coole', the recurrent swan images in the poems and plays Yeats wrote after the Easter Rising, and the ending of the play

<sup>37</sup> *CL IntelLex* 5799, 24 December 1932, to Horace Reynolds; *CW7* xviii.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

he finished in December 1938, a short time before his death on 28 January 1939, suggest that the legend of the wandering swans had inspired Yeats in the 1890's, returned to his thoughts in 1917, and shaped Cuchulain's dying vision even as Yeats was about to die.

The ending of *On Baile's Strand* (1904), Yeats's first play about Cuchulain, had left its protagonist, after a mad battle with the sea, about to be drowned by the waves he'd mistaken for the heads of his enemies. Twelve years later, however, *At the Hawk's Well* returned the 'great fighting man' to a time that predates Yeats's other accounts of his life: the moment when Cuchulain took on his true identity and fate, along with his chosen name. I'd suggest that the completion of 'The Wild Swans at Coole', the following year, signaled the resurfacing in Yeats's mind of the task that had shaped his own identity and fate as an Irishman writing for his own people: restoring their home and their human form to the enchanted, exiled, and forgotten Children of Lir. Or, to interpret the tale of the swan children metaphorically, giving epic and dramatic form, at Coole and in the Abbey Theatre, to the wandering voices of Irish song and story.

#### MODERNITY, REALITY

By 1902, those voices had found their language, for Yeats, in the spoken English of Dublin. As he recalls in his last-written memoir, *Dramatis Personae* (1936), he made this discovery when he saw William Fay's acting company perform Alice Milligan's *Red Hugh*, written in the style of Walter Scott. In that performance, he writes, 'all the old rattle-traps acquired modernity, reality, spoken by those voices. I came away with my head on fire. I wanted to hear my own unfinished *On Baile's Strand*, to hear Greek tragedy, spoken with a Dublin accent'. His association with the Fay company began with their production of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* in 1902, which was, Yeats writes, 'the first play where dialect was not used with an exclusively comic intention' (*Au* 449; *CW3* 331). Shortly after, the figure of Cuchulain, on a Dublin stage, gave a dramatic body to those unmistakably Irish voices. In that body, Yeats's soul finds a credibly Irish self.

That self becomes soul again at the end of *The Death of Cuchulain*, when several transformations occur. First, Cuchulain's severed head becomes a mask or geometric figure, mourned, in the dance of his wife, Emer, as a stylized, spiritualized object of devotion; then the scene changes, moving from myth to history, from Emer's dance to the music of 'an Irish fair of our own day'; and finally, in the lyrics of the song that ends the play, the idealized images of legend give way to the mere complexities of the present moment, *circa* 1939.

But something has been lost. The image of the mythical Cuchulain has been so powerful that it has possessed the minds and bodies of the 1916 rebels; yet, in the present reality of the play's epilogue, it persists only in a song by an unnamed street singer, quoting the words a harlot sings to a beggar man about her two desires: her unattainable desire for the 'clever eyes' and 'muscular bodies' of the legendary heroes she adores unreservedly, though she can 'get | No grip upon their thighs', and her ambivalent desire for the living men whose 'flesh her flesh has gripped' but whom she 'both adores and loathes'. The harlot seems as sterile, in her way, as the 'old maid history' denounced by the Producer in the prologue to the play, and he seems, in his insistence on the props and attitudes of romance, a caricature of Yeats himself. Where, in all this, is the Cuchulain Yeats described, in a letter he wrote to Dorothy Wellesley in August 1938, as 'a heroic figure because he was creative joy separated from fear'?<sup>39</sup>

Some readers may identify that heroic figure with the statue placed in the Dublin post office to commemorate the Rising. As the final lyric of the play has it, 'No body like his body | Has modern woman borne, | But an old man looking back on life | Imagines it in scorn. | A statue's there to mark the place | By Oliver Sheppard done. | So ends the tale that the harlot | Sang to the beggar man'. (*VPI* 1063; *CW2* 554). The words of the song are teasingly ambiguous, and the lines, 'But an old man looking back on life | Imagines it in scorn', could imply a contrast between life and art, with mere life an object of scorn, and art—that is, Sheppard's statue—an image of satisfied desire.

<sup>39</sup> *CL InteLex* 7290, to Lady Dorothy Wellesley, 15 August [1938]; *L* 913.

I would argue, though, for a different reading, one that takes into account two passages by Yeats: his introduction to his play *Fighting the Waves*, in which he tells how Lady Gregory followed Standish O'Grady in attempting to 'bring back an heroic ideal, ... her eye too upon life' (*Ex* 371; *CW2* 702); and this passage in a letter Yeats wrote in December 1938, a month before his death, to the artist William Rothenstein. As Roy Foster tells us, Yeats in the letter contrasts the demise of the romantic movement in England with its persistence in Ireland:

In England the romantic movement is of course over. ... With us it is the opposite. Some of the best known of the young men who got themselves shot in 1916 had the Irish legendary hero, Cuchulain, so much in their minds that the government has celebrated the event with a bad statue. For us a legendary man or woman must still be able to fight or to dance.<sup>40</sup>

In the light of these passages, the life that the old man looks back on, in the lyrics of the harlot's song, is the heroic life that O'Grady and Gregory, in writing about Cuchulain, thought they were reviving in Ireland, and the object of the old man's scorn is not that life but its spectral incarnation in Sheppard's 'bad statue'. As Foster points out, 'the song that ends the play ... puts Cuchulain's symbolic death at the beginning of modern Ireland's sacrificial foundation myth: the Easter Rising' (*Life* 2 645).

The statue in the Dublin Post Office, then, marks the place where the heroic life of Yeats's Cuchulain has started to die, for its author, into two forms: its past life as myth, portrayed in the dance that ends the play itself, and its persistence as spectre, haunting the prologue and the projected ending of the play in the person of the Producer, who in the working manuscript, wears the mask of the Old Man in *At The Hawk's Well* and, as Yeats originally planned the ending, reappears to arrange Emer's dance.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *CL InteLex* 7359 to Sir William Rothenstein, 29 December 1938. See also *Life* 2 644.

<sup>41</sup> See W. B. Yeats, *The Death of Cuchulain: Manuscript Materials including the Author's Final Text*, ed. by Phillip L. Marcus (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982), 11.

This interpretation of the play has consequences for the readers of Yeats's poems. The swan images in such poems as 'The Wild Swans at Coole' and 'Leda and the Swan' reach back to Yeats's earliest hopes and set them against the realities of his experience as an Irish writer struggling with the divided emotions, deceptive images, and unintended consequences associated with two movements: the literary and dramatic movement that led to the founding of the Abbey Theatre; and the military movement that led to the Easter Rising, the wars that followed the Rising, and the establishment of the Irish Free State.

#### THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE

'The Wild Swans at Coole' is ostensibly a personal poem, and the words 'all's changed', although they echo a phrase from 'Easter 1916', seem to have no relation to the Rising. Yet two changes Yeats made in the poem before its first publication, in June 1917, reflect his awareness that his cultural movement was irreconcilable with the military movement of Pearse and the other rebels. One of these changes is well known. In the last pre-publication version, the poem ends by asserting the constancy and youth of the eponymous wild swans: 'Their hearts have not grown old. | Passion and conquest, wander where they will, | Attend upon them still'. This ending counters and balances the speaker's anxieties about his own aging and the unpredictable wanderings of the swans, when, in the poem's third stanza, he asks where they will 'delight men's eyes' when he 'awake[s] some day | To find they have flown away'. As the poem appeared in *The Little Review* and *The Sphere* in June 1917, the order of its stanzas is the same as it is in the final pre-publication version reproduced in the manuscript edition. But in the Cuala Press edition, dated October 1917, the third stanza (lines 13 to 18) has been placed at the end of the poem. In the words of Stephen Parrish, the editor of the manuscript edition,

this is as brilliant a single revision as Yeats ever made. The other stanzas, all declarations, close flatly or with a drop; the new final stanza lifts the swans

into flight with a question and leaves the reader with a haunting uncertainty about the meaning of 'awake'.<sup>42</sup>

What is less noticeable is another revision that foreshadows this one: the substitution of 'passion *or* conquest' for 'passion *and* conquest' (my emphases) in the published versions of the poem, from *The Little Review* to the *Variorum* edition.<sup>43</sup> This does not change the poem's subject, though it does widen its context, evoking Yeats's despairing comment, in a passage from the 1909 diary that I've quoted before: 'No art can conquer the people alone—the people are conquered by an ideal of life upheld by authority'. (See page 20, above.) This wider context enables Yeats to retrace the path he took when, completing *On Baile's Strand*, he allowed himself to believe that his cultural movement could conquer the Irish people by art alone, as they identified his Cuchulain with the legendary hero portrayed by Standish O'Grady and Augusta Gregory.

<sup>42</sup> The Wild Swans at Coole: *Manuscript Materials* by W. B. Yeats, ed. Stephen Parrish (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), xxix, 17, 19, 27, 37, and 39. See Herbert J. Levine, "Freeing the Swans": Yeats's Exorcism of Maud Gonne', *ELH* 48. 2 (Summer 1981), 411–26; in part reprinted in Levine's *Yeats's Daimonic Renewal* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), in which Levine astutely recognizes the link between Yeats's evolving relationship with Maud Gonne and his poetic development in 'The Wild Swans at Coole'. He also notes Yeats's association of apple blossoms with Maud Gonne's luminous complexion and with the swan images in 'Baile and Ailinn' (1902; *VP* 188) and in his draft manuscript for *The Trembling of the Veil* (*Mem* 128). He does not, however, see the significance for Yeats's work of the connexions and the differences between the versions of the 'Children of Lir' story as retold by Ella Young in her *Celtic Wonder Tales* (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1910, illustrated by Maud Gonne, 143–60) and in A. L. Burt's *IFFT*. See also Donald Torchiana on Maud Gonne and Fionnuala, in his "Among School Children" and the Education of the Irish Spirit' (*In Excited Reverie: A Centenary Tribute to William Butler Yeats*, ed. by A. Norman Jeffares and K. G. W. Cross [London, Melbourne and Toronto: Macmillan, and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965]), 139–40.

<sup>43</sup> See *VP* 322–23. According to *Chambers' English Dictionary, Pronouncing, Explanatory, Etymological etc.*, ed. and rev. by Thomas A. Davidson (London and Edinburgh: W&R Chambers, Ltd., 1908) 'conquest is the act of conquering: that which is conquered or acquired by physical or moral force: the act of gaining the affections of another' (202). Yeats owned the 1914 printing (*YL* 1294).



Not that Yeats's Cuchulain was ever very close to the Cuchulain of Irish legend. The legendary Cuchulain is a half-divine figure who chooses, instead of a long, ordinary existence, a short and glorious life as the defender of his people. He is distinguished by his superhuman skill as a fighter and his passion as a lover, and, like Achilles, he is proud, wrathful, and impulsive. Yeats's Cuchulain possesses these traits, but his voice and language identify him as a poet possessing and possessed by Shelley's thirst for the absolute, Keats's love of beauty, and Byron's metrical skill and swagger; and, since he is also a stand-in for Yeats, he is subject to self-betrayals; torn, at times, between his inner life and his public role; and overwhelmed, at other times, by the 'ungovernable sea' of his own imaginings. If the Rising had not occurred, Yeats might have allowed his audiences to ignore the differences between the legendary and the Yeatsian figures. But even before the Rising, *At the Hawk's Well* (first performed in a London drawing room, in early April 1916) had opened a space between them.<sup>44</sup> Yeats did all he could, at least until the mid-1930s, to widen that space.

Among the forms taken by that effort was one that began in 1916 and, by 1919, was decisive for Yeats's life as a playwright. This was a turn away from Western theatre, toward his adaptations of Nō—away from the Abbey audience, and their desire only to 'see and understand', toward a different audience that, given a different theatre, would desire also to 'feel and imagine'.<sup>45</sup> The portrayals of Cuchulain in Yeats's first Nō adaptations, *At the Hawk's Well* (1917) and *The Only Jealousy of Emer* (1919), were begun in January 1916 and November 1917. In the next three or four years, I suspect, Yeats had begun to recognize the Rising, like his turn away from the Abbey audience, as an unintended consequence of his attempt to dis-enchant the Children of Lir.

<sup>44</sup> On a source of *At the Hawk's Well* in Motokiyō Zeami's Yōrō, see Richard Taylor, 'Assimilation and Accomplishment: Nō Drama and an unpublished source for *At the Hawk's Well*' (YT 137–58).

<sup>45</sup> See 'A People's Theatre', an open letter to Lady Gregory dated 1919 (*Ex* 257; *CW8* 133).

‘Leda and the Swan’, written in 1924, reflects his awareness, in hindsight, of the deceptions and self-deceptions attending that project. These came from his involvement, through Maud Gonne, with political movements that were, as he writes in ‘The Stirring of the Bones’, ‘no business of [his]’ (*Au* 354; *CW3* 268). Accompanying that involvement was his failure, as a public figure, to distinguish Gonne’s activism from his. This failure resulted in—or, perhaps, began in—a certain blurring of images, an identification that surfaced in his poem ‘The Rose of the World’ (1891), more specifically and identifiably in ‘No Second Troy’ (1908) and, much later, in ‘Among School Children’ (1926) with Maud Gonne imagined as Helen, a daughter of the swan with a Ledeian body that, by the mid-1920’s, has become spectral—‘hollow of cheek as though it drank the wind | And took a mess of shadows for its meat’ (*VP* 111, 256, 443–44).

But it seems that Yeats also imagined Gonne as Fionnuala, the daughter of Lir, as she was before her jealous stepmother turned her into a swan. Other readers—most notably Donald Torchiana and Herbert J. Levine—have noticed that one of Yeats’s poems, ‘The Arrow’ (written 1901), describes Gonne, ‘when newly grown to be a woman’, as ‘Tall and noble but with face and bosom | Delicate in colour as apple blossom’. They have noticed, too, that the blossom image also appears in *Celtic Wonder Tales* (1910), a collection of stories for children ‘retold by Ella Young, illustrated and decorated by Maud Gonne’ and published by Maunsel & Company, Dublin, in which Fionnuala is ‘my white blossom’ and her beauty is compared to ‘sunshine in blossomed branches’ (148, 145). Yeats returns to the blossom image in ‘Four Years: 1887–91’ describing Gonne at their first meeting: ‘Her complexion was luminous, like that of apple blossom through which the light falls, and I remember her standing that day by a great heap of such blossoms in the window’.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> These lines in ‘The Arrow’, in the version first published in 1903, don’t specify apple blossoms. They read, ‘Blossom pale, she pulled down the pale blossom | At the moth hour and hid it in her bosom’. The lines specifying ‘apple blossom’ were first published in *Later Poems* in 1922, although Yeats first inserted them in the poem, it seems, in a 9 November 1909 diary entry that begins ‘I want to re-write “The Arrow”’; he then gives them in the version published thirteen years later (*Mem* 236; *VP* 199; *Au* 123; *CW3* 119–20). In adapting the tale, Young uses

It seems, however, that the description of Fionnuala in the Children of Lir story as Ella Young retold it is not based on a Celtic source but on Yeats's poem—that is, on 'The Arrow' as it was published in 1903. In Jacobs' version of 'The Fate of the Children of Lir' as it is included in the 1898 *IFFT*, Fionnuala is named Fingula, and there is nothing like this description in that version of the story. So the only thing linking the Children of Lir story to Maud Gonne, in Yeats' published work, is the 1903 version of 'The Arrow', a poem by Yeats that was published seven years before the Gonne/Young children's book and says nothing about Fionnuala or Leda or Helen. If we look further into the story of Leda, then, it suggests that the conflation of Gonne with Fionnuala was Ella Young's creation, not Yeats's—a creation as misleading as Zeus's swan disguise, in the Greek story of Zeus and Leda.

As Helen Sword notes, that disguise reverses the power relations between Leda and Zeus. Swans were sacred to an exclusively feminine early cult in ancient Greece, because of their V-shaped formation in flight. Summarizing Robert Graves, she writes, 'For the ancient Greeks, swans were the sacred birds of women—"the V-formation of their flight was a female symbol"—and particularly of Aphrodite, the goddess of love; thus, in the mythology of later centuries, Zeus takes the form of a swan not because it signifies male power but precisely because it offers him the most deceptive means whereby to catch Leda off her guard'. In Sword's reading of the story of Zeus and Leda, Zeus's swan disguise enabled him eventually to replace the swan with his own universalizing image. Sword also quotes Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, who 'relates how ... early Indian legends of a swan goddess who mates with a mortal man later became reversed,

the blossom images of the 1903 'Arrow' to conflate Gonne with Fionnuala. In his 1909 revision of the poem, however, as in the 1922 memoir, Yeats widens the distance between Gonne and Fionnuala by making the image more specific and presenting it as fictionalized biography, not personalized legend. See also *Mem* 40–42 for a more immediate memory of the meeting in Bedford Park, west London. Given that the event is in January, the blossom might just have been almond blossom, in a mild winter.

so that the once powerful goddess was eventually “demoted”, like the hapless Leda of Hellenic myth, to “ignominious mortality and passivity”.<sup>47</sup>

Did Yeats know this aspect of Zeus’ deception? Graves’s book on the Greek myths could not have been his source; that book did not appear until 1955. But one of Graves’s comments on the sacredness of swans suggests that he and Yeats were perhaps drawing on a common source that linked the swan image to a myth of death and rebirth: ‘swans were sacred’ to ‘the Nymph-goddess’ of ‘pre-Hellenic myth’, Graves writes, ‘because, at mid-summer, they flew north to unknown breeding grounds, supposedly taking the dead king’s soul with them’. This account of the swans’ connection with a ‘Nymph-goddess’ recalls both Yeats’s situation in 1917, contemplating the destabilizing and possibly lethal effect of the Rising on Coole and the Abbey, and the revised ending of ‘The Wild Swans at Coole’, with its lines about the swans’ impending flight to unknown breeding grounds: ‘Among what rushes will they build, | By what lake’s edge or pool | Delight men’s eyes when I awake some day | To find they have flown away?’ (*VP* 323).

This uncertainty about the future was not new to Yeats, for whom the death of Parnell in 1891 and of Synge in 1909 were comparably unsettling. And, if the images in these lines are associated with an account in which the soul of a dead king is carried to a fated but unpredictable rebirth, they evoke the note to ‘Parnell’s Funeral’, in which Yeats recalls in 1932, forty one years after the event, that the dead body of Ireland’s ‘uncrowned king’, Charles Parnell, was brought to Kingston Pier in Dun Laoghaire on the same ship that took Maud Gonne—described, here, only as ‘a friend’—on the last stage of her return to Ireland from France. Yeats ends the note to ‘Parnell’s Funeral’ by recalling the words ‘My dead king’ spoken by

<sup>47</sup> Helen Sword, ‘Leda and the Modernists’, *PMLA* 107. 2 (March 1992), 305–18, n. 16. Robert Graves’s *The Greek Myths I* (Harmondsworth, Surrey; Baltimore: Penguin, 1955), 126, n. 2 is quoted in Sword’s 316–17, n. 16, as is Wendy Doniger O’ Flaherty’s ed., *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythological Beasts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 212.

Simon Dedalus after 'a violent quarrel about Parnell and the priests' in the Christmas dinner scene from James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (VP 834–35).

In the final paragraph of his note, Yeats evokes the invisible hypnotist and his symbols in a way that leads back to Leda and Gonne, when he describes Parnell as the 'symbol that made apparent, or made possible' an epoch that was the tragic contrary of the epoch preceding it, an epoch dominated by 'the great comedian' Daniel O'Connell (VP 855). Two years later, in his introduction to his play *Fighting the Waves* (1934), Yeats continues his explication of Irish cultural history by describing how, after Parnell was 'dragged down' and his party 'gave itself up to nine years' vituperation', the Irish imagination 'fled the sordid scene', and turned to 'romantic dreaming, to the nobility of tradition' (Ex 372). The living body of Gonne, then, accompanying the dead body of Parnell, was the first symbol that made this epoch of romantic dreaming apparent to Yeats, and it was associated with an event of 1891 that Yeats described in 'Parnell's Funeral' some forty years later.

Yeats recalled his first response to this event in 'His Dream' (1908), a poem that has puzzled its readers because it seemed to have nothing to do with Gonne, although it was the first poem in a series that was obviously about her. The connection with Gonne becomes clearer, however, when we learn from biographical evidence and from Yeats's note to 'Parnell's Funeral' that Gonne was the friend Yeats mentioned in that note, and that 'His Dream' seems to be linked to a myth in which a swan brings a dead king's soul to a place of rebirth. The detail linking Gonne to 'His Dream' is the king's dead body, which is contrasted with Gonne's living body in the next poem, 'A Woman Homer Sung', and the mention of Homer in the title of the poem evokes Helen's birth as the offspring of Leda and the swan. The relation between the two poems is further sharpened by the word 'thing' in the phrase 'what thing her body was'. That word echoes and contrasts with the phrase 'that thing beneath', in Stanza 3, before the speaker of the poem, a coxswain on the ship carrying the corpse, has joined in the song of the crowd running along the shore:

Though I'd my finger on my lip,  
 What could I but take up the song?  
 And running crowd and gaudy ship  
 Cried out the whole night long

Crying amid the glittering sea,  
 Naming it with ecstatic breath,  
 Because it had such dignity,  
 By the sweet name of death. (*VP* 254)

In the light of 'Parnell's Funeral', 'His Dream' reveals Yeats's aversion to 'the crowd' as it is characterized in the 1895 English translation of Le Bon's book on mass psychology. In that book, Le Bon had listed, analyzed, and illustrated the ways that crowds are moved to action by the irrational forces of suggestion and repetition, prestige and contagion.<sup>48</sup> 'His Dream' is shaped by two of those forces, repetition and suggestion, and it illustrates the force of prestige in the line 'because it had such dignity' and of contagion in the speaker's compulsion to 'take up the song', despite his reluctance to do so. That reluctance is expressed in three ways: in the implications of the word 'gaudy' which suggests both an inappropriate showiness and an inappropriate joy; in the speaker's attempt to silence the crowd; and in the crowd's ecstasy, as if, in calling the body in the ship by 'the sweet name of death', they had welcomed Parnell's demise. Given the fact suppressed in 'His Dream'—its relation to a history in which the frenzy of the crowd had 'dragged down' Parnell, then worshipped his dead body when it was returned to Ireland—'His Dream' embodies and illustrates the power of suggestion that Yeats will describe in his 1909 diary, seven months after the writing of 'His Dream', as belonging to the 'invisible hypnotist' whose 'artificial illusions' hold civilizations together.

His distrust of that power, as it shapes the emotions of crowds, had surfaced in 1903, when he warned Gonne that her conversion to Catholicism and her marriage to John MacBride would erode her prestige among her followers, who shared MacBride's religion and low birth. She had rejected that warning in a letter of 10 February

<sup>48</sup> See above, 67 n. 7.

1903 in which she wrote, ‘You say I leave the few to mix myself with the crowd while Willie I have always told you I am the voice, the soul of the crowd’ (*G-YL* 166). Yeats in his letter to Gonne had described a dream in which the Irish god Lug had put his hands in Gonne’s and told him they were married ‘and we were to do a certain great work together’ (*G-YL* 164). The title of the series that begins with ‘His Dream’ ‘Raymond Lully and his wife Pernella’ (later amended to ‘Nicholas Flamel and his wife Pernella’) alludes to that earlier dream of a mystical marriage and a great work, and in the seven remaining poems of the sequence, composed between September 1908 and May 1910, Yeats struggles to suppress the conflict between his desire to ‘take up the song’ of the crowd—a desire he will describe much later, in ‘Parnell’s Funeral’, as ‘the contagion of the throng’—and his rage at their ignorance, dishonesty, and ingratitude. In ‘Against Unworthy Praise’ (May 1910), he resolves that conflict by having the speaker of the poem renounce his desire for the ‘unworthy praise’ of the ‘knave and dolt’ who have rejected his work. And, suppressing the resentment that will resurface in ‘The People’ (1915), he has that speaker declare that he needs only the approval and inspiration of the Gonne figure in the poem to continue the work they share. He ends the poem with an image of her ‘singing upon her road | half-lion, half-child, | ... at peace’, because she is free of the desire for applause and gratitude that has disturbed his own heart.

‘Against Unworthy Praise’ appeared in 1910 in *From ‘The Green Helmet and Other Poems’*, along with six other poems that were overtly about Gonne, and the Ella Young/Maud Gonne version of the Children of Lir story appeared the same year in *Celtic Wonder Tales*. In both books Gonne is a woman of swanlike beauty united in perfect harmony with a Yeats figure—the ‘I’ in the poems of Yeats’s book and Aedh, the brother of Fionnuala in *Celtic Wonder Tales*. As Donald T. Torchiana writes, Aedh’s resemblance to ‘a young eagle in the blue of the sky’ identifies him with Yeats, and, in Gonne’s illustration for the book, the ‘motif ... of a sphere containing two swans intertwined, ultimately blent as one’, is ‘an obvious symbol of kindred souls’.<sup>49</sup> Certainly the sphere motif suggests this idea when

<sup>49</sup> See Donald T. Torchiana, “‘Among School Children’ and the Education of the Irish Spirit”, *op. cit.*, 139.

it appears in 1927 in the second stanza of 'Among School Children'. But Yeats's 'old scarecrow' persona and Gonne's spectral image in 'Among School Children' emphasize the distance between that memory and present reality (*VP* 444).

Beyond the changes wrought by ageing, there were differences between Yeats and Gonne that turned out to be irreconcilable. In the years from 'Against Unworthy Praise' to 'A Prayer for My Daughter', and from 'His Dream' to 'Parnell's Funeral', Yeats was brought back repeatedly to the image of Maud Gonne as 'the voice and soul of the crowd'. That aspect of Gonne, I believe, conflicting with Yeats's fondness for the Children of Lir story, gives 'Leda and the Swan' its complexity and psychological depth. Yeats had cast Gonne, in two of the poems that began with 'His Dream' and ended with 'Against Unworthy Praise', as Helen of Troy—as an embodiment of romantic dreaming and the nobility of tradition. Fionnuala, however, belonged to another, earlier time, when he and Gonne seemed to merge into one being, a passionate, enchanted, and doomed singer seeking a human body. But, in continuing to identify with Fionnuala, Gonne was claiming a kinship that no longer existed. As the voice of the crowd, she could have quoted the old saying 'Vox populi, vox dei' to prove that she spoke for god, but Yeats as the author of 'Parnell's Funeral', knew that this was not always so. And he also knew that the rough beast of 'The Second Coming', despite its 'head of a man', was, by the last lines of that poem, as much 'half-lion, half-child', and as much at peace with its heart as the idealized 'she' of 'Against Unworthy Praise'.

I am sceptical, too, of Levine's reading of the Yeats-Gonne relationship as it affects Yeats's development as a poet. What Yeats frees himself from, in 'The Wild Swans at Coole' and 'Leda and the Swan', is not so much his personal obsession with Gonne—Levine concedes that 'there is no ... clean break in his feelings. ... [and the] remembered swans of the past continued to inhabit Yeats's imagination'. But Yeats does make an almost complete break, long before he wrote 'The Wild Swans at Coole', from the identification of Gonne with Fionnuala in the Young/Gonne version of the Children of Lir story. I'd therefore modify Levine's insight with the thought that in 1917, as in 1891, an age was the reversal of an age, and to



reverse an age you had to define and characterize it. The swan images in 'The Wild Swans at Coole' have their source in the distinction Yeats was forced to make thirteen years earlier, in 1903, between his identification of *Gonne* as *King Lir's* daughter, the voice and soul of the swan children, and the role *Gonne* herself took on in her public life as 'the voice and soul of the crowd'.

In 'His Dream', therefore, Yeats begins a series of poems in which *Gonne* is the symbol of a new age in which the narrative generated by the tragic death and putative resurrection of Ireland's 'dead king', *Parnell*, is replaced by an apolitical romanticism and traditionalism. The instability evoked by 'His Dream' harks back to that narrative, in addition, possibly, to another narrative in which a swan, identified with the swan child *Fionnuala*, accompanies the body of the dead king to the secret place where he will be buried and the swan will begin a new cycle of history. In the poems that follow 'His Dream', 'King and No King' alludes to the fact that *Aodh* is *Fionnuala's* brother and therefore cannot be her lover, but in 'A Woman Homer Sung' and 'No Second Troy' she becomes the daughter of conquering *Zeus*, not grieving *Lir*. In 'Reconciliation' she joins Yeats in discarding the props of his Celtic phase, and in 'Against Unworthy Praise' her strength and innocence enable her to renounce praise or gratitude, even from the people she serves.

In 1917, however, this passage from instability to balance is reversed by Yeats's brilliant revision of 'The Wild Swans at Coole'. The swans at Coole appear in his poem as natural, local images, truly 'wild' because, as *Levine* recognized, their meaning as totems or symbols or emblems is still latent, still potential. Yeats realizes that potential in later poems, beginning with the swan in part III of 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', the 'solitary soul' that, like the swan children after their baptism, 'has leaped into the desolate heaven', and the realization of that potential culminates in 'Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931', in which the collectively created soul of Yeats and the other Irish writers of his movement drifts like a swan on the waters of the generated soul, and is, in its closeness to folk-tradition, 'so arrogantly pure, a child might think | It can be murdered with a drop of ink'.

The earliest source in Yeats's writing for the image of the murdered swan is a negative comment in 'Samhain: 1902', on a play in Gaelic by Douglas Hyde. Yeats's comments about the play end with a reference to an eponymous character in a fictional work by Villiers de l'Isle Adam: 'Did not M. Tribulat Bonhomet discover that one drop of ink can kill a swan?' (*Ex* 90, *CW8* 14–15 & n. 19) I haven't discovered precisely how this reference relates to the metaphor in Yeats's poem, but Yeats's reservations about Hyde's play do cast light, I think, on the development of the swan image between 1917 and 1931. Despite praising Hyde as 'the chief Gaelic poet of our time', Yeats writes that Hyde's play is his 'least interesting as literature' because Hyde's 'imagination, which is essentially the folk imagination, needs a looser construction' He goes on to say that Hyde's play 'gets its effect from keeping close to one idea' and thereby 'loses the richness of its own life, while it destroys the wayward life of his own mind by bringing it under too stern a law. Nor could charming verses make amends for ... that abounding black bottle' (*Ex* 90). In the context of this passage, the metaphor of the murdered swan defines genius, for Hyde, in terms that are eminently local, specifically Irish, and, above all, folkloric, oral, and free of the literary 'inkhorn' words, drawn from an 'abounding black bottle', which threaten that genius.

As Levine recognizes, Yeats, post-1916, does not wholly free himself from his obsession with Gonne. But Levine appears to consign all things Gonne, along with all things local and feminine, to a private, inaccessible realm irrelevant to 'universal symbols' and to Yeats's development as a poet. As a result, he misses several important features of that development, including the metaphors related to Gonne in Yeats's post-1916 poems and plays. One of these is 'Quarrel in Old Age', which, in 1931, retrieves Gonne's youthful image as an eternal archetype—'that lonely thing | that shone before these eyes | Targeted, trod like spring'—in lines that recall the phrase 'what thing her body was' in 'A Woman Homer Sung'. Another is Yeats's final play, where she appears as Aoife, the mother of the nameless young man who challenges Cuchulain to mortal combat and is recognized, too late, as his only son. And there is her appearance in Yeats's poem 'A Bronze Head' (1938), where her 'bird's round eye'

evokes an image of Gonne as the crow-headed Celtic goddess of war who sees 'gangling stocks grown great, great stocks grown dry' and, in the grim, terrified, and terrifying last lines of the poem, 'wonders what was left | For massacre to save'.

Levine also misses the metaphoric dimensions of the Children of Lir story, based on its specific allusions to Irish experience and its specific meaning for Irish readers, which gives it a symbolic weight comparable to that of the classical Greek story of Zeus and Leda; in Yeats's identification with Leda, as much as (if not more than) Zeus, he counters the brutality of Zeus in his swan disguise by taking on the humanity (with the femininity) of Leda. Recent scholarship has focused on this aspect of the poem. As Bernard McKenna emphasizes in his analysis of its draft manuscripts, those drafts emerge from the conflict between the brutality of the swan and the human and divine forces that struggle against it, personified in Leda and Zeus. 'The poem's drafts', McKenna writes, 'portray the tragic stories of an animal brutality that all but destroys the divinity of Zeus and that violates Leda, even though she emerges as an individual with agency and an identity independent of her violation. ... The final form of the poem, read in the context of the drafts, reaffirms the tragic consequences of Leda's rape but also affirms her potential for self-awareness'.<sup>50</sup>

This interpretation establishes Yeats's strong identification with Leda but not his awareness of the feminine swan cult that enabled Zeus, disguised as a swan, to deceive Leda. It is tempting to speculate about the effect this knowledge could have had on Yeats. Knowing the full import of Zeus' chosen disguise, he would have recognized, in hindsight, that he was deceived, as Leda was. He might have resisted Gonne more strongly if he had known her as an embodiment of conquest, not passion, a daughter of Zeus, not of Aphrodite or Lir. This knowledge would account for his identification with Leda in the poem and would affect the meaning of the question that ends it. As Brian Arkins has pointed out, 'The implied correspondence ...

<sup>50</sup> Bernard McKenna, 'Violence, Transcendence, and Resistance in the Manuscripts of Yeats's "Leda and the Swan"', *Philological Quarterly*, 90. 4 (Fall 2011), 425–44 (425 and ff.).

between the phases of the act of rape—penetration, orgasm, post-coital lassitude—and the fate of Troy and the Greek leader leads on to the crucial question of the status of Leda's union with the Swan—the question of whether Leda acquired 'divine knowledge when Zeus overpowered and raped her?' Arkins thinks she did.<sup>51</sup> I'm inclined to think she did not, any more than Mary, in Yeats's poem 'The Mother of God' would have recognized that her phrase 'and gathered all the talk' prefigures the doctrine of the Logos, which brings together two Greek words meaning 'to gather' or 'to collect' and 'to talk'.<sup>52</sup>

As I read 'Leda and the Swan', the point of the analogy between Leda's sensations and the events that followed is that Leda did not recognize the sensations of the rape—the broken wall, the burning roof and tower—as prefigurations of the Trojan War and its aftermath, any more than Yeats recognized the events he witnessed and participated in—especially the Jubilee riots in Dublin in 1897, described in 'The Stirring of the Bones' section of the *Autobiographies*—as prefigurations of the violence to come. Or did he?

Yeats, in 1934, writes of the unconscious in his essay 'The Mandukya Upanishad'. Would it have warned him—perhaps in dreams—of the consequences of his own thoughts and acts? In 1916, in *At the Hawk's Well*, the Guardian of the Well, with her hawk eyes, embodies the self-knowledge that the Old Man denies and the Young Man will attain, although it will come too late to save him from the consequences of his acts. This must be what Yeats means when he writes that 'We begin to live when we have conceived life as tragedy' (*Au* 189; *CW3* 163). Certainly, by 1922, as the author

<sup>51</sup> See Brian Arkins, *Builders of My Soul: Greek and Roman Themes in Yeats* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1990), 99.

<sup>52</sup> The etymology of the word 'Logos' derives from the Greek term meaning 'word, speech, discourse, reason'. It first appeared in English in a translation by Sir Philip Sidney and Arthur Golding in 1587 (OED, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/109857>). 'Its Proto-Indo-European root means "to collect" (with derivatives meaning "to speak", on notion of "to pick out words") ... used by Neo-Platonists in various metaphysical and theological senses and picked up by New Testament writers' (Collins English Dictionary—Complete and Unabridged 10th Edition. HarperCollins).

of ‘The Stirring of the Bones’, he had a sharp awareness of those consequences, reflected in his account of the cost of the Jubilee riots in Dublin—

many have been wounded; some two hundred heads have been dressed at the hospitals; an old woman killed by baton blows or perhaps trampled under the feet of the crowd; and ... two thousand pounds worth of decorated plate glass windows have been broken. I count the links in the chain of responsibility, run them across my fingers, and wonder if any link there is from my workshop. ... A week later Maud Gonne marches forty thousand children through the streets of Dublin, and in a field beyond Drumcondra, and in the presence of a priest of their church, they swear to cherish towards England, until the freedom of Ireland has been won, an undying enmity. How many of those children will carry bomb or rifle when a little under or a little over thirty? (*Au* 368; *CW3* 277)

‘Leda and the Swan’ ends with a question about knowledge and power that Yeats, in 1924, must have asked himself. And if that poem is about the poet and his muse (as Helen Vendler remarked in a talk she gave in New York some years ago) it seems that Leda is the poet, not the muse—a poet who, with divided emotions, witnesses and participates in the power of an Olympian in disguise: this poet resembles the Maud Gonne whom Yeats saw, in the 1890’s, as the Countess Cathleen, an embodiment of pity who sacrifices her own soul in a good cause, not the sovereignty figure Cathleen ni Houlihan, the queen, disguised as the Shan Van Voght or Poor Old Woman, who demands the blood of others.

But, whatever he knew of the Greek background of the Leda story, Yeats did not recognize the power of Irish militancy to disrupt his world—and the violence that would accompany this disruption—until it was too late. This truth, however, evokes a counter-truth that he came to see and articulate in his late dance plays: his attraction to this disruptive power. This attraction is expressed in a question and response from *A Full Moon in March* (1935), in which one member of the chorus sings, ‘Why must those holy, haughty feet descend | From emblematic niches, and what hand | Ran that delicate rattle through their white? | My heart is broken, yet must understand’, and another singer answers, ‘For desecration, and the

lover's night' (*VPI* 989; *CW2* 508). The 'perfect service' of the Irish state is eroticized and humanized in this dialogue, in which Yeats attempts to reconcile Cathleen ni Houlihan's conquering image with the emblematic purity of Intellectual Beauty and The Secret Rose. And, in the action of the play as a whole, he dramatizes the tensions in the word 'conquest'—between artistry and moral force—that shaped Irish cultural and political life during his lifetime and for several decades after his death.

#### A BODY REBORN

The achievement of Yeats as a poet seems to me to combine the daring of a Brian Merriman with his own daring attempt—as an Anglo-Irishman devoted to certain English poets, influenced by Nō drama and by Shri Purohit Swami—to 'other' the Irish, even as he Irishizes the other. The source of that daring, which I see as a distinguishing Irish trait, is the ability to resist the temptation offered in the happy ending of the Ella Young/Maud Gonne version of the Children of Lir story, in which the swans transmit their songs to a bard who will preserve them; they are then converted to Christianity and briefly resume their human form, but as withered skeletal ancients. They are, however, rewarded for their conversion when they find their true home in heaven.

This version of the story lacks the sternness emphasized in the following excerpt from a review published in *The Bookman* in July 1895.

'The Children of Lir' is of the great family of transformation legends, ... But ... the Celtic fairy tale has this distinction, that removed as it is far from the region of human habitation, remote, ethereal, and, other peoples say, too often inhuman, ... no other has so sternly dared to face inexorable human fate—sorrow, decay, and death .... After ages of wandering and suffering, the swan-children, [are] given back their human shape, but with it the feebleness and the palsy of old age, and at the touch of the holy water they drop dead.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> The review, though unsigned, is attributed to Yeats by Allan Wade in his *Bibliography* and reprinted in *CW9* 268.

The end of the Children of Lir story, as it is described in this anonymous review, is plausible evidence that Yeats either wrote the review or shared its author's vision, which acknowledges the permanence, in human existence, of disruption, failure, and loss. The *Bookman* review also casts light on the swan imagery in Section III of 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen'. Section I of the sequence laments the decline of Yeats's cultivated audience and his Ascendency patrons, but Section III mourns the appropriation, by those for whom art serves the national myth, of desires to which Yeats's imagination and craft had given 'beauty, a meaning, and a form all can accept' (*Myth* 362). In that section of the poem the speaker begins by trying, like an imprisoned king, to reason himself out of his grief at the loss he has suffered, declaring his satisfaction with his vision of the swan as an emblem of 'the solitary soul'. But then, with the line 'The swan has leaped into the desolate heaven', he ends, like a disinherited prince, in rage at the isolation that tempts him to destroy 'even the half-imagined, the half-written page'. The image of the swan that has 'leaped into the desolate heaven' has evoked the 'inexorable human fate' confronted in the Children of Lir story, in addition to the speaker's rage at the possibility that future generations will reject that tragic vision for the consolations offered by a fantasy in which every loss is balanced by a reward. In the story as it is told in Jacobs' *More Celtic Fairy Tales*, the children are deprived of their human bodies but keep their human voices. The Young/Gonne version, however, carries this restoration much further: their history is not lost, because the bards will preserve it; their home is a desolate ruin, but they will have a better one in heaven.

For Yeats, those consolations are unacceptable. He gives his audiences and readers, instead, the prologue of his final play, in which, in place of the noble swans transmitting their songs to the bard, we have the hysterical Producer ranting to the audience and, in the play's final lyrics, the disappointed but still desirous harlot singing to the beggar man. Those final lyrics prove that the Producer is wrong. History is not an old maid; and, though promiscuous, she is alive and fertile. Her desire sets the street singer singing and the street musicians playing again, as her dissatisfaction sets the wheel of

history turning again. And, considering Yeats's definition of myth, her audience may be a beggar man because he lacks, and will always lack, 'sufficient evidence' for whatever vision the invisible hypnotist grants to him. That vision takes form at the end of the play's mythic action, when Emer's love for Cuchulain is expressed in a dance of mourning and triumph. In that action, Cuchulain's body—*Celestial Body* or *Body of Fate* in the terms of *A Vision*—begins as myth, lives in history, and ends as a mask or geometric form, not the spectral being that some may call tradition. It is this version of tradition, I believe, that Yeats describes, in 'The Completed Symbol' chapter of *A Vision B* as 'pursuing, persecuting and imprisoning the Daimons' (the supernatural messengers who, in challenging poets and artists, liberate their imaginations and their antiselves.)<sup>54</sup>

That liberation was achieved by Yeats when he came to reject the mythic power that all too easily 'conquers the people' and, with it, the authority that, despairing of 'Art alone', he had embraced in the 1909 diary. The loss entailed in this rejection is absolute. As Yeats writes in his letter to Sturge Moore, 'when the criticism of myth is finished, there is not even a drift of ashes on the pyre .... We free ourselves from obsession that we may be nothing. The last kiss is given to

<sup>54</sup> See the Greek saying, 'Myths are the activities of the daimons', quoted in 'The Stirring of the Bones' (*Au* 373; *CW3* 281). Also see two passages in *A Vision* (1937). The first passage reads, 'sometimes the *Celestial Body* is a prisoner in a tower rescued by the Spirit. Sometimes grown old it becomes the personification of evil. It pursues, persecutes and imprisons the *Daimons*' (*CW14* 139; *AVB* 189). But, in a sentence three pages on, the *Celestial Body* is described as 'timeless', 'My teachers do not characterize the *Celestial Body*', this reads, 'but it is doubtless the timeless' (*CW14* 141, *AVB* 192). This is hard to understand. How can it be both old and timeless? But then, Venus is old and spectral for Merriman in Ireland in the late eighteenth century, although she is timeless and mythical there and elsewhere earlier in that century, at least for Swift as the author of *Cadenus and Vanessa*. If sequential time is illusory, the contradiction can perhaps be resolved, though I'm inclined to turn from this problem to another passage, toward the end of 'The Completed Symbol', which returns the poet, along with his readers, to a reality he describes there as 'concrete, sensuous, bodily. My imagination', he continues, 'was for a long time haunted by figures that, muttering "the great systems", held out to me the sun-dried skeletons of birds, and it seemed to me that this image was meant to turn my thoughts to the living bird' (*AVB* 214). I hope that this essay will similarly turn the thoughts of readers to the 'concrete, sensuous, bodily' reality of Yeats's poems and plays.



the void'. (See above, 90). Yeats accepts this loss in the verses that speak of the 'rich dark nothing' and the 'proper dark' in which civilization is renewed; and, finally, he accepts it in his choice of the Morrighu, not the Old Man Producer of the Prologue, to accompany Cuchulain to his last battle and arrange Emer's dance. As the crow-headed goddess of war, who 'cannot lie' and who clears the dead from the field of battle, the Morrighu presides over the losses that the Producer cannot face, then leaves the stage to Emer. It 'darkens slowly', and Emer 'stands motionless' in the darkness where the soul of Cuchulain, that great fighting man, is 'about to sing'.<sup>55</sup>

The play's final moments return the audience to the light, the street singer, and her song about the harlot History. What the harlot desires is 'body', a crucial term for Yeats. And tradition lives for Yeats as a body reborn, not a treasure preserved: Phidias reborn in Michelangelo, Homer's hexameters in Chapman's fourteeners, Blake and the great Romantics, along with Shakespeare and Marvell, Sophocles and Synge and Zeami, reborn in his poems and plays. His legacy to Irish writers, finally, is a body of work in which daring and skill are born of disruption, failure, and loss; of the knowledge that is always, in some measure, a kind of death; and of creative joy, separated from fear.

<sup>55</sup> See The Death of Cuchulain: *Manuscript Materials*, *op. cit.*, 11, nn. 32 and 179.

## AFTERWORD

I began to think of this essay when I wrote a presentation, 'My Soul's First Shape' for a 2010 meeting of the American Conference on Irish Studies. Its subject was the Irish identity Yeats shaped, after 1916, for himself and for future Irish writers. I reworked that presentation because of my resistance to the tendency, in John Swift's review and in other comments on the Rising, to read 'Easter 1916' as Yeats's definitive and final response to that event. I've therefore tried to show the connections between Yeats's history as an Irish writer and his second thoughts about that history, in the decades when the martyrdom of the 1916 rebels was emerging (in Roy Foster's words) as the 'sacrificial foundation myth of modern Ireland' (*Life* 2 645). To trace those connections, I've written on a wide range of subjects, including the influence of Nō drama on *The Resurrection*, and my analysis of that play draws on my experience of Nō as a theatregoer in Tokyo from 1971 to 1976 and in New York up to the present. In considering the sources and ideas that influenced Yeats, I've tried to make clear what he most valued as a writer of his time and his nation. And, although my views coincide at certain points with those of Seamus Murphy and Declan Kiberd, especially about 'The Stare's Nest by My Window', the epigraph to *Responsibilities*, and *The Resurrection*, I had arrived at those views before I'd read either writer.



‘Satan Smut & Co’:  
Yeats and the Suppression of Evil Literature in the  
Early Years of the Free State<sup>1</sup>

Warwick Gould

FOOTNOTING IRRECONCILABLE REALITY

JULIAN BARNES the novelist and critic recently recalled a centenary exhibition at the Royal Academy in London entitled ‘1900: Art at the Crossroads’, which had displayed

without preferential hanging or curatorial nudge, a cross section of what was being admired and bought as the previous century had turned, regardless of school, affiliation or subsequent critical judgment. ... If such an exhibition had been organised in 1900, you could imagine visitors feeling baffled and affronted by the enormous aesthetic squabble in front of them. Here was the cacophonous, overlapping, irreconcilable actuality that would later be argued and flattened into art history, with virtue and vice attributed, victory and defeat calculated, false taste rebuked.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [warwick.gould@sas.ac.uk](mailto:warwick.gould@sas.ac.uk)? Apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Life turned into something else’ in *The Guardian*, 2 May 2015 (*Review*, 2–3) see also ‘Art Doesn’t Just Capture the Thrill of Life ... Sometimes it is that Thrill’,

Such cacophonies are very familiar from microbiographies.<sup>3</sup> I wonder how a micro-biography of selected *textual* lives might benefit from the display of 'cacophonous, overlapping, irreconcilable actuality'? The early years of the Irish Free State provide an admirable case-study of irreconcilabilities: its annals are more revealing than abstraction-driven, 'flattening' analysis. My focus is on the interactions between Yeats's new writing, rewriting, and his 'required writing'—the phrase is Philip Larkin's—as a Senator and public man. My texts include: 'The Dedication of a Book of Stories from the Irish Novelists' in its early (1890) and rewritten versions (1924–1925), 'Leda and the Swan' in its first (1924) version, and the essays, 'The Need for Audacity of Thought' (1926), 'The Censorship and St Thomas Aquinas' and 'The Irish Censorship' (both 1928), and I bear in mind Yeats's comment to Derek Verschoyle, editor of the *Spectator*, in 1933 'my writings have to germinate out of each other', an organic notion at odds with Barnes's 'irreconcilable reality'.<sup>4</sup>

I take a couple of passages more or less unannotated in Yeats's *Collected Works*, to give some sense of Yeats's perspective upon the Free State's bitter fissiparity.

Some weeks ago, a Dublin friend of mine got through the post a circular from the Christian Brothers, headed A Blasphemous Publication and describing how they found 'the Christmas number of a London publication in the hands of a boy'—in the hands of innocence. It contained 'a horrible insult to God ... a Christian Carol set to music and ridiculing in blasphemous language the Holy Family'. But the Editor of a Catholic Boys' Paper rose to the situation; he collected petrol, roused the neighbourhood, called the schoolboys about him, probably their parents, wired for a film photographer that all might be displayed in Dublin, and having 'bought up all unsold copies ... burned them in the public thoroughfare. However, he first

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/may/02/julian-barnes-art-doesnt-capture-thrill-of-life>. Barnes counsels that this exhibition in 2000 'deliberately' did not 'seek [...] to instruct' (*ibid.*). Subsequently collected as the introduction to Barnes's *Keeping an Eye Open: Essays on Art* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2015), 7–8.

<sup>3</sup> I think of James Shapiro's *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (2006), or his *1606: The Year of Lear* (2015).

<sup>4</sup> 21 May 1933, to Derek Verschoyle, *CL InteLex* 5877; L, 809.

extracted the insult—the burning was to be as it were in effigy—that he might send it here and there with the appeal: “How long are the parents of Irish children to tolerate such devilish literature coming into the country?”<sup>5</sup>

Ecclesiastics, who shy at the modern world as horses in my youth shied at motor-cars, have founded a ‘Society of Angelic Welfare’. Young men stop trains, armed with automatics and take from the guard’s van bundles of English newspapers. Some of these ecclesiastics [Page 481] are of an incredible ignorance. A Christian Brother publicly burnt an English magazine because it contained the Cherry Tree Carol, the lovely celebration of Mary’s sanctity and her Child’s divinity, a glory of the mediaeval church as popular in Gaelic as in English, because, scandalized by its naïveté, he believed it the work of some irreligious modern poet; and this man is so confident in the support of an ignorance even greater than his own, that a year after his exposure in the Press, he permitted, or directed his society to base an appeal for public support, which filled the front page of a principal Dublin newspaper, upon the destruction of this ‘infamous’ poem.<sup>6</sup>

When was this book-burning, and by whom was it conducted, and what was the burnt periodical containing ‘The Cherry Tree Carol’? When did vigilantes hold up trains? I concede the difficulty presented by the vast sea of print that is the era’s legacy, yet ‘untraced’ remains too much for some editors. Its absence tells readers that *they* should know the answer, especially when ‘untraced’ appears elsewhere in an edited text.

‘The Cherry Tree Carol’ had appeared in the 1925 issue of *Pears’ Annual* which had been burned by the Christian Brothers in February 1925. Louis M. Cullen tells the story of the ‘bullying element of the relationship’ between the Christian Brothers’ children’s monthly, *Our Boys*, and Easons who, though notionally the publisher, was the distributor of *Our Boys*. Its editor, Bro. Canice Craven, in deep financial distress brought on by a misjudged attempt to take the paper to a fortnightly format, wrote to Easons on 23 January 1926.

<sup>5</sup> From ‘The Need for Audacity of Thought’, *The Dial*, February 1926, collected in *CW10* 198–202.

<sup>6</sup> From ‘The Irish Censorship’, *The Spectator*, 29 September 1928, collected in *CW10* 214–18.

Enclosed you will find the two centre leaves of *Pear's* [*sic*] *Annual* 1925. When I saw the paper I sent scouts to buy up all the unsold copies in Dublin. I also bought some other obscene things, paying £4.10 for them all. The lot were burned publicly in front of the *Our Boys* office, the blaze being photographed by the *Evening Herald*. Perhaps you would favour me with your opinion of verse 4 (marked) ...<sup>7</sup>

Had Yeats's editors followed Cullen's clue, however, this is what they would have found.

This image is a brand plucked from the burning, thanks to eBay. *Pears' Annual* (1925) was the last number of that celebrated children's annual, and while it had merely a monochrome cover, its illuminated centre-fold is Kennedy North's Christmas 'mediaeval homage' for Cecil Sharp's version of 'The Cherry Tree Carol'. It was set amid colour-illustrated children's verse by A. A. Milne, Dickens's Christmas stories with colour illustrations by Ernest Shepherd, illustrated verses in colour by Fougasse, and reproductions of nativities by Crivelli, Botticelli, Rembrandt, David, Luini, and Corregio. Other contributors included E. V. Lucas and Heath Robinson. It cost 1/- and was published in time for Christmas 1924 / New Year 1925.

Stanza 4, after Mary has told Joseph in the orchard that she is pregnant and asked him to gather her cherries, was used by Craven to foment sectarian outrage.

Then up speaks Joseph  
                   With words so unkind;  
 Let them gather thee cherries  
                   That brought thee with child.

<sup>7</sup> L. M. Cullen, *Eason & Son: A History* (Dublin: Eason and Son, 1989), *passim*, but see 234–36, 268. Hereafter 'Cullen'. See also Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, 'The Erotics of the Ballad', in *Tumult of Images: Essays on W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Peter Liebrechts and Peter van de Kamp, 109–30 (119). This book is volume 3 of C. C. Barfoot, Theo D'haen and Tjebbe A. Westerndorp, gen. eds., *The Literature of Politics, the Politics of Literature: Proceedings of the Leiden IASAIL Conference* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1995). When her paper was reprinted in her *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 165–84, the passage was omitted. Professor Cullingford had been unable to locate her sources in April 2015, but kindly suggested that it might have been 'a later critic' or (less possibly) a newspaper. It seems possible that Cullen had indeed been her source.

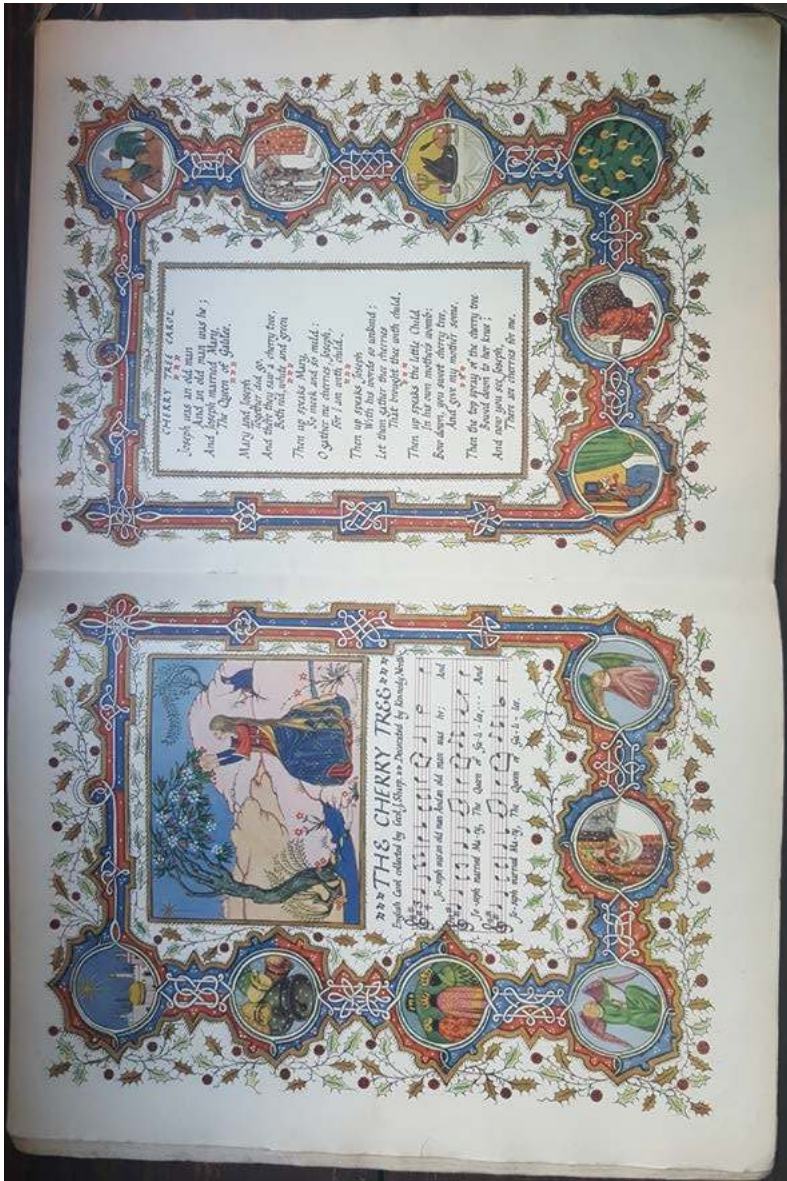


Plate 13. Centre fold of *Pears' Annual*, 1925, with an illuminated design for 'The Cherry Tree': English Carol by Cecil J. Sharp. Decorated by (Richard) Kennedy North. Image courtesy Private Collection, London.



The questions raised by Yeats about Irish Vigilantism and this particular book-burning require, however, extensive initial scene-setting. Even before the ratification by the Dáil of the 6 December 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty on 7 January 1922 and even as Yeats braced himself to endorse it, he foresaw the enduring bitterness of a settlement that, though a step in the right direction, pleased almost no one.

I am in deep gloom about Ireland for though I expect ratification of the treaty from a plebescite I see no hope of escape from bitterness, & the extreme party may carry the country. When men are very bitter, death & ruin draw them on as a rabbit is supposed to be drawn on by the dancing of the fox. In the last week I have been planning to live in Dublin—George very urgent for this—but I feel now that all may be blood & misery. If that comes we may abandon Ballylee to the owls & the rats, & England too (where passion will rise & I shall find myself with no answer), & live in some far land. Should England & Ireland be divided beyond all hope of remedy, what else could one do for the childrens sake, or ones own work. I could not bring them to Ireland where they would inherit bitterness, nor leave them in an England where being Irish by tradition, & my family & fame they would be in an unnatural condition of mind & grow as so many Irish men who live here do, sour & argumentative.<sup>8</sup>

He moved to Dublin from Oxford. The June 1922 general election brought victory to the pro-Treaty parties. The Irish Civil War (28 June 1922–24 May 1923) had been foreseen by Yeats and many others from the moment of ratification because the oath of fealty to the Crown as Head of the British Empire split Cosgrave's Sinn Féin from Republication purists.<sup>9</sup> The 'Provisional Government' became the Free State in December 1922, and in that month Yeats was appointed for six years as one of the thirty founding members of Ireland's first Seanad which met for the first time on 11 December 1922.<sup>10</sup> Republican irreconcilables saw the 'Staters'—Maud Gonne's preferred term for the likes of Yeats—as betrayers of the 1916 Easter Rising Proclamation. Bullets were fired into Senator Yeats's house, 82

<sup>8</sup> *CL IntelLex* 4039, 22 December 1921, to Olivia Shakespear.

<sup>9</sup> See Roy Foster's excellent pages on the events, 1922–28, *Life* 2 204–365.

<sup>10</sup> See *CW5* 422, n. 12.

Merrion Square, on 24 December 1922, and a fragment hit George Yeats. During the Civil War, Senator Yeats had a police guard, but his social, literary, and political eminence made him a constant target for a sniping Press long after the gunmen had ceased to threaten his family. What he was later to call 'civil rancour' (*VP* 542) indeed prevailed, largely through that increasingly turbulent Press.

In mid-November 1923, the Nobel Prize for Literature was announced, and the next month Yeats and his wife travelled to Stockholm for the actual award ceremony, as recorded in *The Bounty of Sweden*.<sup>11</sup> Alfred Nobel's 1895 Will rewards those who 'have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind', the literature prize being for 'the most outstanding work in an ideal direction'.<sup>12</sup> Yeats's citation praised: 'his always inspired poetry, which in a highly artistic form gives expression to the spirit of a whole nation'.<sup>13</sup> The phrase carried with it such an obvious echo of the Young Ireland anthology, *The Spirit of the Nation* (1845) that all who read the press release were invited to believe, that, to the Swedish Academy at least, the works of Yeats embodied a united national ideal, and that the literary career of Yeats had been a principal force in the creation of the Irish Free State, the then closest realization of that ideal. He was gracious enough in his Nobel Prize Address to mention those who had worked for the cultural movement from the fall of Parnell in 1891 in a 'disillusioned and embittered Ireland to the end of the Anglo-Irish war', lamenting that Lady Gregory and John Synge were not beside him receiving the prize.<sup>14</sup> In his short Acceptance Speech, he suggested that those in the Irish literary revival would see the award as 'a fulfillment of that dream'.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See *The Bounty of Sweden: A Meditation, and a Lecture delivered before the Royal Swedish Academy and Certain Notes* by William Butler Yeats (Dublin: Cuala, 1925); later collected in *Au* 531 and ff.; *CW3* 289 and ff.

<sup>12</sup> Nobel's Will is at [http://www.nobelprize.org/alfred\\_nobel/will/will-full.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/alfred_nobel/will/will-full.html)

<sup>13</sup> 'The Nobel Prize in Literature 1923', [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/1923/](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1923/)

<sup>14</sup> Emphasis added. See *Au* 553–54, 559 and 571–72; *CW3* 406, 410, 418. Just how 'embittered' certain Irish factions remained is evident in their reaction to the award, a matter explored below.

<sup>15</sup> *CW10* 164.

There were those who did not rejoice in the award to Yeats, and Ireland. Very different pressure groups contested that 'Spirit of the Nation', and some sought exclusive ownership. Bitterness prevailed, and the Free State's great moment, however anticipated by those who had sought it, or had feared it, was all too soon perceived not to be some final consummation of history. By 1925 Yeats was fighting a proud, unsuccessful rear-guard fight on behalf of the Anglo-Irish Protestant people—'No petty people' as he termed them—in respect of their former right under English law to divorce—a 'vain battle' with implications unresolved until 1996. Less well known is the conflict in which he found himself embroiled against those who sought to theocratize the new Free State in the Catholic interest and to sacralise as Catholic martyrdom the bloodshed of 1916. This time the 'vain battle' was freedom of expression, its *casus belli* being not merely that of obscenity. This 'vain battle' was for freedom of expression, its *casus belli* not merely that of obscenity (including advertisement for contraception, illegal until 1980), but also that of blasphemy, as yet unresolved.

English law in respect of what might have a 'tendency ... to deprave or corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall' still controlled what people in the new Free State could, or should, be allowed to read.<sup>16</sup> By the 1920s this case law was highly nuanced, but

<sup>16</sup> The Obscene Publications Act 1857 ... provided for the seizure and summary disposition of obscene and pornographic materials. I use the terminology of English case law, following the Hicklin appeal case of 1868 which interpreted the Obscene Publications Act. *Regina v. Hicklin* involved ... [the reselling] of an 'anti-Catholic pamphlet entitled "The Confessional Unmasked: shewing the depravity of the Romish priesthood, the iniquity of the Confessional, and the questions put to females in confession"'. When the pamphlets were 'ordered [to be] destroyed as obscene, ... [The] court of Quarter Sessions ... revoked the order ... [holding] that [the reseller's] purpose had not been to corrupt public morals but to expose problems within the Catholic Church ... [T]he Queen's Bench, Lord Chief Justice Cockburn presiding, on April 29, 1868, reinstated the order of the lower court, holding that [the reseller's] intention was immaterial if the publication was obscene in fact. Lord Justice Cockburn reasoned that the Obscene Publications Act allowed banning of a publication if it had a "tendency ... to deprave and

in the Free State it seemed a new start should be made with stricter definitions and controls, including on that which might be deemed blasphemous. Such a charge had been vainly levelled at *The Countess Cathleen* on its Dublin production by the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899.<sup>17</sup> Before the play was performed on 21 Mar 1899, Yeats wrote ‘there is likely to be a riot as the ultramontane organ [*The Freeman’s Journal*] has denounced us for heresy and blasphemy’.<sup>18</sup> The rabble-rousing potential of such charges remained.

#### VIGILANCE, *OUR BOYS*, AND *THE CATHOLIC BULLETIN*

The Irish Vigilance Movement, an off-shoot of the UK National Vigilance Association founded in 1885 to work for ‘the enforcement and improvement of the laws for the repression of criminal vice and public immorality’,<sup>19</sup> became a popular clamour opposing foreign—especially English—newspapers and all literature judged by local groups as non-Irish, blasphemous, obscene—and influential. From at least 1911, a sporadic number of local Vigilance Committees, particularly in the West and South-West, chose to police what could be read. The best account is Cullen’s thirteenth chapter, ‘The Problem of Evil Literature’ and how it affected Easons.<sup>20</sup>

corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall”. Hicklin therefore allowed portions of a suspect work to be judged independently of context. If any portion of a work was deemed obscene, the entire work could be outlawed’. (See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hicklin\\_test](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hicklin_test)).

<sup>17</sup> *CL2* 378 and ff., 669–80 and *passim*.

<sup>18</sup> Newly recovered letter to Augustin Hamon, 21 Mar 1899, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, first published in Deirdre Toomey, ‘Three letters from Yeats to the Anarchist, Augustin Hamon’, *YA20* 393.

<sup>19</sup> After ‘The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’, a series of articles exposing child prostitution by W. T. Stead in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4–10 July 1885.

<sup>20</sup> Cullen 246–82. Cullen’s book is valuable in its mining of Eason & Sons but rarely looks beyond it. On the Limerick Vigilantes, the book-burning of October 1911, and the reaction in the Irish press, particularly among outlets of the Irish Ireland movement, see Philip O’Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Irish Revival, 1881–1921: Ideology and Innovation* (University Park, P.A.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), Ch. 1, esp. 37 and ff.



Plate 14. Front Cover, *the Irish Independent*, 11 October 1927. Image courtesy National Library of Ireland.

Few would guess from the anonymity of this ‘front page’ story that its comprehensive retrospective summary of the issues of blasphemous and obscene literature was not a news story, but the paid-for advertisement to which Yeats was to refer in ‘The Irish Censorship’. Just who paid for it we will come to presently. To read it as it would have been read at the time is to sense its urgent summary. Near the top of column 1 under ‘Chapter I’, the ‘poison[ous] ... corrupt[ing]’ of ‘public morals’ was effected through the trade in ‘impious newspapers’ purveyed by the ‘old firm’ of Satan Smut & Co., a trade denounced by His Holiness Pope Pius X, as indicated in ‘Chapter II’. Chapter III identifies the ‘cursed lust for gold’ of the ‘vendors of immoral publications’ and the ‘evil of pernicious literature’ which were ‘eating like a canker into the moral vitals of some of our youth’, even from the newspaper hoardings. This Pastoral Address by the Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland echoes—I think consciously—*Souls for Gold* (1899), the denunciation by Frank Hugh O’Donnell of *The Countess Cathleen* with its soul-buying merchants ‘travelling for the Master of all merchants’ (*VPI* 37). In ‘Chapter IV’, ‘Lord Aberdeen and an Evil Trade’, it may be seen how in 1911 the Lord Lieutenant had sympathized with the Vigilance Movement after a book-burning. Limerick had felt itself ‘troubled by the importation of objectionable newspapers’ and local vigilantes had forced some twenty-two newsagents to sign a pledge renouncing the ‘evil trade’ in such papers.

The importation of such newspapers, however, simply grew. By 1924, ‘30 tons of moral filth ... [we]re weekly sent to this country’, according to *Our Boys*.<sup>21</sup> (This Christian Brothers’ children’s fortnightly cost 2<sup>d</sup>. As a monthly prior to September 1924 it had cost 3<sup>d</sup>).<sup>22</sup> Time evidently weighed heavily after Sunday Mass and the

<sup>21</sup> *Our Boys*, 4 September 1924, 18.

<sup>22</sup> *Our Boys*, without reference to its financial crisis, claimed the format change was at the request of teachers and pupils, and would facilitate the use of the paper once or twice a week in schools for half-hour supervised reading sessions, which would help to ‘wean the youth of Ireland from the insidious reading’ of ‘Yellow Press publications’, which had played ‘havoc’ with the morality of Irish youth’. A reader from Altnagapple, Co. Donegal, inveighed on the same page against ‘foreign literature, foreign styles, foreign customs’, ‘low disgusting “jazz dance”, “foxtrot”, “one step” and the rest’ and the paper called for the ‘tiger spirit’ to be

Devil's persistence was wily. Newsboys simply bypassed the vigilantes, met the trains and sold direct to the public. Cutting out the coerced middleman damaged the social fabric of small towns. Vigilantes had little traction in the bigger cities. There is next to no sign that the 'clean literature' campaign, made any difference to the sales of such papers as *The News of the World* (London), which was indeed the 'certain Sunday newspaper' warily referred to in 'Chapter IV's' anecdote. From 1843, it had become the biggest selling English language newspaper in the world. Crime, sensation, vice, sex and drug scandals, celebrity-based scoops and populist news shifted newsprint. *The News of the World* was not, in the words of the *Nation* of Thomas Davis and others, 'racy of the soil': *The News of the Screws* or *The Screws of the World* was famously 'soiled by the racy'. And thus it stayed, until Rupert Murdoch, engulfed by phone hacking, closed it in 2011.

According to Cullen, the 'first signal that *Our Boys*' campaign for clean literature was having any effect was a 'new force' in Ballyhaunis when in December 1921 a newsagent cancelled subscriptions for a large number of comics and other foreign publications. By January 1922 *Our Boys* had launched a pledge to be forced locally by vigilantes on newsagents, not to sell 'any publications calculated to lower the Catholic mind of the youth of the parish', and the idea took off, especially in Tuam, with local Diocesan backing.<sup>23</sup>

*Our Boys* had been founded in Dublin in 1914 by the Christian Brothers as a wholesome Irish substitute for the English *Boys' Own Paper* and other such papers for juvenile readers, and aiming 'to interest, instruct and inspire the boys of our Catholic Schools, to create in them a taste for clean literature, to continue the character-forming lessons of their school days, to fire their enthusiasm for what is noble and good, to inflame their love of country, and to help in preserving them as devoted children of Our Holy Mother the Church'. A facsimile of an approving letter from Pope Pius X, 'the Pope of the young', dated 'July 10th 1914', followed. The paper's editor was Bro. M. X. Weston who had inaugurated the paper as part of the clean literature campaign. Br. Canice Craven arrived in the chair in 1916,

aroused for 'true Gaelic ideals of Faith and Fatherland' against 'diabolical work' (11:2, 18 September 1924, [41]).

<sup>23</sup> Cullen, 263.

and remained there until his death in 1929.<sup>24</sup> Padraic Pearse had been one of his pupils at the Christian Brothers School, Westland Row. Barry Coldrey describes an encounter between the young Pearse and Craven at the school, as Pearse read out an essay on ‘The Importance of Sea Power’. At ‘Our navy today sails the seven seas, supreme and unchallenged’ Craven had responded that ‘England used its naval power to plunder the rest of the world and Ireland as well’.<sup>25</sup> Craven, from Tuam and a native speaker, was ‘a much more advanced and outspoken nationalist than most contemporary Christian Brothers, and his potential influence should not be underestimated’. He may have fostered Pearse’s love of Irish language, and Pearse stayed in touch with him.<sup>26</sup> About 3 months after the Rising, Craven had been involved in a fracas with three drunken British officers, and no doubt the execution of his ‘most distinguished past student’ added to his bitter partisanship. The paper became increasingly militant but Craven would not have seen it as political, being an advanced nationalist who wholly conflated religious and political ideals.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See Dáire Keogh, ‘Our Boys, de Valera’s Ireland and the European Crisis, 1932–39’, in Mary Shine Thompson and Valerie Coghlan eds., *Divided Worlds: Studies in Children’s Literature* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2007), 126–38. Hereafter Keogh. Canice Craven was followed briefly by Br. Stanislaus Gill.

<sup>25</sup> See Barry Coldrey, *Faith and Fatherland: The Christian Brothers and the Development of Irish Nationalism, 1838–1921* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), 254.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* Pearse apparently never forgot this lesson and referred to it in later conversations with other Brothers. Ruth Dudley Edwards claims that Pearse did not himself come from an Irish Ireland background, and thinks that Craven may well have converted Pearse: see her *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1977), 14.

<sup>27</sup> Despite its tone, ‘P. J. H.’s’ 28 pp. hagiography of Craven recalls recalls his fracas with soldiers training to fight abroad in 1915, his facing down the Black and Tans who raided the offices of *Our Boys* in 1921. On that occasion, the British Auxiliaries were confronted by a poster, “Satan, Smit and Co.,” on the wall’ and ‘met Br. Canice himself at the door with a look as terrible in its righteous indignation as that which saved Rome from Attila in the days of Leo the Great’ (453). Craven was sixty-five when he took up the editorship in 1916, after a long and successful career of wringing money out of such donors as Francis Biggar, President of the Gaelic League in Belfast, the St. James’s Gate brewery of Guinness, to support the Brothers (442–43). See *The Christian Brothers Educational Record (and Necrology)*, 1930, 4436–662; also at [ftp://intranet.edmundrice.org/necrology/1860-1970/1930/James Canice Craven.pdf](http://intranet.edmundrice.org/necrology/1860-1970/1930/James%20Canice%20Craven.pdf). ‘P. J. H.’ was Very Rev. Br. P. J. Hennessy, Superior General, Christian Brothers of Ireland.



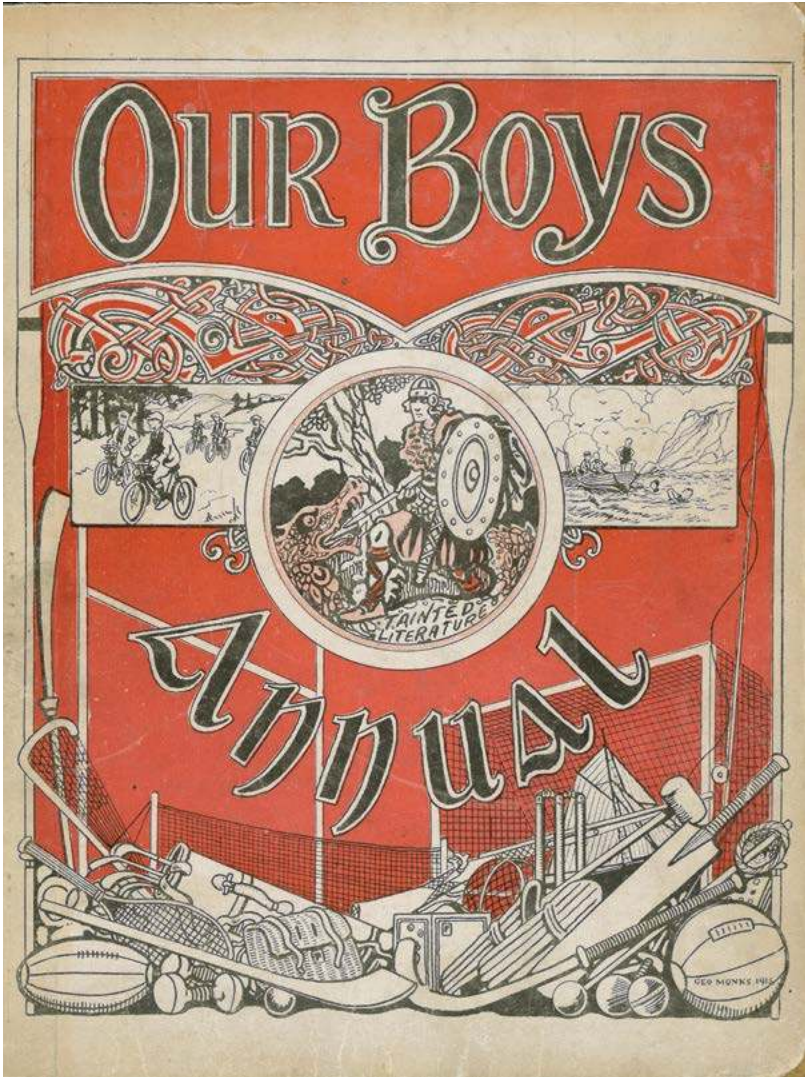


Plate 15. Cuchulain slays the dragon of 'Tainted Literature':  
 Front Cover of *Our Boys Annual*, 1915. Image courtesy  
 Christian Brothers Province Centre, Dublin.

The circulation had rapidly grown to c. 40,000 copies per month, with a readership of perhaps 100,000 peaking at 53,000 in October 1922, with over 70,000 for special issues.<sup>28</sup> The mottoes of the paper were ‘To God and Ireland True’ and ‘Purity in our hearts, Truth on our lips, Strength in our arms’.<sup>29</sup> It relentlessly attacked the evils of dancing, drink, and cinema (Ireland having the largest number of cinema seats *per capita* at the time). By 1930, circulation had fallen to 20,000, half what it had been in the years following its launch.

The front cover of *Our Boys Annual* (1915) might be a suitable emblem with which to start. Below the Celtic knotwork and bicycles and swimming, amid the unconvincing English Public-School sporting clutter for rowing, cricket, tennis, croquet, lacrosse, rugby, sailing and golf, you’ll see hurling sticks and a Gaelic football. In the central medallion, Cuchulain slays the dragon of ‘Tainted Literature’ the emblem of the paper’s chief crusade.<sup>30</sup> There is evidence from Cullen’s history of Eason & Sons that during the period with which we are concerned, distribution had been rendered very difficult, especially during 1922, because of disruption of the railways,<sup>31</sup> so the zealous Craven bullied his distributors with threats of a pamphlet campaign against them, and drove even harder bargains as his paper began to fall in circulation in 1924–1927. He also bullied his readers with ever more hysterical schemes for Angelic Warfare upon impure literature. The Brothers themselves were then and later relentlessly

<sup>28</sup> Coldrey, *Faith and Fatherland*, 127. Turnover went from £798 in 1915–1916 to £7,386 in 1923 (Cullen, 188).

<sup>29</sup> *Our Boys*, 12:6, 26 Mar. 1925, [210]. For Conor Cruise O’Brien, *Our Boys* was ‘ultra-nationalist, ultra-Catholic and Anglophobic’: see his *Ancestral Voices: Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* (Dublin: Poolbeg, 1994), 96–97.

<sup>30</sup> See also Linda King and Elaine Sisson (eds.), *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922–1992* (Cork: Cork University Press, School of Creative Arts, IADT, 2011), where an image of this copy illustrates Michael Flanagan, ‘Republic of Virtue: *Our Boys*, the Campaign against Evil Literature in the Assertion of Catholic Moral Authority in Free State Ireland’, 116–29. Flanagan’s useful essay points to *Our Boys*’ imperial rivals, *Pluck, Boys of the Empire, British Bulldog, Boys of England*.

<sup>31</sup> Cullen, 232–36. By March 1927, the paper was being distributed by the Educational Company, having, it seems, narrowly avoided bankruptcy, as feared by Eason & Sons: see Cullen, 236–37.

pushed to sell *Our Boys* through their schools at least until 1960.<sup>32</sup> It did not die until the late 1980s.<sup>33</sup>

*Our Boys* was not alone in opposing this 'filthy tide'. *The Catholic Bulletin* had been founded in 1911 by J. J. O'Kelly (1872–1957),<sup>34</sup> and 'aim[ed] ... to promote wholesome literature for the family and to support vigilance committees in their opposition to undesirable publications'. It had a circulation of c. 10,000–11,000 by June 1914, 'and was acclaimed by the bishops of Ireland'.<sup>35</sup> It supported the Rising in 1916, during which O'Kelly very skilfully managed the censorship imposed by martial law from 1 June 1916 under the Defence of Realm Act, concentrating on the social and religious repercussions of that event.<sup>36</sup> British censorship provided some sort of rocket fuel

<sup>32</sup> The *Our Boys* archives (such as they are) have until recently been in the Christian Brothers General Archive in Rome but their repatriation to Ireland is now under way. See also Keogh, 127.

<sup>33</sup> Fintan O'Toole has a wonderful little essay on its retrograde effect on his own boyhood in the late 1960s. See 'Our Boys' in O'Toole's *The Ex-Isle of Erin* (Dublin: New Island Books, 1996), 73–89.

<sup>34</sup> A Kerryman from Valentia Island, appointed to the post by the publisher M. H. Gill & Sons, O'Kelly used the *nom de plume* 'Sceilig' (he could see Sceilig Mhichíl from his window as a child in Valentia). O'Kelly had learned his Irish from his father and from newspaper columns by Peadar O'Laoghaire and Douglas Hyde. Closely associated with the IRB, he was a 'fervent' adherent of the Irish-language movement. He had helped Fr. Dineen with *Foclóir Gaed'ilge agus béarla, An Irish-English Dictionary*, had worked for the Gaelic League, and was a founder of Sinn Féin (1905). See the entry on O'Kelly by Brian P. Murphy in James McGuire and James Quinn eds., *Dictionary of Irish Biography from the Earliest Times to the Year 2002* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), vii: 603–08. Hereafter *DIB*, with volume no.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, vii: 605. The very first number opened with Rev. Patrick Forde's 'Catholic Literature'. Its first sentence was 'Why do bad and dangerous publications find a wide circulation in Ireland?' (*The Catholic Book Bulletin* [as it was entitled until its March no.] 1. 1, January 1911, 3–5 [3]).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, vii, 607. By August 1917 the *Catholic Bulletin* had been given precise details of 160 sentences, thus allowing obituaries and/or tributes with photos, a 'simple record of their lives' (*Catholic Bulletin*, 1 April 1917, 201–3. It gave prominence to stories of wives and young children. As Vice-President of Sinn Féin in 1916, O'Kelly was interned in England without trial from February–June 1917. See also J. Newsinger, "I Bring not Peace but a Sword": The Religious Motif in the Irish War of Independence', *Journal of Contemporary History* 13 (1978), 617–18, and Margaret O'Callaghan, 'Language, Nationality and Cultural Identity in the Irish Free State, 1922–7: *The Irish Statesman* and the *Catholic Bulletin* Reappraised', in *Irish Historical Studies* 24. 94 (November 1984), 226–45.

for 'Irish Ireland' i.e., 'ourselves alone' sentiment. Decontamination from British influence reinforced the *Bulletin's* claim that everyone would be better off when free of England.

The *Bulletin* remains an important historical record of British and Irish dealings at the time with the Pope.<sup>37</sup> According to P. S. O'Hegarty, the *Bulletin* was a major influence in forming a sympathetic view of those who took part in the Rising. By 1917, O'Kelly saw his paper as the chronicler of the extraordinary events and their everyday implications for posterity—and with some justice. In providing an alternative to British propaganda and censorship, its authority, founded during the Rising, grew during the War of Independence (1919–1921) when it advanced the ideals of Dáil Éireann, despite the continued threat of censorship. O'Kelly went on to be Deputy Speaker of the first Dáil, President of the Gaelic League, Minister for Irish, Minister of Education in the illegal 2nd Dáil, but, after the truce in July 1921, he opposed peace terms and so lost his cabinet place.<sup>38</sup> He relinquished his editorship in September 1922, and was followed from 1922 by Fr. Timothy Corcoran SJ (1872–1943).

Born in Tipperary, and educated at Clongowes, Corcoran had no Irish, but had become Professor of Education at UCD (1909–1942) and was to prove 'one of the most extreme nationalist spokesmen of the 1920s through his contributions to the ... *Bulletin*' from the early 1920s until its cessation in 1939.<sup>39</sup> Under Corcoran's editorship, the *Bulletin* was a vehicle for personal vendettas under his numerous pseudonyms partly to avoid being held accountable by the religious

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., 'Notes from Rome', *Catholic Bulletin*, 1 April 1917, 209–11.

<sup>38</sup> O'Kelly continued to oppose the Treaty. In June 1922, he was elected to the Third Dáil for the constituency of Louth/Meath but abstained from taking his seat. In August 1923, standing as a Republican for the Meath constituency, he was defeated for an abstentionist seat in the 4th Dáil. He was again defeated in the Roscommon by-election of 1925, his last election attempt. After the resignation of Éamon de Valera as president of Sinn Féin in 1926, O'Kelly, maintaining his abstentionist policy towards Dáil Éireann, was elected president of Sinn Féin until 1931. He was hostile towards the 1937 Constitution of Ireland, claiming it was insufficiently supportive of Irish Republicanism and that it did not require the President of Ireland to be of Irish birth. A leading opponent of De Valera, he called himself 'president of Ireland'. See *DIB*, vii, 603–8.

<sup>39</sup> *DIB*, ii, 848–49.

authorities.<sup>40</sup> These included vendettas against academic opponents as well as the rival paper, George Russell's weekly *The Irish Statesman* which, with its lofty internationalism, its opposition to literary censorship and compulsory Irish, and its support for free trade, saw the Anglo-Irish tradition as a distinctive and legitimate element of Irish civilisation.

Corcoran's causes prospered. In early 1923 the *Bulletin* sought tighter Irish Film Censorship, and a Bill was passed later that year. The film 'business' he thought an 'unwholesome and degrading traffic' with control beyond 'even the worthy efforts of Vigilance Committees and the Board of Film Censors'. 'National censorship is entirely necessary: a partial control, as for instance in large urban areas, is by no means adequate'.<sup>41</sup> The Censor (James Montgomery (from 1923–1940), and his deputy were to make the routine decisions (usually recording only a couple of words by way of justification: full records of the decisions and the reasons survive).<sup>42</sup> In February 1924, a Censorship of Films Appeal Board was set up under the new Act, with eight Commissioners under the chairmanship of Prof Wm Magennis, TD. He and Montgomery were determined that Ireland would be different, and resist commercial pressures accepted from the Film Industry elsewhere in the world.<sup>43</sup> The other

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, i.e., 'Inis Cealtra', 'Conor Malone' 'J. A. Moran', 'Art Ua Meacair', 'Momonienis', 'Dermot Curtin', 'Donal MacEgan' and 'Molua', *inter alia*. See also below 210, n. 173.

<sup>41</sup> *The Catholic Bulletin* had pressed for heightened censorship in large urban areas where consumption of such undesirable material was large and Vigilance Committees less effective. However, eight newsagents in Dublin had signed the pledge: see Cullen 262–63.

<sup>42</sup> James Montgomery later wrote: 'The charges against the cinema today are the same made against it 30 years ago; violation of moral principles, obscenity, corruption of public manners, adult immorality, creation of false notions, warping of character in years of formation, juvenile delinquency. The film industry shows up the world as a hotbed of vice—its people obsessed by sex to the exclusion of everything else'. See *Our Boys*, 30. 2, October 1943, 7.

<sup>43</sup> *Our Boys* recounts the story of how two men (Smith & Wood) came representing commercial interests from the UK and sought out Montgomery and Professor Magennis, allegedly asking them to take commercial films acceptable elsewhere to audiences of up to 120 million. Ireland (3 million) was determined to be

commissioners were Rev. T. W. E. Drury MA, Rev. John Flanagan, Máire Ní Chinnéide, Sen. Dr Oliver St. John Gogarty, Sen. Wm. B. Yeats; Prof R. H. FTCD, Alton TD; Senator Mrs J. Wise Power; Dr Myles Keogh TD, and were appointed for five years.<sup>44</sup> In 1901 Yeats had said that it was a responsibility of ‘men of ideas’ to prevent things falling into ‘rougher hands than ours’, but he lasted only until December 1924.<sup>45</sup> Dublin folklore has it that at one session Yeats was asked his view of a torrid Hollywood star, reputedly Jean Harlow. He advised ‘Undoubtedly Aquarius rising’. I am told that the Astrology is accurate.<sup>46</sup>

‘different from the rest of the world’. “That”, replied the Professor, “is precisely why we fought your people for so many centuries—because we were determined to be ourselves”. See ‘Two Bullies from London’, *Our Boys*, 11, 19 March 1925, 643.

<sup>44</sup> See TAOIS 10619a and TAOIS/S 3026 Censorship of Films Act, Irish National Archives, Dublin.

<sup>45</sup> To the Editor of *Nationality*, 18 August [1901], *CL InteLex*; *CL3* 108–9. Although the term of office was five years, some served as many as 16 years. Irish National Archives, TAOIS/S 3026, agreed on 9 February 1924 (Min C2/49) under C1.3 of the Censorship of Films Act, 1923 (no. 23 of 1923).

<sup>46</sup> The anecdote came to me from Roger Nyle Parisious who had it from Liam O’Laoghaire, later O’Leary, a former Abbey director (he discovered Maureen O’Hara), founder of the Irish Film Society (1936) and a long-time National Film Theatre historian, who was, in his late years, a staple of Irish television. He had deputized in the 1940s for the Film Censor: see Kevin Rockett, *Irish Film Censorship: A Cultural Journey from Silent Cinema to Internet Pornography* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2004), 73 and n. 57. O’Leary also wrote the definitive life of the silent film director Rex Ingram and was a friend of Leni Reifenthal, the Director of the 1935 epic of the German Olympics, *Triumph of the Will*. He rented a basement flat belonging to Imogen Stuart. In the Irish State Archives, TAOIS 10619a is a record of appointments to the Film Censorship Appeal Board which would by the way have had to report annually to the Government, and the printed reports are available at the Oireachtas Library and Research Service. In 1939, the Chairman was J. T. O’Farrell who had been member since it was set up in 1924. Other members were Prof. Walter Starkie, Maire Ní Chinnéide, Bhean Mhic Ghearailt, Rt Rev Monsignor Cronin, T. C. Murray, Very Re Canon T. W. E. Drury, Myles Keogh, Mrs M. J. McKean, T. F. Figgis. The Chairman, Canon Drury and Maire Ní Chinnéide had been members since the Board was set up in 1924, Cronin since 1926, Starkie and Murray since 1933 Mrs McKean and T. F. Figgis since 1938. ‘Yeats and the Early Years of Irish Film Censorship’ might be an absorbing doctoral topic.

A VAST, SHAPELESS, AND HIDEOUS HEAP OF THE MOST  
UTTERLY DEPRAVED AND BEASTLY FILTH

Corcoran then turned with some self-satisfaction to repressing 'the Sunday English Press ... a repertory of sordid crime, and of every form of moral filth and unclean suggestiveness'.<sup>47</sup> '[Vi]le and corrupting literature' was exposed 'for direct sale in book-shops and news-shops'. In, for instance, at the Irish Bookshop,

... in a prominent Dublin street,<sup>48</sup> the central position in the display window has been occupied for some weeks in the winter just closing, by a large volume which can only be described as a vast, shapeless, and hideous heap of the most utterly depraved and beastly filth. The writer, who lays his scene in Dublin, and the book itself are not to be named here. Even in Paris it was not found easy to procure for the work a publisher: for Paris and her government are at last waking up to the evils of such publications. ... The publication of this repulsive mass of brutal immorality was somehow achieved, and the book—banned in America and even in London—is displayed for sale in Ireland. The sale will not be great. The coterie of dabblers in such vile puddles is of an economic turn of mind: the usual method is to have one copy bought, and to have this one passed round the circle of those interested ...<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> 'Many of these journals publish articles on what they call "moral problems", articles that are far worse in their effects than even the repulsive criminal details which they serve up on other pages. There is ample reason to believe that the Post Office service is being availed of for the purveying of utterly debased books and circulars throughout Ireland'. See *The Catholic Bulletin*, 13. 3 (March 1923), 131–32.

<sup>48</sup> On 26 June 1924 Yeats wrote to Ezra Pound '... the seizure of copies of "Ulysses" was not made ... according to the Common Law of England. Ireland has no machinery whatever for seizing copies on transit under that law, though of course they are liable to prosecution under the same law as the English. The legal position here is that all English laws apply, unless specially abrogated by our Parliament. No such prosecution has taken place hitherto and "The Irish bookshop" sell[s] copies of the books & puts it in the Window' (*CL InteLex* 4574). The Irish Bookshop was in Dawson Street.

<sup>49</sup> *The Catholic Bulletin*, 13. 3 (March 1923), 131–32. 'Not naming' and periphrasis were, as we shall see, key rhetorical strategies in the campaign of vituperation waged by the *Bulletin* and *Our Boys*.

Corcoran suspected that those who would oppose banning such books had 'sufficient personal influence to secure immunity from well-deserved prosecution and imprisonment. And the sale of such writings is a much viler and much more dangerous form of profiteering than other types of it that are feelingly written about in the press'. This attack on *Ulysses* snowballed, as 'Chapter V' of the *Irish Independent*, 11 October 1927 in Plate 14 above, shows.

Professor Wilbraham Fitzjohn Trench now had Dowden's chair of English at Trinity College. His attack on *Ulysses* for 'raking hell and the sewers for dirt to throw at the fair face of life' had appeared in *The Irish Statesman* on 30 August 1924. Joyce was irreclaimable, he argued: 'the power of divine poesy to elevate the imagination' was 'annulled by the power of a bestial genius to drag it down; and this is in part the result of the championing of that genius by Dr. Yeats'.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> 'Dr Yeats and Mr. Joyce', *The Irish Statesman*, 30 August 1924, 790. Trench's full letter is as follows:

W. B. Yeats, the poet, has for long years made debtors and thralls of the lovers of beauty, by giving them to see life and the world made doubly beautiful by the light that never was on sea or land. J. Joyce rakes hell, and the sewers, for dirt to throw at the fair face of life, and for poison to make beauty shrivel and die. Now, the Dublin aesthete discovers Joyce, and Dr. Yeats undertakes that no citizen of Dublin shall fail to know his name. In season and out of season he has proclaimed him a genius. But be that so, Joyce is a genius. 'Tis true 'tis pity. But there have been geniuses who wallowed in the mire before, though whether any quite equally foul-minded, who shall say? Where then shall the lover of the beautiful, the good, the true, be taking his stand, and what shall be his cry? Vain indeed for him to point out that it is time to cry halt to the aesthete's publicity campaign on behalf of that which is so foul; for it is far too late for this. Vain too, of course, and too late, to plead with the poet to exclude so ugly a topic from public reference. Yet, if at the outset he instead of the aesthete had had the poet's ear, it may be that all he would have been able to plead would have been quite simply this: that just as the heavenly imagination of the genius drunk with beauty creates that which renders our world loftier and brighter and more glorious, even so the imagination of the genius enamoured of foulness can take away all the radiance, and leave it low, dark, mean, in perpetuity. Just that is what must be occurring. The power of divine poesy to elevate the imagination is annulled by the power of a bestial genius to drag it down; and this is in part the result of the championing of that genius by Dr. Yeats, who (Oh irony!) is Yeats the poet.

This is far from being all that the lover of the beautiful, the good, and the true would wish to say upon the subject; but the range of his human interests is rather too large for recognition or comprehension by the aesthete, with whom the poet has taken his stand: whereas the simple argument ought to appeal to everyone to whom it has been given to share in the poet's vision, for he on honey-dew has fed, and drunk the milk of Paradise.



In calling for the Free State to imitate developments in Canada and Australia and to instigate a 'Black List of banned publications', Fr R. S. Devane SJ urged 'a deterrent to the Dublin Cloacal School'. The Black List should be instigated with 'the notorious volume of a well-known degenerate Irishman'. Devane, who wrote with authority in matters of international comparative law, sought to blacklist 'cheap low-class so-called physical culture and health magazines containing not infrequently very dubious illustrations, in addition to vile advertisements', coded references to advertisements for birth control devices. 'All books, magazines etc., advocating Race-Suicide shall be regarded as belonging to this category ... and shall be automatically black-listed', he advocated. For all his legal scholarship, Devane was just one of the co-ordinated daisy-chain of bitter Catholic zealots in the Irish Press, and urged wider public knowledge of what he called Trench's 'remarkabl[e] ecastigation of Senator Yeats'.<sup>51</sup> *The Catholic Bulletin* and *Our Boys* were roused: Corcoran and Craven both loved such 'big, stiff and hyperlatinistic' language.<sup>52</sup>

Trench ignores 'Leda and the Swan', suggesting that even by late August, *To-morrow* had not reached the SCR of Trinity College. Much else in Ch. V is, however, inaccurate. Dr John Henry Bernard's letter to Bro. Craven of April, 1925, is not reproduced in *Our Boys*, and Joyce was not a contributor to *To-morrow*, the 'nastiest publication'.

<sup>51</sup> Fr. R. S. Devane, S. J., on 'Indecent Literature: Some Legal Remedies' in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 25 February 1925, 182–204 (197 and n. 1–198). Devane urged readers of *The Irish Statesman* to procure the October 1924–January 1925 issues of the *Catholic Bulletin* (see, e.g., 14:10 Oct. 1924, 837; 14:11, 929–31; 14:12, 1019–22 on the 'gross public scandal' of Yeats's and Robinson's contributions to *To-morrow*; 15:1 January 1925, 1–6 on the 'Sewage School', the 'Cloacal Combine, and Archbishop T. P. Gilmartin's resignation from the Irish Advisory Committee of the Carnegie Trust. See below 170, n. 102.

<sup>52</sup> Thus Coleridge on the excesses of Sir Thomas Browne's *Vulgar Errors*, i.e., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*: see Henry Nelson Coleridge's edition of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Literary Remains* (London: William Pickering, 1836), Vol. 2, 413. The qualification is in a note of praise for Browne, dated 10 March 1804.

YOU DIRTY BOY!<sup>53</sup>

Bitterness, badgering and lovelessness reflect verbal violence in a contested society.<sup>54</sup> Prompted by Archbishop Gilmartin's rallying of young vigilantes, the Jihadists of Angelic Warfare in Tuam turned up the volume from September 1924.<sup>55</sup> *The Freeman's Journal* also urged Church leadership over public opinion in respect of the sale, circulation, and exposure of objectionable pictures, newspapers, and other publications of an unsavoury character and tendency. *Our Boys* took up the call for new legislation.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Pears purchased the copyright of Giovanni Focardi's most famous statue named *You dirty boy!* and exhibited at the Exposition Universelle de Paris in 1878. The firm then produced copies as advertisements for their soap products on shop counter displays in terracotta, plaster, and metal. See <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/20448/lot/807/>. In 1906, Pears changed its advertising, basing it thereafter on 'Bubbles' by Sir John Everett Millais (1886).

<sup>54</sup> See "Stitching and Unstitching", *op. cit.*, pp. 145–46.

<sup>55</sup> Yeats became so apprehensive about the threat of clerical malice from the Archdiocese of Tuam that on 16 January [1926] he wrote to T. Werner Laurie, I see by some paragraph in a London paper that a 'Vision' is out or all but out. What are you doing about review copies in Ireland? I think there is only one Irish paper worth sending the book to—"The Irish Statesman". If you send there it will be reviewed by A. E. Dont send to 'Irish Independent' 'Irish Studies' or 'The Dublin Review' if you can avoid it. The Bishop of Tuam (Catholic) said to an acquaintance of mine the other day 'we have been waiting for years to get a chance at Mr Yeats but we are going to get it now. He is bringing out a book that will give us our chance'. If they break out it will not help you & it will exasperate me. Their habit is to take an isolated sentence, & go on repeating it for years. 'The Irish Times' would be sympathetic but useless. A review in 'The Irish Statesman' would be sufficient to inform the Irish reading public that the book exists & what its nature is. Even that will be cautious. Let me know what you are doing in this matter. I await the book with some excitement as I dont know whether I am a goose that has hatched a swan or a swan that has hatched a goose'. (*CL IntelLex* 4822). See below, 155, n. 71.

<sup>56</sup> By 16 October, under the banner 'The Yellow Press must Go', the paper demanded that 'Gutter literature ... disappear'. The 'sale of moral filth' was bound to 'destroy the national Virtue, and thus lead people into National Apostasy'. '[I]nnocent children' were buying 'books and papers preaching a code of morals coming not from our Penny Catechism, not from Mount Sinai, not from the Sermon on the Mount, but from the dens of Paris and London' ([121]). *The Freeman's Journal* approved of this policy (18 October 1924).



# OUR BOYS EDITOR

"OUR BOYS" by post for one year, including two double numbers, viz. July and December in Ireland and Great Britain, 7/9; in America, 1 dollar 75 cents.

To be ordered from the publishers, Messrs. Eason & Son, Ltd., 79 to 82 Middle Abbey St., Dublin; 17 Donegall St., Belfast; or from any newsagent.

Literary contributions to be addressed to The Editor, "Our Boys," Richmond Place, Dublin.

Office Hours—9 to 3; Saturdays, 9 to 1. Telegraphic Address—"Boys," Dublin. Telephone No.—Drumcondra 253. Communications regarding advertisements to—

The Manager, "Our Boys," Richmond Place, Dublin. All communications regarding the distribution of this publication to be addressed to— Messrs. Eason & Son, Ltd., 79 to 82 Middle Abbey St., Dublin.

## EDITOR'S NOTES.

### DATES OF PUBLICATION.

September 18, October 2, October 16, October 30.

Away with the Yellow Press. Our Boys, appearing every fortnight, will give, in its 48 pages, a plentiful supply of bright, clean, and healthy reading.

The Yellow Press publications are not only un-Irish and un-Catholic, but, in the majority of cases, soul-destroying.

In those publications there is no room for God's name. Purity is a subject of mockery.

To those who desire to preserve a healthy morality we say—"Don't touch them."

Many of those who have read such literature have lost their faith, have lost their virtue, and—if the truth must be told—their souls.

We renew our offer of having all those registered in the Providential Proposal who find 12 new readers for Our Boys (now at 2d.).

Those entered in this Association will share in all the spiritual advantages of 12 daily Masses said for ever.

The 12 copies are intended to commemorate the 12 stars with which the Holy Virgin was crowned on the Feast of her Assumption.

The list of names will be published every fortnight.



Coronation of the B.V.M.

Our Boys pledge support to our advertisers—our advertisers guarantee best value.

Plate 16. Brother Canice Craven at his Editor's desk, shining the light of Angelic Warfare onto a waste-paper basket ready to receive 'devilish literature coming into this country', with his Editors's Notes for readers below. From *Our Boys*, 4 September 1924. Image courtesy Christian Brothers Province Centre, Dublin.

The central panel on the ‘Satan, Smut & Co.’ cover of the *Irish Independent* boasts of a book-burning on 16 January 1925. This direct action by the Christian Brothers in the editorial office of *Our Boys* was allegedly prompted by a complaint from the West. The story refuses to tell you what was burned, just that 70 copies and a few other newspapers, total cost £4.10s anointed with a ‘gallon of paraffin, had blazed for an hour outside the paper’s offices in Richmond St.<sup>57</sup>

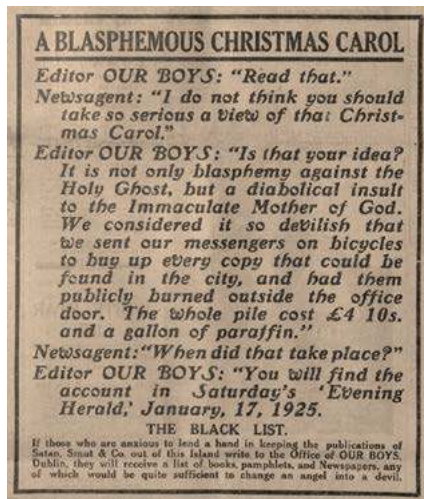


Plate 17. Detail, 'Chapter V' of the *Irish Independent*, 11 October 1927. Image courtesy the National Library of Ireland.

This gleeful destruction also ignited, at grass roots level, the young Vigilantes in other pressure points, such as Limerick. A photographer from the *Evening Herald* was present (Bro. Craven later boasted), but if a photograph appeared in the paper of 17 January 1925, then the particular edition has not been preserved in the National Library and various microfilms of other archival copies elsewhere being of earlier or later editions of that day's paper. Another coy announcement appeared in Monday's *Catholic Herald*. Headed 'A Blasphemous Sheet' and subtitled 'London Publication Burned in Dublin' the full text ran:

<sup>57</sup> 70 copies of *Pears' Annual* would have cost £3.10.0 of this sum.

A London publication which contained a Christmas carol set to music, and ridiculing in blasphemous language the Holy Family, was publicly burned in the streets of Dublin.

A copy of this production had been sent from the west of Ireland to the editor of 'Our Boys', a publication which is produced by the Christian Brothers. The editor immediately sent messages [sic] to the principal newsagents in the city, and had all the unsold copies of the London sheet bought up. Quite a large bundle of copies of the paper was burned.<sup>58</sup>

Shorn even of its name, there was no publicity for *Pears' Annual*, and otherwise, there was silence in the press, domestic and foreign.

*Our Boys* was all for moral improvement. Its readers were Catholic boys who, if they pledged themselves to Angelic Warfare, could further define Irish Exceptionalism by rising above the 'gross animalism' of the 'dung-hill of literature', imported contaminants for which the Irish people were paying £464,000 p.a. They were to avoid the 'Plague Spots' i.e., cinemas and jazz-dancing houses. Smoking, too, caused 'Dead Brains'. Adherence to the triple pledge of the Society of Angelic Warfare would put some character into Irish youth.<sup>59</sup> By 5 February, Bro. Craven could contain himself no longer. He just had to boast to his young audience, or burst with pride. Rather than use a photograph (if there ever was one) of the Brothers burning books, he commissioned 'G. A.' to recast the *Pear's Annual* book-burning in some Christian Brothers' madrassa, cheering larrikins imagined in the style of Ronald Searle in Geoffrey Williams's *Down with Skool!*, the Thomas Henry depictions of Richmal Crompton's *Just William*, or the followers of the Flash of Lightning in Clive James's *Unreliable Memoirs*.<sup>60</sup> Craven had claimed that the complaint about 'The Cherry Tree Carol' in *Pears' Annual* had come from 'a schoolboy', but this projection onto schoolkids of the Brothers' manufactured outrage is an image of fomented moral panic, the unstated aim of the 'Society for Angelic Warfare'.

<sup>58</sup> *Catholic Herald*, 19 January 1925, 4. On 'not naming', see above 142, n. 49.

<sup>59</sup> 'The Angelic Warfare', *Our Boys*, 11. 1, 5 February 1925, 524.

<sup>60</sup> Geoffrey Williams and Ronald Searle, *Down with Skool!* (London: Max Parrish, 1953); Richmal Crompton's *Just William* (London: George Newnes, [1922]); Clive James, *Unreliable Memoirs* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980).

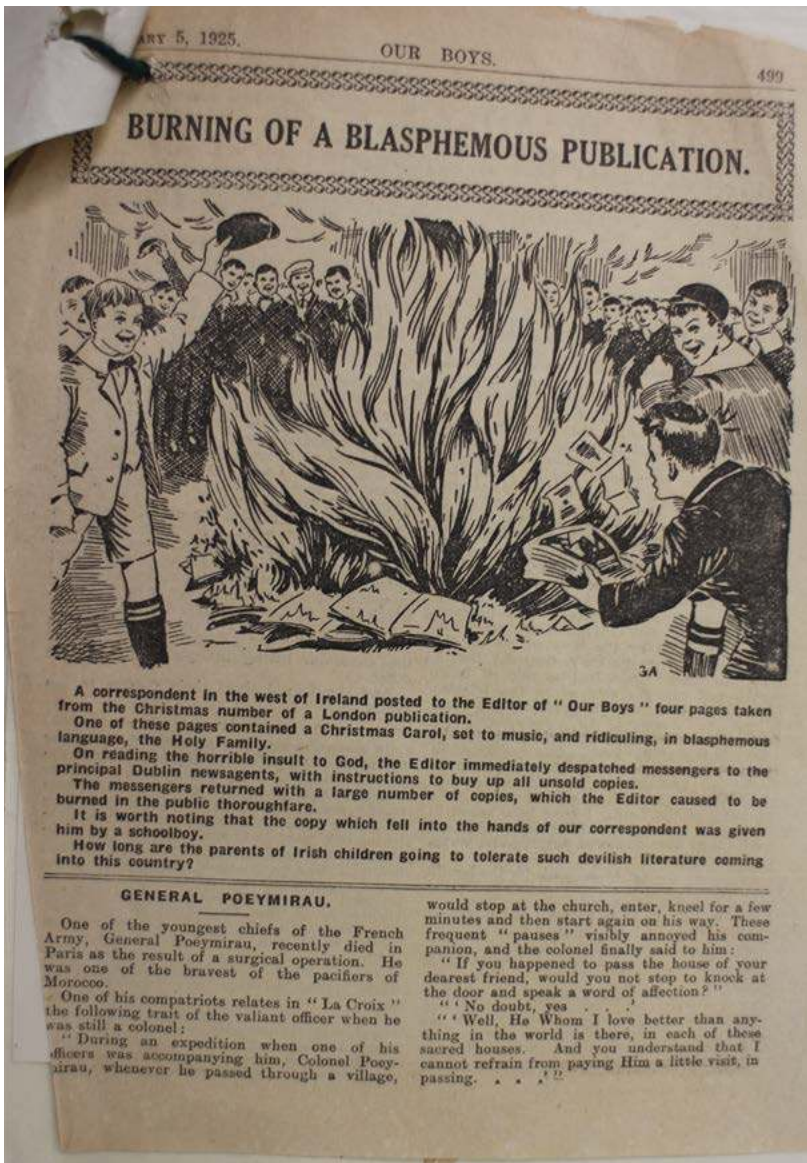


Plate 18. The *Pears' Annual* book-burning as imagined by 'G. A.', *Our Boys*, 5 February 1925, 499, and as preserved in the Evil Literature files. Image courtesy the National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

In the next issue, Craven boasts again, but his campaign is clearly stalling.

Friday, January 16, was a Red-Letter Day in OUR BOYS' Office.

A heap of Immoral Newspapers and 70 copies of a blasphemous periodical blazed for a full hour for a full hour in front of the office.

No doubt, many weeping devils hovered above us, bewailing the loss of their property, but their tears were not enough to quench the flames.

The whole pile cost us £4.10s. and a gallon of paraffin.

Now, wasn't it worth it all? You'll say 'yes'.

We agree with you, and we are prepared to spend double that sum, and two gallons of paraffin, when we get the chance.

If we have succeeded in keeping 70 pairs of innocent eyes from seeing blasphemous language against the immaculate Mother of God, Holy St. Joseph, and the Babe of Bethlehem; if we have succeeded in keeping 70 innocent hearts pure; surely we are well repaid.

On reading this account the eyes of many will blaze to think that such literature should be allowed into this country.

But—and now attend—there are others who are not prepared to blush, even at devilish literature.

Would you wish to get an example?

A Catholic newsagent, living in Dublin, told the Editor of OUR BOYS that, on one Sunday morning, 23 boys and girls, after coming out from Mass, entered his shop to buy a Sunday paper.

Out of the 23, 19 asked for an illustrated paper containing the principal scandals of the world, and four asked for the *Sunday Independent*.

Fortunately the newsagent had not a single copy of the important immoral paper—nor never had.

19 Irish boys and girls who wave Irish flags and shout 'God Save Ireland', bought 19 papers full of moral filth—bought them on the ground where the battle of Clontarf was fought and won, where Turlough O'Brien, grandson of Brian Boru, was found drowned with his hands clutched in the hair of a Dane.

Truly, we have some mad specimens among us in this Island of Holy Memories.<sup>61</sup>

For Craven, Devane had showed 'the necessity of immediately strangling the traffic in obscene books and papers'. He wrote thus to Kevin O'Higgins, the Minister of Justice on 13 February 1925,

<sup>61</sup> *Our Boys*, 11. 12, 19 February 1925, [537].

reprinting his letter in *Our Boys* on 19 March (111). Urging O'Higgins to 'welcome resolutions from all the Boys' and Girls' Schools of Ireland' condemning immoral literature and urging legislation, this latter-day Savanarola promised O'Higgins 'the whole country in a blaze ... a bonfire blazing on every mountain-top in Ireland'. As he 'pray[ed]' that O'Higgins would be 'divinely guided in [his] noble effort to save the Soul of Ireland', Craven sought to whip up the 'pure hearts of Ireland's sons and daughters' against 'the Demon of Immorality and his staff of filthy writers'. A fantasist in the style of Frank Hugh O'Donnell with his vast, shadowy, wholly imaginary organization, *Fuath na Gall* (see *CL2*, 707–12), Craven then promised that 'Ireland's Hurling Men ... The Ancient Order of Hibernians ... The Irish National Foresters ... The Christian Brothers Past Pupils' Association, The Pioneer Associations' and others had 'joined forces' in the name of the 'Angelic Warfare' and the 'safety of Pure Morals'. Moreover, 'The Sodalities of the Sacred Heart will certainly strike staggering blows' and '45 Protestant Boys' and Girls' Schools are also preparing their resolutions against Satan, Smut & Co.', invoking what was to become his keynote phrase two and a half years later in the *Irish Independent*, with a suitably fiery portent.<sup>62</sup>

[F]JUMBLING IN THE GREASY TILL'

Yeats's poems frequently interweave themselves in and out of the Press, finding uses for populist rhetoric from the very forces to which he was most opposed. We should not be surprised to see the 'filthy tide' familiar to readers of *Our Boys* 'Angelic Warfare' stories<sup>63</sup> reversed in 'The Statues',

When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side  
What stalked through the Post Office? What intellect,

<sup>62</sup> *Our Boys*, 20 April 1925, 708–9.

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., *Our Boys*, 3 February 1927, 297 in 'keep[ing] back the filthy tide' of foreign journals with a black-list, a phrase reused 9 June 1927, 659, claiming that £540,000 per year was spent on 'publications causing moral deformity among ... children' in reply to a letter from Pope Pius XI through Cardinal Gasparri, Vatican Secretary of State, 9 May 1927 praising the paper's 'laudable efforts to impede the circulation of evil literature' (658).



What calculation, number, measurement, replied?  
 We Irish, born into that ancient sect  
 But thrown upon this filthy modern tide  
 And by its formless spawning fury wrecked,  
 Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace  
 The lineaments of a plummet-measured face. (*VP* 611)

To find the Sinn Fein Club, Tuam, protecting 'the youth of Tuam' against 'moral contamination' by petitioning against newsagents who 'themselves descendants of martyrs and patriots, and treading on ground watered by their blood' nevertheless sold 'publications insulting to modesty' deepens the linguistic world of 'The Rose Tree'.<sup>64</sup> Yeats also found sources in influential texts—other poems perhaps—but even in reviews and in his own 'required writing'. His phrases then re-entered the Press via news stories, reviews, and audience feedback. 'Fumbling in the greasy till' from 'September, 1913'<sup>65</sup> echoes a line in Thomas MacDonagh's 'The Man Upright' in the *Irish Review* of 1911. MacDonagh looks askance at the subjugated Irish, who

Go crooked, doubled to half their size,  
 Both working and loafing, with their eyes  
 Stuck in the ground or in a board,—  
 For some of them tailor, and some of them hoard  
 Pence in the till in their little shops.  
 And some of their shoe-soles—they get the tops  
 Ready-made from England, and they die cobblers—  
 All bent up double, a village of hobblers  
 And slouchers and squatters ...<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> See *Our Boys*, 4 September 1924, 18.

<sup>65</sup> Published as 'Romance in Ireland' in *The Irish Times*, 8 September 1913, 7.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas MacDonagh's 'The Man Upright'; printed in the *Irish Review* of June 1911: see *The Poetical Works of Thomas MacDonagh* intro. James Stephens (Dublin: The Talbot Press, n.d., i.e., 1916), 124 and ff., and *Life* 1 494, n. 4 and 620. In *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it Up in Ireland* (London: Allen Lane, the Penguin Press, 2010), 12 and 240, n. 40), Roy Foster cites Standish O'Grady's depiction of Cuculain's becoming 'dejected' when window-shopping in Dublin, when 'he looked upon the people, so small were they, and so pale and ignoble, both in appearance and behaviour; and also when he saw the extreme poverty of the poor, and the hungry eager crowds seeking what he knew not' (*History of*

This clearly spoke to the Yeats of *The Wanderings of Oisín*. Oisín's giant perspective on his return to Ireland, shows an inevitable contempt for its now 'small and a feeble populace, stooping with mattock and spade'; with 'the sacred cairn and the rath' left 'guardless' in favour of 'bell-mounted churches' (*VP* 58). MacDonagh's pence rattled yet again in Yeats's London lecture against Irish bigotries on 14 July 1913.<sup>67</sup> By 9 August, the lecture's half-suppressed thought had made its way into 'Romance in Ireland' a first draft of 'September, 1913'. On that day, Yeats wrote again to Lady Gregory,

I wrote a poem which I will send you—a poem about modern Ireland in four verses. I think the poem good but wonder if the allusion to the 'tallow' in the first verse explains itself. I mean those holy candles—it is the result of a passage I had made up for my speech on the Gallery but had to tone down. The passage was 'If the intellectual movement is defeated Ireland will

*Ireland: Heroic Period* [London: Sampson Low etc. 1878–1881]), II, 291–92). At a presentation of this paper on 7 December 2017, Foster wondered if either Yeats or Macdonagh's poems showed the influence of this passage. O'Grady clearly borrows the puzzlement of the 300 year old Oisín on his return to an Ireland subjugated by Christianity from Bryan O'Looney's 'The Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth', *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*, IV, 1856 (Dublin 1859). In Yeats's case (i.e., for the passage quoted above) In Yeats's case, the answer is found in his source, also O'Looney's poem. It seems to me that Macdonagh, too, *qua* poet, draws upon O'Looney, but via Yeats.

<sup>67</sup> The speech was before a performance of *The Showing-Up of Blanco Posnet* at the Court Theatre at 3.00 pm on 14 July. 'I made a good speech on Monday. I spoke with [Sir Hugh Lane] quite as much as the possible subscribers [to Lane's Gallery] in my mind. I described Ireland if the present movement failed as "a little huckstering nation groping for halfpence in a greasy till" but did not add except in thought "by the light of a holy candle"'. See letter to Lady Gregory, 16 July [1913] (*CL InteLex* 2214). The passage may be found in Mr. Shaw's Censored Play' the report in *The Pall Mall Gazette* of the performance and talk, 15 July 1913. Yeats is reported as having made 'an earnest appeal for the project, which was to help Ireland fulfil its own ideals instead of becoming a little huckstering nation groping of halfpennies in a greasy till' (7). Roy Foster wonders in a private message to me if there is antisemitism here, but the antisemitism of Irish Ireland was open: press advertisements for Dublin businesses could boast openly 'no connection with the Jews', and Macdonagh's poem has no such overt prejudice. Yeats was a lifelong opponent of antisemitism: the Dreyfus case divided sharply from Maud Gonne and his 'holy candle and his ton[ing] down suggest he was at pains to avoid reversing Irish Ireland contempt for *Protestants*.

become for our time a little huckstering nation groping in a greasy till for halfpence by the light of a holy candle'.<sup>68</sup>

'Groping for halfpence in a greasy till' did indeed become 'But fumble in a greasy till'. The draft of the poem that followed included the word 'tallow' to suggest that 'fumbling by the light of a holy candle' which he had censored from the lecture, the 'holy' also exhibiting some incidental Protestant recoil.<sup>69</sup> Lady Gregory confirmed his caution, but the *Catholic Bulletin* chose to remain offended. With exquisitely bad timing, Corcoran had prepared for December 1923 an elaborate and nasty attack on Yeats, contrasting those lines with some poor verses by Padraic Pearse and daring his readers to disagree by sacralising the martyr of the Rising—a remarkable piece of emotional blackmail given Pearse's own estimate of his poetry: ('If we do nothing else', Pearse had said just before the Rising, 'we will rid Ireland of three *bad* poets'<sup>70</sup>). Corcoran's attack began with the sources of Yeats's income (always a sore point to the Jesuit).

Mr. William Butler Yeats, having recently added to his English Civil List pension for poetical writings a much larger annual sum from the pockets of Irish ratepayers, and given no special value in exchange for it, has now joined the New Ascendancy movement in criticism of a Gaelic Ireland. Hence many persons were astonished, and a good deal more than astonished, to find him lecturing, on literature in general and on himself in particular, on behalf of the Catholic Central Library Committee ... the lecturer's views were expounded in the school hall of a Catholic Convent in Dublin city, and when it was known, from the obvious satisfaction expressed threat by

<sup>68</sup> *CL InteLex* 2235.

<sup>69</sup> *VP* 289–90. Few MSS of 'September, 1913' survive, and none before a pretty fair copy of August 1913 which brings the first four lines to very near their form in *The Irish Times*, 8 September 1913 (7) version. At the bottom of this MS, evidently sent to Lady Gregory and pasted in to her copy of Vol IV of *CWVP* now in the Berg Collection, NYPL, Yeats has added a note. 'I made this poem out of a contemplation of M<sup>r</sup>. William Murphy. I have as you see changed the line about the tallow'. See *Responsibilities: Manuscript Materials*, ed. by William H. O'Donnell (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 232–34, where the editor has evidently had difficulty in reading the last two words.

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Desmond Ryan, *The 1916 Poets* (Dublin: A. Figgis, 1963), 1.

some of the tonier among the visiting audience, that a large number of Catholic nuns ... came to that Convent Hall for the occasion, by motors and otherwise. 'So instructive it must be for them', said one superior lady visitor: 'the poor things have so few opportunities of meeting and conversing with a cultured writer and a gentleman of distinction How they did show their appreciation of this singular opportunity!' ... the pensioner poet has ... no use for Christianity, and that he prefers, both on aesthetic and on ethical grounds, if you please, the pagan past. He has often manifested his resentment that the spiritual conquest of Ireland by St. Patrick and his followers, was so complete and so enduring. Christianity is, to such as Mr. W. B. Yeats, an ideal of conduct and of thought, which is 'lower than the heart's desire'. He turns his back on the Ireland of our Catholic faith, and in what he calls his 'pagan speech', yearns for 'a Druid land, a Druid tune'.

While remembering ancient perceived insults to the Catholic faith in *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1889), *The Land of Heart's Desire*, and 'September, 1913', Corcoran conveniently forgot that 'Easter 1916' had been published in the *New Statesman* on 23 October 1920. Moreover, no sooner had Corcoran drafted his piece than the Nobel Prize was announced. He hastily added a further sniping paragraph wondering why Yeats had

secured, by the due measure of enlightened paganism in his writings, the Nobel prize, founded by a non-Christian manufacturer of explosives? Who has written the newly announced work on Symbolism and the mystic scripts of Giraldus? We apologise to the high memory of Pearse and of Mallin, for bringing their noble thoughts into comparison with those of the new type of literary lecturer in the wrong place.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>71</sup> *Catholic Bulletin*, 13:12, Dec. 1923, 817–19. Agreement had been reached in principle with T. Werner Laurie for what became *A Vision* (1925, actually 1926) by 12 October 1923 (T. Werner Laurie to A. P. Watt, 12 October 1923, *CL InteLex*, 4380). By 20 April 1924 Laurie was circulating a prospectus (*CL InteLex* 4523). The *Catholic Bulletin's* source is untraced, but it is clear it tracked newspaper cuttings on Yeats with a captious tenacity. After AE did review it in the *Statesman* review on 13 February 1926 (714–16), the *Bulletin* quoted from it extensively in its editorial in March (16:3, 250–52, after an attack on O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*, but then every month involved an attack on Yeats and his school. By May, Gogarty, the 'Liffey Lyrist' has become 'literary Sancho Panza' to Yeats who, in June, is the 'Oratory in Ordinary, promoter of Loquacity' (16:6, 572).

## WIDER STILL, AND WIDER

Oliver Gogarty had moved congratulations to Yeats on the Nobel Prize in the Seanad on 28 November 1923. In January 1924, the attack on Yeats tediously opened out. *The Catholic Bulletin* snarled 'Irish-speaking Ireland, with its Gaelic culture, which was invariably the aim of all workers in the Irish-Ireland movement' was

clearly an object of attack to the New Ascendancy, so strongly entrenched in the [Seanad], decorated by the presence of Senators Gogarty and Yeats. The latter potentate with his auxiliar lights, are to stand for Irish civilisation. Any patriotic inspiration in poetry is a mistake ... Mr. Yeats wrote in 1913 'Romantic Ireland's dead and gone: 'tis with O'Leary in the grave [*sic*]. ... Senator Gogarty draws attention to the fact ... that there was ... a tussle between the English colony in Ireland [i.e., on behalf of Yeats] and the English of England [i.e., on behalf of Hardy] for the substantial sum provided by a deceased anti-Christian manufacturer of dynamite. ... the line of recipients of the Nobel Prize shows that a reputation for Paganism in thought and word is as very considerable advantage in the sordid annual race for money, engineered, as it always is, by clubs, coteries, salons and cliques. Paganism in prose or in poetry has, it seems its solid cash value; if a poet does not write tawdry verse to make his purse heavier he can be brought by his admirers to where money is, whether in the form of an English pension, or in extracts from the Irish taxpayer's pocket, or in the Stockholm dole'.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> *Catholic Bulletin*, 14:1, January 1924, 6–7. The 'heavier' purse of course tilts at 'The Grey Rock's praise of the Rhymers who *'never made a poorer song | That you might have a heavier purse'* (VP 273.) The Nobel Prize award remained contentious. Edmund Gosse's sour notice of *The Bounty of Sweden* (Cuala: 1925): Gosse's 'A Poet's Thanks' had appeared in the London *Sunday Times*, 26 July 1925 (6), attacking first Alfred Nobel, speculating that he had endowed his prizes including the one for 'idealistic literature' to atone for his 'dynamites and cordites' his 'horrible nitroglycerines and gun-cottons'. In turning to Yeats—Gosse had supported Hardy for the award in the same year—Gosse numbered him among 'passionate men who were like bats in dead trees' who had 'recovered the Eternal Rose of Beauty and of Peace after receiving [the Nobel Prize]' c.f., VP 136, l. 5. AE then protested anonymously in *The Irish Statesman*, 1 August 1925, 645. The *Bulletin* rather lost its way amid fanciful variations upon Gosse's abuse: whilst recycling the story about Yeats, Robert Smyllie of *The Irish Times*, the news of the award, the empty cellar, the sausages, it roundly endorsed Gosse's view that WBY was 'an English Poet, resident in Ireland, and writing in English, just as Swift and Berkeley and Burke had written when they were *resident in Ireland*' (15:9, September 1925, 857).

Yeats had taken to his heart Roger Ascham's formula: 'Think like a wise man but express yourself as the common people'.<sup>73</sup> Incapable of learning that more sustained invective is less, Corcoran could do neither. Republication of his relentless, monthly attacks would serve

<sup>73</sup> This principle is a common-place of Classical Rhetoric: see Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404b. Thomas Wilson enjoins 'never affect any strange inkhorn terms but so speak as is commonly received, neither seeking to be overfine, nor yet living overcareless, using our speech as most men do, and ordering our wits as the fewest have done'. See his *The Art of Rhetoric* (1560), ed. by Peter E. Medine (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 188. The precept is also found in *Rhetorica ad Herennium; Incerti Auctoris De Ratione Dicendi Ad C. Herennium Libri IV*, ed. by F. Marx, Leipzig 1964. i.e., that diction should be *usitata* and *propria* ('current' and 'proper') (4, 17). These ideas came to Yeats via Roger Ascham's *Toxophilus* (1545), as noted c. 6 May 1923 in Lady Gregory's Journals: 'Ascham says: "He that will wryte well in any tongue, must follow this council of Aristotle, to speak as the common people do; to think as wise men do"'. See *Lady Gregory's Journals Volume 1, Books 1–29, 30 October 1910–1924 February 1925*, ed. by Daniel J. Murphy (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1978), 450. See Roger Ascham, *Toxophilus etc.* (1545), ed. with notes and commentary by Peter E. Medine (Tempe, Arizona: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002), 40, lines 34–36 (note, p. 144) offers 'He that will wryte well in any tongue, must follow this council of Aristotle, to speke as the common people do; to think as wise men do: and so should every man vnderstande hym ...'. For Ascham in a modern spelling edition, see, e.g., *Toxophilus; The School of Shooting, in Two Books*, rptd. from the edition of Rev. Dr Giles (London: John Russell Smith, 1866), Preface (7). Yeats cites this catch-phrase throughout his later works, usually reversing its order and usually citing the authority of Aristotle. e.g., *CW3* 296 and 492–93, n. 21, which identifies Ascham from Lady Gregory's *Journals*, but looks no further to find the source in Ascham), 325; *Au* 395, 440; *Ex* 371; *VPI* 567; *CW10* 28; *UP2* 494; *CW12* 193. The most accurate of these does not, however reverse the order of the constituent phrases, and is to be found in the Preface to the translation WBY did with Shri Purohit Swami of *The Ten Principal Upanishads*: "'To write well", said Aristotle, "express yourself like the common people, but think like a wise man", a favourite quotation of Lady Gregory's—I quote her diary from memory'. (*CW5*, 172; fn. 6 cites Book III of Aristotle's *The Art of Rhetoric* generally on 'appropriate diction' but admits not finding Lady Gregory's 'specific reference'). By the time of 'The Great Basket' (1933) the rhetorical principle had become an ethical imperative: 'To Lady Gregory and to Synge it was more than speech, for it implied an attitude towards letters, sometimes even towards life, an attitude Lady Gregory was accustomed to define by a quotation from Aristotle: "To think like a wise man but to express oneself like the common people"'. (*CW10* 248). 'Aristotle bids us think like wise men but express ourselves like the common people, but what if genius and a great vested interest thrive upon the degradation of the mother tongue?', Yeats and Dorothy Wellesley challenge, in 'Music and Poetry' the prefaces to *Broadsides: A Collection of New Irish and English Songs* (1937): see *CW12* 193.

only to show what 'Pensionary Senator Pollexfen Yeats' chose to rise above.<sup>74</sup> Captious, obsessively detailed, turgid, and laboriously pre-meditated, Corcoran's editorials gain in risibility what they lose in sick-making potential when cut for illustrative purposes. The *DIB* sees Corcoran's language as 'the extreme development of catholic and nationalist positions in nineteenth century religious and political conflicts over land, education and nationality', but in its heyday, *The Catholic Bulletin* reached a majority of homes in Ireland.<sup>75</sup> The unsigned editorials came first in each issue and gave the appearance of being an *ex cathedra* pronouncement of the Church itself on the issues of the day. The 'New Ascendancy' against which Corcoran inveighed was a catch-cry which failed to ignite among those who could resist its conspiracy theory. But there is reason to assume they were a minority. Based on Dublin's urban geography, with its epicentre as the Freemasons' Hall in Molesworth Street the theory enfolded The National Library, the adjacent Kildare St Club, Trinity College, the Royal Irish Academy, and the National Library as Ascendancy institutions and so within the penumbra of Corcoran's abuse. The I.A.O.S. headquarters, Plunkett House at 84 Merrion Square—Yeats's own house was No. 82—was 'the very powerhouse of the new Ascendancy' while *The Irish Statesman* in Plunkett House was 'the weekly organ of the New Ascendancy'.<sup>76</sup> The 'New Ascendancy' writers were pilloried, month by month, as the 'Cloacal Combine' the 'Sewage School' (based on their support for *Ulysses*), the 'Associated Aesthetes', the 'Mutual Boosters' (all of these jibes can be found within just one page).<sup>77</sup> Corcoran wrote as an autodidact, fuelled by alliteration's adolescent artful aid, no doubt thinking he had triumphed in phrases such as the 'filthy Swan Song of Senator W. B. Yeats' and the 'brutal blasphemies' of Lennox Robinson, or the

<sup>74</sup> The jeer comes in *The Catholic Bulletin's* editorial against Yeats's 'no petty people' Divorce speech in the Irish Seanad (15:7, July 1925, 641–2).

<sup>75</sup> *DIB* 2:849.

<sup>76</sup> *The Catholic Bulletin*, 14:6, June 1925, 459–61.

<sup>77</sup> *The Catholic Bulletin* 15:1, January 1925, 1–5. The running battle with *The Irish Statesman* is the *Bulletin's* background theme: Plunkett House being the 'Harmonious Homestead': see *ibid.* and 101 and ff. On the 'Sewage School' see further 196 and ff.

‘absquatulation of the Advisory Aesthetes’—‘absquatulation’ being a nineteenth-century American way of making ‘to abscond’ sound learned and comic at the same time.<sup>78</sup> The prose of ‘ecastigation’ was, in Dryden’s phrase, ‘slovenly Butchering’, not that ‘fine[] ... stroke that separates the Head from the Body, and leaves it standing in its place’.<sup>79</sup>

Anything Yeats did was a red rag to the sectarian *Bulletin*. Corcoran pressured the new Government, which of course he did not recognise, to turn the Free State into a Theocracy. As such he rounded on ‘squalid ascendancy history’. To him, the Anglo-Irish Protestant tradition implied a continued claim to ascendancy. Only assimilation to Catholic and Gaelic Irishness was acceptable. Protestants should be excluded from public positions that might endanger the faith of Catholics. Protestant nationalists were wolves in sheep’s clothing, Catholic clerics of West British tendencies were enemies of faith and fatherland.<sup>80</sup> When Corcoran died in 1943, his obituaries tactfully passed over his editorship of *The Catholic Bulletin*.

#### ‘PRE-EMINENCE OF PUTRESCENCE’

‘[I]n high spirits’ Yeats wrote to Olivia Shakespear on 21 June 1924, foreseeing ‘a most admirable row ... a group of Dublin poets ... were ... to publish a review. I said to one of them

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, and 15:3 March 1925, 196 and ff., more on the ‘Sewage School’, esp. 198 re ‘Absquatulation’; 15:4 April 1925, 291 and ff. to 294 re ‘An Undelivered Speech’ on Divorce; almost every issue thereafter continues the running battles with *The Irish Statesman* and its ‘Magniloquent Mahatmas and fuglemen’; English Catholic and other periodicals on the issues of Divorce, decadent upper class life, the award of the Nobel Prize and Gosse’s imprecations against Yeats, ‘evil literature’, the Tailteann Games and the roles of Yeats and Gogarty: see, e.g., 15:6, June 1925, 536 and ff.; 15:7, July 1925, 641 and ff.; 15:8, August 1925 759 and ff.; 15:9 September 1925 c. 854–55, yet more on Gosse’s reaction to Yeats’s Nobel Prize; 15:10, September 1925, 962–65, on Yeats’s Divorce speech; 15:11, November 1925, 1082–88 on Yeats and Gruntvig Schools in Denmark. See also Devane, *op. cit.*, 197.

<sup>79</sup> From ‘A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire’ (1693.)

<sup>80</sup> English Catholics, Corcoran thought, were hardly Catholics at all (notably for their failure to establish an independent Catholic university; Corcoran believed Catholics should be forbidden to attend Oxford and Cambridge).



why not found yourself on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul ... most bishops & all bad writers being obviously athiests' I heard no more till last night when I recieved a kind of deputation. They have adopted my suggestion & been supressed by the priests for blasphemy. I got a bottle of Sparckling Mosselle, which I hope youthful ignorance mistook for Champagne, & we swore alliance. They are to put the offending parts into Latin & see if the printer will stand that; & begin an agitation. I saw a proof sheet marked by the printer 'with no mention must be made of the Blessed Virgin' .... My dream is a wild paper of the young which will make enemies every where & suffer suppression, I hope a number of times, for the logical assertion with all fitting deductions of the immortality of the soul.<sup>81</sup>

By 28 June, the 'new monthly periodical' was advertised for 1 July at 6<sup>d</sup>.<sup>82</sup> Yeats's involvement in its planning with Iseult and Francis Stuart, F. R. Higgins, and Cecil Salkeld seems an unnecessarily quixotic venture. After his Nobel Prize Yeats, courted by the reckless, threw caution to the winds. *To-Morrow* 'amuse[d him] much more' he said, than the Senate. Yeats reported, Lennox Robinson's front-page story 'The Madonna of Slieve Dun' was the 'chief offence' to the Dublin printer.

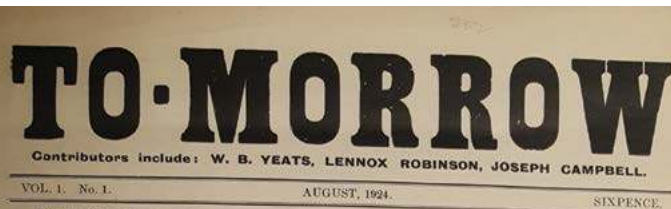
Now they are to print in England<sup>83</sup> & I am advising generally. They will criticize the church not from the side of unbelief but from that of a more intense beleif. They have a manifesto classing all 'bishops & bad writers' among the Athiests because 'the Holy Ghost is as an intellectual fountain' & would show in their works did they believe, in their architecture & written style. If they have the courage to fight on I will write for them regularly—I have sent them a contribution as it is—and I think it may be the start of a great deal. It is about the only cause for which I am prepared to turn journalist.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>81</sup> *CL InteLex* 4570, 21.

<sup>82</sup> *Irish Statesman* 28 June 1924, 507. The business manager (i.e., for subscriptions) was 'Mr Cecil Salkeld, 13 Fleet St Dublin', *ibid.* On Cecil Ffrench Salkeld, see *DIB* 8, 751–52. He had studied under Sean Keating at the Metropolitan School of Art, Dublin.

<sup>83</sup> If its references to the 'Blessed Virgin' were put into Latin, they evidently failed to fool the Dublin printer, Maunsell. Both issues of the paper were printed by Whitely & Wright Ltd., of 30, Blackfriars St., Manchester (*To-Morrow* I:1, August 1924, 8)

<sup>84</sup> 'France & America & to a less degree England have a number of reviews, managed by young people, ready to follow any lead & they would probably follow this lead' (*CL InteLex*, 28 June [1924], no. 4578). On the *Catholic Bulletin's* response, see 14:11 November 1924, 129–31.



Contributors include: W. B. YEATS, LENNOX ROBINSON, JOSEPH CAMPBELL.

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SIXPENCE.

### THE MADONNA OF SLIEVE DUN

By Lennox Robinson.

She had always been the same. When she was only a little child, brought in by her father and mother to the fairs and markets in Lisree, she would often come home in the evening crying, sitting on a sack of hay in the bottom of the cart, all because one or two lads in the town had a drop of drink taken and were quarrelsome and rowdy or because her mother had had words with her aunt Peg about the price of eggs. A little thing like that would spoil her day's pleasure, and as she grew older she shrank more and more from the roughness and ugliness of the world.

Once or twice in the year she would go to see her other aunt, Sister Anastasia, in Liscannon convent. She would spend a long summer's day there, walking in the quiet garden and praying in the chapel. It was the only places she knew where life was uniformly gentle and pure, and when she was fourteen years old she told her aunt that the secret wish of her heart was to become a nun.

But it was never anything more than a wish. To begin with, she was an only child, and her mother would have found it hard to do the work of the house without her, and then, there wasn't much more than sixteen years old when Joe Brady began to marry her. She struggled against the thought of marriage at first, but she had always liked Joe, and her dreams of becoming a nun faded, and she, half regretfully, made up her mind to marry him. She went to Father Kearney about it, and he said that life was like a wheel, that life in a convent was one spoke, and life on a farm another, and that, maybe, there wasn't much difference after all between them. The match was made after that, and they were only waiting to be married, till Joe would come home from England in six months or a year.

Lisree was a very wicked place, not only Mary Creodon that thought so, the place was a byword to the whole country for fighting and drinking. Father Kearney was too old and feeble to keep a watch on the lads, and every year they grew wilder and more lawless. They had to have an extra policeman at the barracks, and there was never a Petty Sessions that there weren't men had up before the magistrates for assault or poaching, or, maybe, something worse.

Little Mary Creodon thought it must be the worst place in the whole world. The wickedness of it appalled her. She had heard of God destroying whole cities for their wickedness, of Him smiting men dead for their sins, and she wondered over the possible destruction of Lisree, until it seemed a doomed town clinging to the edge of a crumbling precipice.

Father Kearney got a stroke and died in the early spring, and they sent down in his place a young priest, by the name of Brannigan. Father Brannigan was a dark, bery man, a man of plain speech and good courage, and before he was a month in Lisree he told the people very plainly what he thought of them. He

preached against the drinking and the swearing and the fighting and the poaching, he called down the judgment of Heaven on them, he spoke to them of Hell torments till Mary Creodon grew cold with horror listening to him, but, for all that, the people didn't improve their behaviour—indeed, they seemed to be getting worse.

There were always races in Lisree on Lady Day, and Mary Creodon and her father and mother drove in to them. First, of course, they went to Mass, and Father Brannigan preached a terrible sermon about Lisree and the people in it. "I sometimes think," said he, "that if the Blessed Child was born into this world and the miracle took place in the parish of Lisree even that wouldn't turn you from your sins."

But Mary Creodon was sure it would. She was sure the people were not bad out and out, they were only thoughtless. If the Child were born in Lisree, up among the Slieve Dun hills, it was impossible to think that the people wouldn't get gentle and kind; even, still, about Christmas time they got softer and more quietly spoken until the drink they took on Christmas night sent them raging again. Oh, if only the Child might be born in Lisree! It was impossible, of course, but the miracle had happened before, and, maybe, it might happen again, maybe. . . . She stayed behind praying in the chapel long after the others had gone away. She prayed with a passion of feeling that the wonderful miracle might happen again, that the Blessed Child might come and save the poor, sinful people of Lisree.

Afterwards she went on to the race-course, and stayed there for a while talking to her friends, but she wasn't thinking of the horses and the leaps, or the jockeys in their gay jerseys, she was thinking all the time of Father Brannigan's words, she was praying in her heart for the Saviour to come. Then, about five o'clock, there was a disputed race, and blows and bad words, and she ran off the field frightened. She met her father in the village street, but he had taken drink and was having words with the blacksmith about a horse that had been carelessly shod, and suddenly she felt that the badness and blasphemy of the place was pressing and crushing her, and she started to walk home by herself.

Slieve Dun—where she lived—was about three miles from Lisree, up among the hills. As she walked up the road the shouts from the racecourse below grew fainter and fainter, till at last she turned a corner and there was silence. It was a fine, soft April evening, and the ditches along the road were full of primroses, and the hedges were yellow with iuzze. When she got within half a mile of her father's cottage she turned into a field to rest herself. She sat down under the hedge facing west, and she remained there till the sun went down behind the mountains, and the blackbirds were flying from bush to bush in the twilight. She sat in a sort of dream, thinking on the Blessed Virgin, whose holy day it was, and how on a spring evening—perhaps just like this one—the wonderful message had come to her that she was

(Continued on page 7.)

### A RED PETTICOAT

By Liam O'Flaherty.

Mrs. Mary Deigan and her four children were sitting around the fire in their cabin. They were very miserable. For the reason that the day was a cold one in the middle of February, and there was no food in the house. That morning they ate the last piece of outer cake, and there was no more oats to make another cake. Their flour had given out a week before that. A dried fish that Coleman, the eldest child and the only son, had stolen off a wall where it was getting dried after being taken out of pickle, had lasted them three days for dinner. There was not a single scrap in the house. Not even a piece of potato.

"Well," said the mother, "what are we doing here? We must do something. God is good, no doubt, but we have to do those who forage for themselves. Now what's to be done? Children, can none of you think of anything? Isn't it well known that the angels put wisdom into the mouths of little ones? Though God forgive me, the four little ones I have are bigger than myself, at least, as far as their stomachs are concerned, so they are."

The four children in spite of their hunger and their misery began to laugh. They were really a remarkable family. The mother was remarkable and the children were remarkable. Since the father, old Mitch Deigoan, that had the wart on his nose, and was always sick with the influenza, and always wore a white frieze trousers that somehow or other always had a yellow burnt spot on its leg one place or another, since he died ten years before that the family had been very, very poor. They had ten acres of land, but they had no stock to put on it, so they always rented it for a few pounds a year. The mother worked at any odd job that she could find, washing, thickening frieze, and scrubbing in people's houses, and the daughters used to mend nets for the co-operative society, while the son, who was seventeen years of age, worked as a labourer. But, to tell the truth, as far as work was concerned, they were a lazy and indigent family. Maybe they would work well enough for a spell, and then for some reason or other the whole family took to idleness and sat in their cabin all day composing poems, cracking jokes, drinking tea, and having the time of their lives. So that the villagers, passing their cabin and hearing loud laughter, got mad with rage against these poor devils who were gited by the good God who governs all things with the Divine capacity for enjoying life and their good health. For in spite of their cabin containing only one point bedroom where the mother and her three daughters slept, and the little kitchen where the son slept on the settle, the children were healthy. And the mother was healthy, except in cold weather when she drank too much tea and suffered so terribly from flatulence and pains all over her middle, that she was always on one point of death and moaned like a possessed one.

But that winter things had gone badly with them until now they were at the end

(Continued on page 8.)

*To-Morrow* finally appeared in August, the first of only two adolescent and chaotic issues. 'The Madonna of Slieve Dun' dealt with a western peasant girl, Mary Creedon/Creedan, of extreme piety who dreams of being another Virgin Mary ('her meditations stirred perhaps by her own name of Mary', says Yeats). The local priest had publicly despaired that even had Christ been born in the parish, the locals were well-nigh irredeemable. She swoons while in the company of a drunken tramp, is raped, but blacks out the memory of it, except that he had uttered the words 'Jesus Christ!' during the rape. Pregnant, she is quickly married in October to an innocent local lad named Joe Brady, the parallels between his name, hers, St Joseph, and the Virgin Mary being explicitly drawn. She knows she will give birth on Christmas Day, and the local drinking and fighting are mysteriously quietened. Local shepherds and animals foregather. She dies in child-birth and the child is a girl. The tramp boasts of his conquest in a shebeen in Cork: 'Well, you're the boy!' say a couple of admirers.

Robinson's story had been written in New York in 1911, and had been published in an American magazine 'which paid ... handsomely and there was no word of reproach from his readers'.<sup>85</sup> It was refused by the Talbot Press in Dublin. The editor of *The Nation* in London, 'thought it might give offence and he returned it', declaring it 'One of the finest short stories I have ever read'. In offering it to *To-Morrow*, Robinson took a greater risk than Yeats did in reprinting 'Leda and the Swan' from *The Cat and the Moon* and the June issue of *The Dial*.<sup>86</sup> Yeats claimed that he had sent the poem to *To-Morrow* at the 'request from an editor', i.e., Francis Stuart.<sup>87</sup> It had taken its origins in the speculation that a counter-movement to modern individualism

<sup>85</sup> George Yeats had told Lady Gregory by 15 July that 'the Talbot Press had already refused to print it in his book of short stories; then he sent it to the *Nation* which refused it because it was indecent and dealt with rape'. See *Journals 1*, 563, 15 July 1924. See also Lennox Robinson, *Curtain Up: An Autobiography* (London: Michael Joseph, 1942), 135–36.

<sup>86</sup> *VP* 441 *vs.* *The Cat and the Moon* had been published on 1 May 1924.

<sup>87</sup> *Cf.*, *NC* 247 where Jeffares suggests AE. While *The Irish Statesman* is seemingly more of a 'political review' than *To-Morrow*, it is evident that Yeats was so intimately involved in the planning of the latter that it is inconceivable that Stuart is not the editor involved here.

would come by way of 'some movement from above preceded by some violent annunciation', but that annunciation took on an entirely new purpose and meaning in the context of 'The Madonna of Slieve Dun'. '[B]ird and lady took such possession of the scene that all politics went out of it' (*VP* 828) Yeats wrote, but in *To-Morrow*, it was nothing if not political, and was read as another attack on the Church, this time from a pagan, mythological angle. Indeed, the *Catholic Bulletin's* rhetoric insisted that everything about 'Senator Yeats' was indeed politics. A mythologically-based poem raising the possibility of a conjunction of 'knowledge' and 'power' arising from the violent annunciation depicted in 'Leda and the Swan' challenged the *Bulletin*, which preferred dogma to 'knowledge'. 'Power' it was still seeking through bluster, in the new Free State. 'Leda and the Swan' and 'The Madonna of Slieve Dun' were a disastrous conjunction; two rapes, to be charged with the incendiary politics of bestiality and blasphemy respectively. Every last drop of political significance was squeezed out of *To-morrow*, down to the names and addresses of its printers Whiteley and Wright ('appropriate name'), in Blackfriars Street '(a choicely ironical address)', Manchester and of its publication (from 13 Fleet St., Dublin) in the *Bulletin's* invective.

The new literary cesspool of the clique of aesthetes, prize-winners or laurel-bearers at the recent [Tailteann] games, blazons under its titles: 'Contributors include W. B. Yeats, Lennox Robinson'. The former contributes a 'poem', which exhibits Senator Pollexfen Yeats in open rivalry with the 'bestial genius' which Senator Yeats has recently championed. For bestial is the precise and fitting word for this outburst of 'poetry'. The 'swan-motive' has been prominent in the aesthete's [*sic*] circles for a year or more; it has now found characteristic utterance in the title and texture of the fourteen lines signed 'W. B. Yeats'. To such foul fruition have come the swan-sequence of Coole, of the Liffey; the mutual prefaces, the mutual awards; the posed photographs on the river-side, including Mr. Lennox Robinson, Senator Yeats, and the Senator who made the Offering of Swans to the river, and received from Senator Pollexfen Yeats therefor [*sic*] a wreath of laurel spray. Professor W. F. Trench is answered. We may even say that J. Joyce will be envious when he reads the effort of Yeats, and will call for a more effective rake. Hell and the sewers are not in it. It is when resort is had to the pagan world for inspiration in the 'poetry' of the obscene, that the mere moderns can be outclassed in bestiality.

To Senator Yeats therefore must be accorded the distinction of bringing the Swan Stunt to its quite appropriate climax. The Swan Song which he has uttered will not be forgotten to him.

The fourteen lines of Senator Yeats, however, are really a minor indecency among the contents of the new literary cesspool. Pride of Place in the unsavoury netherworld, is preserved for Mr. Lennox Robinson. His 'Madonna of Slieve Dun', a sustained and systematic outrage on all that is holiest in our religion, outclasses Senator Yeats in repulsiveness and villainy, even as Senator Yeats outclassed by his Swan Song outclassed the writer described so fitly by [Professor Wilbraham] Trench as one who 'rakes hell and the sewers for dirt'. Fr the diffuse and amorphous heap of filth that issues from mere modern naturalism is never as foul as what can be raked up from the foul depths of paganism, and the foulness of pagan mythology is comparatively flaccid when artistic blasphemy strikes out into the open. The holiest act of the Catholic Religion was, as is well known, deliberately outraged by one of this coterie of aesthetes so as to lead up to that culminating atrocity. Two of the prizewinners at the literary games of August now act as sponsors for this new product of blasphemous ribaldry, couched in artistic phrasing over several areas of the new cesspool.<sup>88</sup>

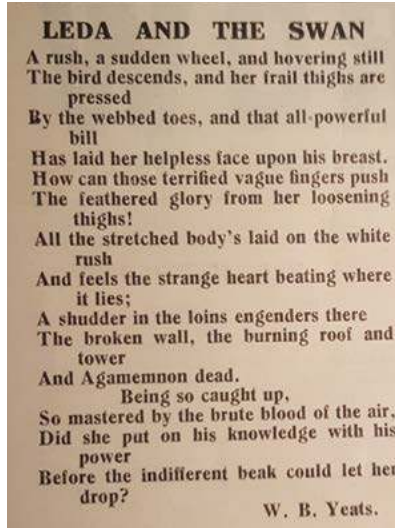


Plate 20. 'Leda and the Swan', as printed in *To-morrow*, August 1924,  
 2. Private Collection, London. Image courtesy Warwick Gould.

<sup>88</sup> *Catholic Bulletin*, 14: November 1924, 930–31.

The *Bulletin* here is wary of naming 'Leda and the Swan', just as the Catholic press in general took pains never to name *Pears' Annual*. However, 'J. Joyce' at last achieves a name, and a name for 'The Madonna of Slieve Dun' was unavoidable, if the blasphemy charged were to be sustained.

By 3 July, George Yeats had sensed that it was all going to end in tears.

Willie repeated the manifesto they or he composed, one sentence is 'All Bishops are atheists'; and the Catholic Bishops' pastorals are criticised. I was grave and said I was afraid his connection with it would injure the Abbey (already attacks on its influence are being made). I thought that an offensive sentence, he defended himself, says they are atheists.<sup>89</sup>

As the delay to the paper and the reason were being announced on 5 July, Yeats boasted to Ezra Pound of the perceived blasphemy against the Virgin Mary and yet its intent 'to test all art & letters by the doctrine of the immortality of the soul'.<sup>90</sup> Ellmann's assertion that '[t]he style makes the authorship quite clear', is particularly to be questioned.<sup>91</sup>

WE are Catholics, but of the school of Pope Julius the Second and of the Medician Popes, who ordered Michaelangelo and Raphael to paint upon the walls of the Vatican, and upon the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, the doctrine of the Platonic Academy of Florence, the reconciliation of Galilee

<sup>89</sup> *CL InteLex* 4586, 5 July [1924].

<sup>90</sup> Writing thus to Pound (*CL InteLex* 4586) was one of several attempts to spread this message.

<sup>91</sup> *YMM* 322. See *UP2*, 438, which mistakenly claims that it was Mrs Yeats, not Iseult Stuart, who told Richard Ellmann, cf. Ellmann's *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (London: Macmillan, 1949), 249–51, 322; followed by *Wade* 382. Ellmann also wrote: 'he persuaded Lennox Robinson, Stuart, and some others, to publish a magazine called "Tomorrow"—only 2 issues appeared, one containing a story by Robinson about a peasant girl who has a child and claims it's a miracle. The Archbishops of Dublin (Catholic and Protestant) both denounced it as an effete product. Yeats wrote the editorials, but didn't sign them' (*YA16* 308). While programmatic self-allusions are everywhere to be found in Yeats's prose and verse, the Yeatsian phrases in this piece amount to unacknowledged quotations. The relation between the immortal soul and 'the imperishable substance of the stars' had been explored first in *Rosa Alchemica* (*VSR* 126, 129; *Myth* 2005 177–79, *VPI* 691). 'To all Artists and Writers' is not admitted to *Later Articles and Reviews* (*CW10*).

and Parnassus. We proclaim Michaelangelo the most orthodox of men, because he set upon the tomb of the Medici 'Dawn' and 'Night', vast forms shadowing the strength of antideluvian Patriarchs and the lust of the goat, the whole handiwork of God, even the abounding horn.<sup>92</sup>

We proclaim that we can forgive the sinner, but abhor the atheist, and that we count among atheists bad writers and Bishops of all denominations. 'The Holy Spirit is an intellectual fountain', and did the Bishops believe[,] that Holy Spirit would show itself in decoration and architecture, in daily manners and written style.<sup>93</sup> What devout man can read the Pastorals of our Hierarchy without horror at a style rancid, coarse and vague, like that of the daily papers? We condemn the art and literature of modern Europe. No man can create, as did Shakespeare, Homer, Sophocles, who does not believe, with all his blood and nerve, that man's soul is immortal, for the evidence lies plain to all men that where that belief has declined, men have turned from creation to photography. We condemn, though not without sympathy, those who would escape from banal mechanism through technical investigation and experiment. We proclaim that these bring no escape, for new form comes from new subject matter, and new subject matter must flow from the human soul restored to all its courage, to all its audacity. We dismiss all demagogues and call back the soul to its ancient sovereignty, and declare that it can do whatever it please, being made, as antiquity affirmed, from the imperishable substance of the stars'.<sup>94</sup>

This passage is best read as an act of homage to Yeats's table talk, to his poems, to the yet-to-be published *A Vision* (1925), to the Blake he regularly quoted ('The Holy Spirit is an intellectual fountain'), to his denunciation of atheist Bishops, and, in that final phrase about 'the imperishable substance of the stars' again to the Blake essays, to

<sup>92</sup> Cf., Yeats's lines from 'Michael Robartes and the Dancer':

While Michael Angelo's Sistine roof,  
His 'Morning' and his 'Night' disclose  
How sinew that has been pulled tight,  
Or it may be loosened in repose,  
Can rule by supernatural right  
Yet be but sinew. (*VP* 386)

<sup>93</sup> The quotation is from Plate 77 of William Blake's *Jerusalem*. See *WWB3*, or any modern edition, e.g., that of David V. Erdman ed., *The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake*, Newly Revised Edition (New York: Random House, 1988), 231, 32. 'is the Holy Ghost any other than an Intellectual Fountain?' became one of Yeats's catch-phrases: see *CW4* 60, 101; *E&I* 78, 136, *CW9* 303; *UP1* 40.

<sup>94</sup> *To-Morrow*, 1:1, August 1924, 4.

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 Vol. I. No. 1 AUGUST, 1924 Sixpence
 

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## TO ALL ARTISTS AND WRITERS

We are Catholics, but of the school of Pope Julius the Second and of the Medician Popes, who ordered Michaelangelo and Raphael to paint upon the walls of the Vatican, and upon the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, the doctrine of the Platonic Academy of Florence, the reconciliation of Galilee and Parnassus. We proclaim Michaelangelo the most orthodox of men, because he set upon the tomb of the Medici "Dawn" and "Night," vast forms shadowing the strength of antideluvian Patriarchs and the lust of the goat, the whole handiwork of God, even the abounding horn.

We proclaim that we can forgive the sinner, but abhor the atheist, and that we count among atheists bad writers and Bishops of all denominations. "The Holy Spirit is an intellectual fountain," and did the Bishops believe that Holy Spirit would show itself in decoration and architecture, in daily manners and written style. What devout man can read the Pastorals of our Hierarchy without horror at a style rancid, coarse and vague, like that of the daily papers? We condemn the art and literature of modern Europe. No man can create, as did Shakespeare, Homer, Sophocles, who does not believe, with all his blood and nerve, that man's soul is immortal, for the evidence lies plain to all men that where that belief has declined, men have turned from creation to photography. We condemn, though not without sympathy, those who would escape from banal mechanism through technical investigation and experiment. We proclaim that these bring no escape, for new form comes from new subject matter, and new subject matter must flow from the human soul restored to all its courage, to all its audacity. We dismiss all demagogues and call back the soul to its ancient sovereignty, and declare that it can do whatever it please, being made, as antiquity affirmed, from the imperishable substance of the stars.

H. Stuart.

Plate 21. Editorial (or Manifesto), *To-Morrow* 1: August 1924, 4.  
Private Collection, London. Image courtesy Warwick Gould.



'Father Christian Rosencrucx', *Rosa Alchemica*, and *The Unicorn from the Stars*.<sup>95</sup>

Context in such a journal is mutual reinforcement. In *To-Morrow*, everything pulled in the direction of rebellion. 'M. Barrington', the wife of Edmund Curtis, Professor of Modern History at Trinity and later to bolt with another *To-Morrow* contributor, Liam O'Flaherty, contributed 'Colour' about the disturbing sexual attraction felt by a white American girl in Paris for a black Senegalese man, against all her inherent prejudices. The paper's spiritual antinomianism is also found in Francis Stuart's 'A Note on Jacob Boehme' and 'Maurice [i.e., Iseult] Gonne's 'The Kingdom Slow to Come', both committed to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. '[T]he Sordid Swan Song of Senator Yeats ... rivalled ... Mr. Lennox Robinson on the Madonna, in that great effort towards pre-eminence of putrescence' was the last judgement of *The Catholic Bulletin*.<sup>96</sup>

#### THE TO-MORROW FALLOUT

The disasters for Yeats's cause occasioned by the fiasco of *To-morrow* continued to multiply. Yeats's classical 'rape' poem and Lennox Robinson's 'rape plus Second Coming delusion' story were felt to be doubly impious, Robinson's being an infamous blasphemy and a heinous insult to the people of the West. The situation deteriorated. Robinson had protested 'indignantly'<sup>97</sup> to the *Irish Statesman*

My friends who have started *Tomorrow* believe in the immortality of the soul ... the purpose of this paper is the overthrow of the unbelievers ... the question is the gravely serious one of the freedom to believe.<sup>98</sup>

Lady Gregory, however, thought that the printers (and Lennox Robinson's previous failed outlet, the *Nation*) had objected not to his beliefs but to 'his way of supporting it', and told George Yeats that

it would be hardly necessary to display the immortality of the soul. She, though she didn't support me when I told him so—is sorry Willie is writing

<sup>95</sup> On the embedded quotations from Yeats's work, see above 165–66, nn. 91 and 92.

<sup>96</sup> *Catholic Bulletin* XVI, 3 March 1926, 248

<sup>97</sup> According to Lady Gregory (*Journals* 1, 563).

<sup>98</sup> *Irish Statesman* 12 July 1924, 555.

for them, says everyone will recognise the manifesto as his though he doesn't believe they will, and that he has given them his Leda poem and a fine thing among his other poems in [*The Cat and the Moon* 1924] but is, now it is known it goes into *Tomorrow*, being spoken of as something horribly indecent. However she says he was feeling dull in Dublin and it has given him a great deal of amusement'.<sup>99</sup>

Yeats and Robinson were not to be forgiven, and the September issue of the paper was to be its last. Robinson had been Secretary and Treasurer of the Central Committee of the Carnegie Trust provided monies for libraries in Ireland. The Provost of Trinity, John Henry Bernard, as well as a priest, Fr. Thomas Finlay S. J., resigned from the Carnegie Library Advisory Committee over the *To-Morrow* affair.<sup>100</sup> Yeats anticipated such moves as pressure on Robinson, warning him that

... the Provost will threaten his resignation & that you will be asked to resign to prevent it. Your desire would be to escape from so much annoyance by that easy act but when you consider public opinion in this country I think you will stay where you are. You have done nothing needing explanation or apology'.

Robinson had

but claimed the same freedom every important writer of Europe has claimed. Neither Flaubert nor Tolstoy, nor Dostoieffsky nor Balzac, nor Anatole France would have thought your theme or your treatment of it illegitimate. Ireland must not be allowed any special privilege of ignorance or cowardice. Even if your resignation helped the libraries for the moment it would injure them in the end perhaps irreparably because it would injure the position of

<sup>99</sup> *Journals* 1, 563. Cecil Salkeld, who was given to painting pictures based on Yeats's poems (see below 312-13) painted a celebrated 'Leda and the Swan, with the burning tower of besieged Troy in the background: see [http://www.artnet.com/artists/cecil-french-salkeld/leda-and-the-swan-3YU89e5qv\\_7aRLuTozdJ8g2](http://www.artnet.com/artists/cecil-french-salkeld/leda-and-the-swan-3YU89e5qv_7aRLuTozdJ8g2)

<sup>100</sup> As Ellmann indicated (*YA16* 308), the story was particularly disliked by Dr John Henry Bernard (1867-1927, Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, 1915-1919, Provost of Trinity College, 1919-1927). Yeats had found him 'a charming and intelligent man, but with the too ingratiating manner of certain highly educated Catholic priests, a manner one does not think compatible with deep spiritual experience' (*Mem* 146).

literature. We must not surrender our freedom to any ecclesiastic ... You can do what you like with this letter.<sup>101</sup>

Archbishop T. P. Gilmartin, who personally organised platoons of vigilantes in his Tuam diocese then resigned from the Carnegie Trust, writing to various national newspapers that

Catholics who remain connected in any way with the Committee ought to watch very carefully the class of books that are being circulated through its libraries.<sup>102</sup> £45,000 of Carnegie funding was at risk. The *To-Morrow* affair echoed through every sphere of public life that involved either Yeats or Lennox Robinson. Far from putting him above the struggle, Yeats's Nobel Prize made him the more vulnerable a target for all divisions in Irish opinion,<sup>103</sup> from those who wished to sacralize the memory of 1916 and theocratize the institutions of the new Free State, to those who—as he did—sought to defend established British civil liberties (including divorce). As he saw, The Carnegie Foundation finally dismissed Lennox Robinson, who later recorded that he found 'the whole thing inexpressibly painful. It alienated many of my Catholic friend and with some the breach will never be healed'.<sup>104</sup> The fallout in the *Catholic Bulletin* became a relentless monthly hammering of ever more florid epithets, ringing ever-more vituperative changes on 'Swan Sonneteer, Senator Pensioner Pollexfen Yeats', the 'fuglemen' of the 'New Ascendancy', the 'Cloacal Combine' the 'Associated Aesthetes', the 'Mutual Boosters'.

<sup>101</sup> *CL InteLex* 4663, 23 October 1924.

<sup>102</sup> See *The Connaught Tribune* 19 December 1924., quoted in the *Catholic Bulletin* 15;1, January 1925, 2, an editorial which reviews the impact of the *To-morrow* affair on the Irish Carnegie Libraries. See also above 144, n. 51.

<sup>103</sup> See A. E.'s sombre 'Notes and Comments', 'The old Sinn Fein movement ... came to power because truly new ideas were associated with it. ... In half a dozen directions pioneers of new ideas were winning adherents' (*The Irish Statesman* 2:13, 7 June 1924, 387). Because they pre-date the *To-Morrow* affair, they are prescient.

<sup>104</sup> Geoffrey Elborn, *Francis Stuart: A Life* (Dublin: Raven Arts Press, 1990), 67 is very inaccurate about what is in Robinson's story, but notes that George Yeats thought 'Leda and the Swan' would be thought 'horribly indecent because of its association in print with the story'. Lady Gregory thought the story was an attempt to 'pervert the nation', *ibid.* Bernard McKenna develops a similar point: see his 'Yeats, "Leda", and the Aesthetics of *To-Morrow*' (*New Hibernia Review* 13. 2 (Summer 2009), 16–35) at 25 and ff.

‘Their habit is to take an isolated sentence, & go on repeating it for years’ Yeats warned Werner Laurie, and his 1925 speech against divorce in the Senate, brought more predictable jeering.<sup>105</sup> Russell’s *The Irish Statesman* began to feel significant financial pressure.

## AN OLD SONG RESUNG

The ‘Dedication’ of *Representative Irish Tales* in Putnam’s Knickerbocker Nuggets Series (1891) had been merely a poem addressed to Irish-American ‘Exiles’ and other would-be tourists. Thirty-three years later in late 1924, Yeats chose to update it to the realities of divided Free State Ireland. He was correcting proof for *Early Poems and Stories* (1925), but the rewritten version had a first outing in the *Irish Statesman* on 8 November 1924. The last three stanzas of the early and later versions can be seen below, reconstructed from those two texts.<sup>106</sup>

## AN OLD POEM RE-WRITTEN

I tore it from green boughs winds tore and  
tossed  
Until the sap of summer had grown weary!  
I tore it from the **barren boughs of Eire,**  
**That country where a man can be so crossed;**  
**Can be so battered, badgered and destroyed,**  
**That he’s a loveless man.** Gay bells bring  
laughter  
And shake a mouldering cobweb from the rafter,  
And yet the saddest chimes are best enjoyed.  
Gay bells or sad, they bring you memories  
  
Of half-forgotten, innocent old places;  
**We and our bitterness have left no traces**  
**On Munster grass, or Connemara skies.**

Nov. 1924

## DEDICATION

I tore it from green boughs winds tossed and  
hurled,  
Green boughs of tossing always, weary, weary,  
I tore it from the green boughs of old Eri,  
The willow of the many-sorrowed world.  
  
Ah, Exiles, wandering over many lands,  
My bell branch murmurs: the gay bells bring  
laughter,  
Leaping to shake a cobweb from the rafter;  
The sad bells bow the forehead on the hand  
A honied ringing! under the new skies  
  
They bring you memories of old village faces,  
Cabins gone now, old well-sides, old dear places,  
And men who loved the cause that never dies.

March 1891

<sup>105</sup> See above 145, n. 55, and *Irish Statesman*, 11 June 1925, *CW10* 186 and ff.

<sup>106</sup> Cf., *VP* 129–30.

Yeats had begun to revise the poem on slip 63 of the galleys of *Early Poems and Stories* well before the call came, probably between 23–28 October.<sup>107</sup> The *Irish Statesman* version appeared with Gogarty's 'To Some Spiteful Persons' as a comment on the facing recto, not so much as the following piece in a snaking column as if a footnote to Yeats's poem, but as striking homage to WBY's hawk-like stature above the 'chattering dyke' of brawling journalism.<sup>108</sup>

Russell had dismayed Yeats in the distant past by wilful republication of texts Yeats had disavowed. Now, however, their mutual need was clear, if tempered by the fact that *To-Morrow* had survived for just two issues and that Yeats's association with it was still notorious. Russell probably welcomed the impersonal phrasing of 'That country where *a man* can be so crossed' instead of a protest from Yeats at harassment so personal and so public. 'An Old Poem Rewritten' was prefaced with a designedly nonchalant headnote,

<sup>107</sup> The galleys were returned corrected to A. P. Watt & Son, who wrote to Macmillan & Co. on 28 October 1924: 'I have just received from Mr. W. B. Yeats, and have pleasure in handing you herewith corrected proofs, slips 57–144 of "EARLY POEMS AND STORIES". I shall be glad if, at your convenience, you will kindly acknowledge their safe receipt' (*CL InteLex* 4666). The revision, I suggest, happened between 23 and 28 October, the former being the date of Yeats's letter to Lennox Robinson quoted above.

<sup>108</sup> It reads:

TO SOME SPITEFUL PERSONS

Your Envy pleases me and serves  
 My fame by all your muttering talk,  
 Just as the starling stock that swerves  
 With shrieks aside, and shows the hawk.  
 Men will lift up the head to stare,  
 Although it never stoop to strike,  
 At that still pinion stretched on air,  
 When all such chattering fills the dyke.

See A. Norman Jeffares coll., ed., and intro., *The Poems & Plays of Oliver St. John Gogarty* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 2001), 253. The poem had been collected in *Wild Apples* (Dublin: Cuala, 1928), 24 and in the revised *Wild Apples with Preface by William Butler Yeats* (Dublin: Cuala, 1930), 11. This poem probably alludes to Tamara's words in *Titus Andronicus* 4, iv.84–90:

King, be thy thoughts imperious, like thy name.  
 Is the sun dimm'd, that gnats do fly in it?  
 The eagle suffers little birds to sing,  
 And is not careful what they mean thereby,  
 Knowing that with the shadow of his wings  
 He can at pleasure stint their melody:  
 Even so mayst thou the giddy men of Rome.

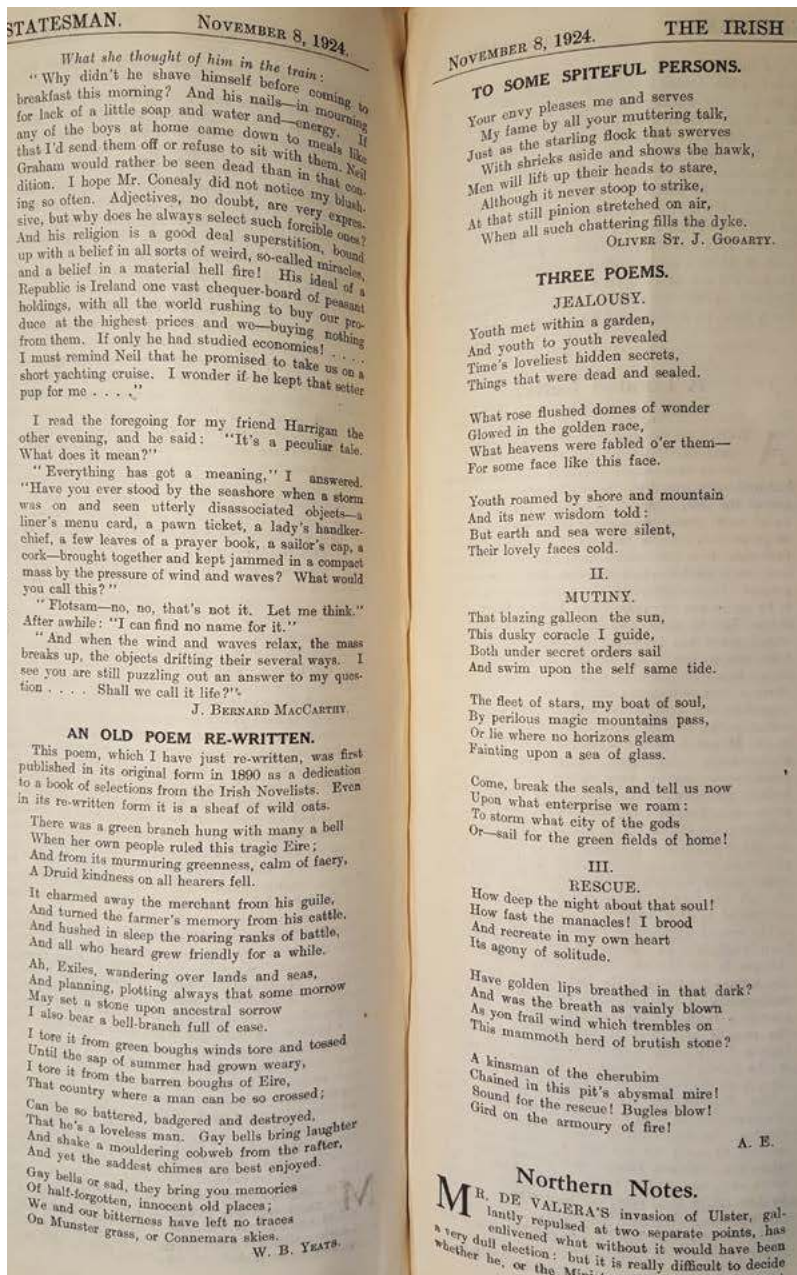


Plate 22. 'An Old Poem Re-written' in its original *placement*, followed by Oliver St. John Gogarty's 'To Some Spiteful Persons' in *The Irish Statesman*, 8 November 1924 (266-67). Image courtesy the National Library of Ireland.

forestalling readers familiar with the old text, who now urgently needed to know 'what issue was at stake' in poetic remaking, and in the remaking of Ireland.

This poem which I have just re-written, was first published in its original form in 1890 as a dedication to a book of selections from the Irish Novelists. Even in its re-written form it is a sheaf of wild oats.

Cherished (Irish-American) dreams of an independent Ireland had to confront the blunt fact of sectarian and factional struggle in the Free State. Rewriting signalled what Yeats felt: new realities required a new benignity in politics which he could command only if others could do so as well. All is set at a slight remove, no longer with the sense of insult as in the 'daily spite of this unmannerly town' as Yeats had put it elsewhere. Words 'obey[ed his] call'.<sup>109</sup>

Here's how he got there. Yeats had written to George Yeats on an undated Thursday in October (probably 30th).

I send that poem re-written. 'Forehead on the breast'<sup>110</sup> was impossible—it was an oversight of course. In amending that I amended much more. It is my thought & experience of 1890 written [with] the skill of today. Please put the old heading to it—'Poem Rewritten' etc—I forget it'. (*CL InteLex* 4664).

On that same day, Lady Gregory prepared a new typescript of this 'textual spur'. Her journal records:

I have typed out Bell Branch, much improved. He says he would not have ventured when he wrote it to put in such names as Munster and Connemara, had not power and skill enough to set them, I say what he has now is the power born of belief in his own power. 'Quite true'. Yet he had used Sligo names then, had set a fashion, now rather overdone I think; for the young poets hitch a poor verse to a couple of hard names to give it a sort of solidity ... Willie wants to stir it up again but I wish he would let *To-Morrow* take care for the things of itself.<sup>111</sup>

We can follow the interim stages in the next three plates.

<sup>109</sup> *VP* 351, 256.

<sup>110</sup> The line had formerly read—to *Poems* (1924)—'The sad bells bow the forehead on the hands', was changed on the galley to 'And sad bells bow the forehead on the hand'. From *The Irish Statesman* version onwards, it became 'And yet the saddest chimes are best enjoyed'. (*VP* 130v.)

<sup>111</sup> 'He says he is sending his emended Cradle Song for its next number. I say it is time for a baby to appear after all the preliminary preparations'. See *Journals* 1, 598–99.





The original sentimental tocsin had always seemed tendentious: 'Ah, Exiles wandering over many seas | Spinning at all times Ireland's good to-morrow'.<sup>112</sup> Seeing his earliest prose and verse together in the galley proofs of *Early Poems and Stories* brought on such exultant changes<sup>113</sup> as 'Ah, Exiles wandering over lands and seas, | And planning, plotting always that some morrow | May set a stone upon ancestral Sorrow!', redeploying the stone from 'Easter, 1916'.<sup>114</sup>

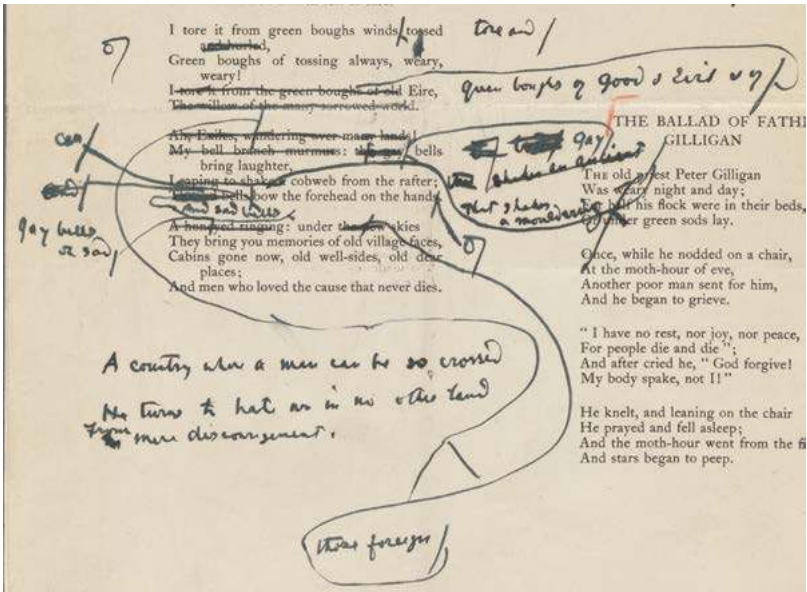


Plate 24. Detail of Plate 23.

<sup>112</sup> Even as the first version had been published, he had sought reassurance from the loyal Katharine Tynan (*CL1* 247). Later, Yeats frequently comments in successive revisions of *Poems* (1895) that certain lines and poems had never seemed to him satisfactory, and reading proof of major new editions repeatedly offered necessary opportunities to 'cut[] out the dead wood'. (*VP* 845–49 at 848).

<sup>113</sup> The galley proofs of slips 63–64 (later pp. 126–29 of the published book) survive in the Berg Collection, NYPL, and may be consulted in W. B. Yeats, *The Early Poetry: Volume II: 'The Wanderings of Oisín' and Other Early Poems to 1895: Manuscript Materials*, ed. by George Bornstein (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 298–99. For an extended discussion of these matters see Warwick Gould, "Stitching and Unstitching": Yeats, Bibliographical Opportunity, and the Life of the Text', in Brian G. Caraher and Robert Mahony (eds.), *Ireland and Transatlantic Poetics: Essays in Honour of Denis Donoghue* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 129–55. Hereafter, Gould, "Stitching".

<sup>114</sup> *VP* 393–94.

Free State Ireland is that country where a man can be ‘so crossed | So battered, badgered and destroyed | That he’s a loveless man’. I take that Irish usage of ‘destroyed’ to mean exhausted, worn down: I think of ‘Destroyed we all are with the hunger and the drouth’, as in *The Unicorn from the Stars*, or, as Synge writes in *The Playboy* and Yeats quotes ‘destroyed with the cold’. A peasant says to Lady Gregory of cut hay threatened by the rains, ‘it’s the night and the break of day that have us destroyed’.<sup>115</sup> If the quarrel with others was bitter, that with himself was also intense. He suppressed more extreme expressions of bitterness which, within the textual continuum,<sup>116</sup> provoke questions. On the corrected galley

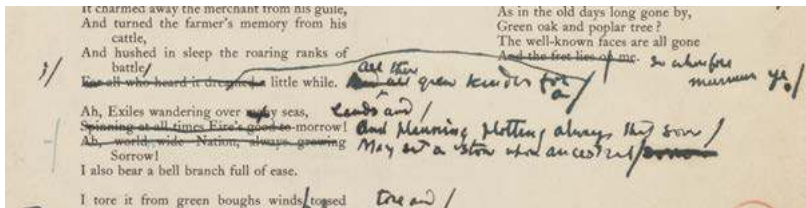


Plate 25. Further detail of Plate 23.

you will see that ‘the green boughs of old Eri’ were first revised to ‘the boughs of good and evil’ and at the bottom ‘A country where a man can be so crossed | He turns to hate as in no other land | From mere discouragement’. No, it doesn’t work, but it shows a certain empathy with his accusers, even if the ‘loveless’ of the version printed is more magnanimous. Even after he sent the now lost fair copy to George Yeats from Coole for transmission to George Russell at *The Irish Statesman* he sent more, guilty with worrying her ‘with all those

<sup>115</sup> VPI 671; J. M. Synge, *Collected Works*, 3, *Plays Book 1*, ed. by Ann Saddlemyer (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd.; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1968), 113; *EC&I* 309; *CW4* 224; *Journals* 1, 579. Years ago, an old boatman took me to Innisfree in wild weather, warning ‘You’ll be destroyed of the spray’.

<sup>116</sup> See Gould, “Stitching and Unstitching”, 129 *et. seq.*, and pl. 1, 13. A larger version of the galley proof image can be found in W. B. Yeats: *The Early Poetry Volume II: ‘The Wanderings of Oisín’ and Other Early Poems to 1895 Manuscript Materials*, ed. by George Bornstein (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 298–99.

revisions'. On 7 November, 'Please make one more change in that poem: Stanza 5 should run thus

I tore it from green boughs winds tore & tossed  
 Until the sap of summer had grown weary!  
 I tore it from the barren boughs of Eire,  
 That country where a man can be so crossed' etc.

'I think' he wrote, 'that removes the last sentimentality'. 'If the copy has already gone to Russell send him this stanza. He can add it in proof'.<sup>117</sup> The corrections are in the 'sheaf of wild oats' published the *next day*. The poet of 'Meditations in Time of Civil War' whose bridge at Ballylee has been blown up and whose Merrion Square house has been shot up in 1922, extirpate sentimentality in favour of magnanimity. The majority of textual changes made for the periodical were absorbed into the page proofs of *Early Poems and Stories*. They are not the last in that poem's history.<sup>118</sup>

Such textual imbrication is not merely a 'vertical' matter whereby a new text drives out the old. A new, 'horizontal' field of textual reference, where the poet gestures to or summons circumstances contemporaneous with the writing and | or its re-publishing may well have supplied the poet's need to rewrite at a particular point.<sup>119</sup> Neighbouring texts, by others or by the poet, new collections, or new resonances available to the author as self-reader (say) of proofs offer new opportunities or pressures. The relation between the new and the rejected deepens our understanding not merely of the gropings and the assuredness of poetic revision, but also of the motivations and opportunities that new textual occasions provide. Yeats was not

<sup>117</sup> *CL InteLex* 4670 [7 November 1924] Russell, of course, given half the chance, would have set the 1891 version from memory. Yeats was quite open that '[between us existed from the beginning the antagonism that unites dear friends' (*CW113*).

<sup>118</sup> While some lines stood in all future versions through other changes (*VP* 129–30). On 1 December 1924, Watt sent 'corrected proofs of "EARLY POEMS AND STORIES" by Mr. W. B. Yeats (pp. 17–80 and 161–224)' to Macmillan. *CL InteLex* 4682.

<sup>119</sup> See Gould, "Stitching", 129–55.

merely out-manoeuvring Russell's stultifying love for his early work with a rewritten poem: its publication was a fresh salvo in a pamphlet war. Such contexts show the very real dangers of hastening into purely literary-historical observations about poetic influence.

For George Bornstein, the revisions 'mark an embittered cry at Irish realities during and after the "Troubles"', before reminding us that 'the revised version appeared in the middle of perhaps the most glorious decade of literary modernism in English, one that saw the publication of *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses*, and *The Tower*'. The *Irish* realities are precise: Yeats is turning a dedicatory poem for American readers of 1891 into a poem of 1924 for Irish readers of an Irish periodical, a domestic audience *au courant* with a pamphlet war: the *Irish Statesman* and the *Irish Times* ranged against the *Catholic Bulletin*, *Our Boys*, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, and *Irish Independent*. It is not some vague gesture to 1916, nor the Irish War of Independence, nor the Civil War—and certainly not to 'the Troubles'! This poem is not 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', nor 'Meditations in Time of Civil War'. But accuracy evidently means little to Bornstein who wishes to insist that the 'glorious decade of literary modernism is due to the influence of Ezra Pound'.<sup>120</sup> Pound indeed helped Yeats to abolish

<sup>120</sup> See George Bornstein, 'What is the Text of a Poem by Yeats?', in Bornstein and Ralph G. Williams (eds.), *Palimpsest: Editorial Theory in the Humanities* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 167–93 at 174–76, esp. 175. Pound's role in all this is to be found in his 'Romancing the (Native) Stone: Yeats, Stevens and the Anglocentric Canon', in Gene W. Ruoff ed., *The Romantics and Us* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 108–29 where Bornstein quotes Pound in order to assert (improbably) that Pound's assistance was required for Yeats to 'de-Anglicize' his own Romanticism:—"The new diction and syntax replaced the derivative, strongly English patterns of fin-de-siècle verse which we now associate with modernism. Ezra Pound described the pre-modern, turn of the century poetry this way: "The common verse of Britain from 1890 to 1901 was a horrible agglomerate compost, not minted, most of it not even baked, all legato, a doughy mess of third-hand Keats, Wordsworth, heaven knows what, fourth-hand Elizabethan sonority blunted, half melted, lumpy" (*Literary Essays* 205). In the present context, I emphasize that the modernist patterns replacing those described by Ezra Pound are predominantly Irish and American rather than British—the patterns of Yeats, Pound, Eliot, Frost, Williams, and Stevens. They help account for why the diverse language of literary modernism appeals so strongly to English-language poets around the world today: it has already

'Miltonic inversion' in 'The Two Kings' in 1912–1913, a wonderful poem often air-brushed from history.<sup>121</sup> But Pound's influence, so often over-stated, dates from after Yeats, came 'into [his] strength' such that 'words obey[ed his] call' (*VP* 256) in the years that gave issue to *The Green Helmet and Other Poems*.

It is here that Julian Barnes's 'cacophonous, overlapping, irreconcilable actuality' prevails for me over the 'flatten[ing] [literary] history, with virtue and vice attributed, victory and defeat calculated, false taste rebuked'.<sup>122</sup> When the actual is recovered, 'isms' can be seen to have flattened the life out of any poem. Summoning the First Armoured Division of Modernism seems unnecessary in the face of the quotidian realities of Irish public life. 'Modernist discourse' often actually hurries actual Irish events out of the way to get back to its bloated theme. As Barry Lopez remarks, 'The imposed view, however

de-centered England and prepared the ground for further such enterprises .... In Yeats's case, the new way he wrote poetry enabled him to renegotiate the relation between Ireland and England in his poetry, and to de-Anglicize his own romanticism'. (117). Pound's comment on the 'common verse' is pointedly not about the diction of Yeats or the other Rhymers, of whom Pound was very much in awe. An Irish nationalist schooled in the 19th Irish poetic tradition, a member of the old I.R.B., a physical force movement since around February 1886, Yeats did not have to wait until Ezra Pound happened along to 'de-Anglicize' himself.

<sup>121</sup> Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory on 3 January 1913 '... my digestion has got rather queer again—a result I think of sitting up late with Ezra & Sturge Moore & some light wine while the talk ran. However the criticism I have got from them has given me new life & I have made that Tara poem a new thing & am writing with a new confidence having got Milton off my back. Ezra is the best critic of the two. He is full of the middle ages & helps me to get back to the definite & the concrete away from modern abstractions. To talk over a poem with him is like getting you to put a sentence into dialect. All becomes clear & natural. Yet in his own work he is very uncertain, often very bad though very interesting sometimes. He spoils himself by too many experiments & has more sound principles than taste' (*CL InteLex* 2053).

<sup>122</sup> 'Life turned into something else' in *The Guardian*, 2 May 2015, Review, 2–3. When Barnes collected the piece (see above 123–24, n. 2) he revealed that although his original preference for Modernist art had been confirmed by this exhibition of pre-Modernist works, he was gratified at last to understand the 'noble necessity of Modernism' for the first time and from, as it were, the bottom up. See Barnes's *Keeping an Eye Open: Essays on Art*, 7–8.

innocent, always obscures'.<sup>123</sup> It forces young researchers into what Lawrence Lipking once called 'competitive reading' whereby refuting others' opinions diverts fresh postgraduate energy and enquiry from the print archive itself.<sup>124</sup>

That rich archive records the 'Janus-faced' texts found in periodicals, those which look 'before and after' as new subsumes old into a new structure on old foundations, binding new to old, distancing it yet preserving its integrity. Their whole text is a 'moving image' of its author's developing thought, its forms, and pressures.<sup>125</sup> Textual repudiation shows the mature poet rewriting himself as a character in his own phantasmagoria, 'play[ing] with all masks'.<sup>126</sup>

Bro. Craven's gallon of paraffin and 70 copies of a London Christmas number were, of course, a far cry from the thirty-four

<sup>123</sup> 'The imposed view, however innocent, always obscures', Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape* (1986), 176. It is salutary to be reminded that 'Modernism' is a casual currency of our day, and was not thus to the writers upon whose lives and work it is retrospectively imposed. Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'The Celestial Railroad', sets a high standard for an oppressive 'ism' of *his* day, personified as 'Giant Transcendentalist' and 'German by birth'. '[A]s to his form, his features, his substance, and his nature generally, it is the chief peculiarity of this huge miscreant that neither he for himself, nor anybody for him, has ever been able to describe them. [He looks] somewhat like an ill-proportioned figure, but considerably more like a heap of fog and duskiness. He shouted after us, but in so strange a phraseology that we knew not what he meant, nor whether to be encouraged or affrighted'. Nathaniel Hawthorne, 'The Celestial Railroad' (1843) in his *Mosses from an Old Manse*. See the Centenary Edition of Hawthorne's *Works* 10 (1974), 186–207 at 197. John Harwood's *Eliot to Derrida: The Poverty of Interpretation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995) provides the best guide to the woeful effects of concepts such as Modernism as a pedagogic mode at tertiary level. Roy Foster rousingly deplors the postcolonial 'interventions of refugees from post-post-structuralist university departments of English or sociology' and those from 'born-again newly Irish Eng. Lit. academics' into such areas as the Irish Famine: see his 'Theme-parks and Histories', in his *The Story of Ireland: Telling Tales and Making it up in Ireland* (London: Allen Lane, the Penguin Press, 2010), 23–36 at 28–30.

<sup>124</sup> See Lawrence Lipking, 'Comparative Reading', *The New Republic*, 2 October 1989, 28–35.

<sup>125</sup> Such is the perspective available to those who read 'vertically', alive to these occluded, or acroamatic, connexions between the new and the abandoned.

<sup>126</sup> *Mem* 152. See also Warwick Gould, 'The Mask before *The Mask*' (*YA19* 3–47).

simultaneous book-burnings in university towns on 10 May 1933, organized by German students. But these events have in common an appeal to national Essentialism. In the Opernplatz in Berlin in 1933, you will remember, Dr Goebbels congratulated the students and Hitler Youth:

The triumph of the German revolution has cleared a path for the German way; and the future German man will not just be a man of books, but also a man of character ... you do well at this late hour to entrust to the flames the intellectual garbage of the past. It is a strong, great and symbolic undertaking [from which] ... will arise victorious the lord of a new spirit.<sup>127</sup>

Titillatingly, the identities of both the Christmas carol and the incinerated Christmas publication were not divulged to the ordinary public. 'Blasphemous ... diabolical insult to the Immaculate Mother of God ... horrible insult to God' was enough to rouse the readership.<sup>128</sup> The whole episode has about it a repugnantly withheld knowingness. While there was commercial advantage in destroying an up-market English rival and boasting about it: to have named it would have conferred irresistible notoriety upon it. A & F. Pears Ltd is often cited as using its soap to signify imperial progress,<sup>129</sup> but this too is a very retrospective view, and it is probably wrong to see the opposition of *Our Boys* to *Pears' Annual* (which had been the market leader in children's Christmas publications since 1891) as simply political. *Our Boys* had in life and still has in Irish press histories a reputation for being notoriously hard-nosed about market share.

What Bro. Craven had in fact done was, as Yeats had observed, to remove the centre-fold from every rounded-up copy of *Pears' Annual* before they were burned—'as it were in effigy' said Yeats—before circulating them to selected key fomenters of moral outrage with one of Bro Craven's circulars—alas, still fugitive—as evidence of the wily

<sup>127</sup> See 'Books burn as Goebbels speaks' (with historic film footage) at [http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media\\_fi.php?ModuleId=10005852&MediaId=158](http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_fi.php?ModuleId=10005852&MediaId=158)

<sup>128</sup> See *CW10*, 198 and above, 124.

<sup>129</sup> See, e.g., [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pears\\_\(soap\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pears_(soap))

ways of the Devil.<sup>130</sup> Yeats is the only contemporary witness to tell us that the offending pages held ‘The Cherry Tree Carol’, and the only witness to tell us that they were circulated in this wily, vicious way, even if the Eason archive reveals Bro. Craven’s viciousness on a more personal level. That Yeats does not name *Pears’ Annual* is unremarkable: no doubt Craven’s circular, in accordance with his rhetorical strategy of ‘not namng’, simply identified it, as Yeats says, as ‘the Christmas number of a London publication in the hands of a boy’, and his focus was on the incendiarism itself.

There are many versions of ‘The Cherry Tree Carol’. The offending stanza in the *Pears Annual* version does not appear in the Cuala Press *Broadside* version of December 1909, illustrated by Jack B. Yeats. Though a limited-edition hand-coloured *Broadside* is unlikely to have reached the audiences the Christian Brothers courted, I doubt there was self-censoring at Cuala. The layout of the poem hampers its reading. To preserve any narrative coherence in the *Broadside* one must read across the page, and not in snaking columns: something may be missing before the verses about the miracle of the tree.

Yeats also knew of Irish versions in both languages, including that collated from two Mayo witnesses (Michael MacRury and another from Martin O’Callaly in Erris) by Douglas Hyde for *The Religious Songs of Connacht* (1906).<sup>131</sup>

I will not pluck thee one cherry  
                   Who art unfaithful to me  
 Let him come to fetch you the cherries  
                   Who is dearer than I to thee

<sup>130</sup> See above 125, n. 5 and *CW10* 198. I remain grateful to Christian Bros. archivists in Rome and Dublin who have yet to unearth a copy.

<sup>131</sup> In *The Bookman*, October 1895 Yeats had recommended that *The Religious Songs of Connaught* ‘be added (as soon as it is reprinted from the Irish magazine in which it is now appearing)’ to Hyde’s *Love Songs of Connacht* as one of his ‘Best Irish Books’: see ‘Irish National Literature, IV: A List of the Best Irish Books’, *UP1* 387; *CW9* 292.



# A BROADSIDE

FOR DECEMBER, 1909

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY E. C. YEATS AT THE CUALA PRESS,  
CHURCHTOWN, DUNDRUM, COUNTY DUBLIN.  
SUBSCRIPTION TWELVE SHILLINGS A YEAR POST FREE.



## THE CHERRY-TREE CAROL

Now Joseph was an old man,  
An old man was he,  
When he wedded Mary,  
In the land of Galilee.

O then bespoke up Mary,  
With words both meek and kind,  
'Pluck me some cherries, Joseph,  
They run so in my mind.'

O eat your cherries, Mary,  
O eat your cherries now;  
O eat your cherries, Mary,  
They grow upon the bough.

'He neither shall be born,  
In housen nor in hall,  
Nor in the place of Paradise,  
But in an ox's stall.

As Joseph and Mary walk thro'  
A garden green,  
Where cherries and berries,  
Were as thick as might be seen.

Then bowed down the highest tree,  
Unto God's mother's hand,  
O then, she cried, 'See, Joseph,  
I have cherries at my command.'

As Joseph was a walking,  
He heard an angel sing,  
'This night shall be the birth-time  
Of Christ our Heavenly King.'

'He neither shall be clothed  
In purple nor in pall,  
But all in fair linen,  
' That usen babies all.

300 copies only.

He neither shall be rocked,  
In silver nor in gold,  
But in a wooden manger  
That rested on the mould.'

As Joseph was a walking,  
Then did an angel sing:  
And Mary's child at midnight,  
Was born to be our King.

Then be ye glad, good people,  
This night of all the year,  
And light ye up your candles,  
For His star it shineth clear.

Then out spake the good St. Joseph,  
And stoutly indeed spake he,  
"I shall not pluck thee one cherry,  
Who art unfaithful to me.

"Let him come fetch you the cherries,  
Who is dearer than I to thee,"  
Then Jesus bearing St. Joseph,  
Thus spake to the stately tree:

"Bend low in her gracious presence,  
Sloop down to herself, O tree,  
That my mother herself may pluck thee,  
And take thy burden from thee."

Then the great tree lowered her branches  
At hearing the high command,  
And she plucked the fruit that it offered,  
Herself with her gentle hand.

Loud shouted the good St. Joseph,  
He cast himself on the ground,  
"Go home and forgive me, Mary,  
To Jerusalem I am bound ;  
I must go to the holy city,  
And confess my sin profound."<sup>1</sup>

Then out spake the gentle Mary,  
She spake with a gentle voice,  
"I shall not go home, O Joseph,  
But I bid thee at heart rejoice,  
For the King of Heaven shall pardon  
The sin that was not of choice."

<sup>1</sup> These six-line verses are taken to the spirit of the Irish language, and probably arise from the first half of the next quatrain being forgotten.

until I go to Jerusalem, doing penance for my sin." Then spake the Virgin with utterance that was blessed, "I shall not go home, and I shall not lie upon my couch, but you have forgiveness to find from the King of the graces for your sins."

Ann rin vo Labairt naom íorép  
De'n cómháid bí ceann,  
"Ní beairtú mé áit na reóna,  
A' t' ní héid' b'iom vo éileann.

"S'laob' a'í ádairí ó vo leint  
Ír a'í ír cóm' áit beir' ceann,"  
Ann rin vo coirpúis íora  
So beannaíste f'aoi na byonn.

Ann rin vo Labairt íora  
So naomha f'aoi na byonn  
"Írúis' so h-íruil  
Ann a' f'acóirpe, a' éirinn."

"Ómháid' an éirinn íor' bí  
Ann a' b'raíonúir' éan máll,  
A'sur puair' fí mian a' chorpúir' óis  
S'laonóir'ead' ó'n S'clann.

Ann rin vo Labairt naom íorép  
A'sur éad' ó péin a'í an z'clann,  
"S'ab' a'baile a' mháite  
A'sur túró' a'í vo leaburó.

So véiró mé so h-íspúir'leam  
A's ceannam a'irpúe ann mo péacard."  
Ann rin vo Labairt an f'haígeann  
"Ní péacard mé a'baile

A' t' ní tuoiró' mé a'í mo leaburó,  
A'c' tá maiteannar le páseal' a'sao  
Ó Rús' na n'Sháirca ann vo péacard."

growing beneath my bosom." Then spake St. Joseph with utterance that was stout, "I shall not pluck thee the jewels, and I like not thy child. Call upon his father, it is he you may be stiff with." Then stirred Jesus blessedly beneath her bosom. Then spake Jesus holly, "Bend low in her presence, O tree. The tree bowed down to her in that time, but she delay, and she got the desire of her inner heart. Then spake St. Joseph, and cast himself upon the ground, "Go home, O Mary, and lie upon thy couch

Plate 27. Douglas Hyde's parallel Irish and English versions taken down in Mayo. From *Religious Songs of Connacht* (1906, 280-81). Private Collection, London. Image courtesy Warwick Gould.

The literal translation offered in the running footnote, is even franker:

Then spake St. Joseph with utterance that was stout, 'I shall not pluck thee the jewels, and I like not thy child. Call upon his father, it is he you may be stiff with'. Then stirred Jesus blessedly beneath her bosom. Then spake Jesus holily 'Bend low in her presence, O tree'. The tree bowed down to her in their presence, without delay, and she got the desire of her inner heart, quite directly off the tree. Then spake St. Joseph, and cast himself upon the ground, 'Go home, Mary, and lie upon thy couch until I go to Jerusalem, doing penance for my sin'. Then spake the Virgin with utterance that was blessed, 'I shall not go home, and I shall not lie upon my couch, but you have forgiveness to find from the King of the graces for your sins'. (280–81).

If *Our Boys* and *The Catholic Bulletin* found so much to object to in Joyce's *Ulysses*, why had they never turned on *Religious Songs of Connacht*? Yeats's answer is Bro. Craven's 'incredible ignorance' of 'the lovely celebration of Mary's sanctity and her Child's divinity, a glory of the mediaeval church as popular in Gaelic as in English'. For Yeats, the Carol celebrates a 'miracle'.<sup>132</sup> Joseph's doubt is recorded in *Matthew 1, 18–25* but the rest of the story is in the *Apocrypha*. The 'Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew', a Latin compilation of the eighth or ninth century, contains much from the second century *Protevangelium*, or Infancy Gospel of James. (Hyde's Mayo versions have verbal echoes of these apocryphal Infancy stories.) Then there is a Middle-English ur-carol, the fifteenth-century Coventry Mysteries, and scores of quaint folkloric versions—with which Yeats had some familiarity, but then he also knew A. H. Bullen's version, and had collated Cecil Sharp's version with Quiller-Couch's version found in his *The Oxford Book of Ballads*.<sup>133</sup> The main point, however, is that the carol was sung

<sup>132</sup> In 'The Need for Audacity of Thought', *CW10* 199.

<sup>133</sup> Yeats's scorn for Craven's ignorance suggests some scholarship of his own on the group of poems that make up the various composite versions of the Cherry Tree Carol. Apart from Hyde's version there were, e.g., William Hone (1823), *Ancient Mysteries Described, especially the English Mystery Plays, founded on the Apocryphal New Testament Story, extant in the Unpublished Manuscripts in the British Museum etc.* (London: printed for William Hone, 1823), 90–93; William Sandys, *Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern, including The most popular in the West of England and*

in Christmas services, Catholic and Protestant, year after year, as Cn be followed in the records of Christmas Carol services in local and national newspapers.

The Knights of Angelic Warfare, however, were simply unembarrassable. Their campaign grew. The text of Richard Devane's survey of Commonwealth and American laws to curb 'Evil Literature' in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, was as authoritative as its footnotes were authoritarian. Irish Exceptionalism, he thought, should unite all shades of opinion in a new state to iron all nuance out of English case law.<sup>134</sup> That way he allowed other organs of Catholic

*the airs to which they are sung also specimens of French Provincial Carols with an Introduction and Notes.* (London: Richard Beckley, 1833). Second Part, 123–5 and App. 10; Francis James Child ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Vol. II, Part 1. (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1885, 1886), no. 54 (1–6); A. H. Bullen's *A Christmas Garland Carols And Poems From The Fifteenth Century To The Present Time* (London: John C. Nimmo, 1887), 29–32; *The Oxford Book of Ballads*, chosen and ed. by Arthur Quiller-Couch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), no. 101 (431–33). Sharp had collated his version from two separate encounters in Gloucestershire in 1909, with a Mrs Mary Anne Clayton of Chipping-Camden and a Mary Anne Roberts of Winchcombe. See [http://www.gloschristmas.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/C02\\_SingPDF\\_CherryTreeCarol\\_Doc.pdf](http://www.gloschristmas.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/C02_SingPDF_CherryTreeCarol_Doc.pdf)

<sup>134</sup> See Rev R. S. Devane SJ, 'Indecent Literature: Some Legal Remedies' (*loc. cit.*, above 144, n. 51). The article seems to have been co-ordinated with the February 1925 publicity in *Our Boys* for the burning of 'The Cherry Tree Carol' on 16 Jan. Devane rehearses the history of the Vigilance movement since the action in Limerick in 1911, as well as the rise of vigilantism in Tuam. After surveying international action at the League of Nations, he concludes: 'Unfortunately the term "obscene" is equivocal and has different meanings and equivalents .... It is incumbent on the Irish Free State to define "obscenity", because in the first place, we must break with old traditions in this matter and make things fit in with Irish ideals of decency and morality, and also because in English law which obtains in Ireland "indecent" and "obscene" are so nebulous and ill-defined that some of the most experienced English public servants and others, as we shall see, have striven to get the British parliament to define them more exactly and have failed .... However we may differ in our political opinions today, and however bitter the feelings that have arisen in recent times may be, I think we may truthfully say, that Republican and Free Stater, Capitalist and Worker, Protestant and Catholic, would all rejoice in the re-definition of "indecent" or "obscenity", thereby setting up "as high a standard as possible" and so giving a moral lead to other nations'. (188–90).

opinion to do his work for him. Reluctantly, Kevin O'Higgins as Minister of Justice and a former Christian Brothers schoolboy, set up a Committee on Evil Literature on 12 February 1926, 'in retrospect, a most embarrassing institution that contravened common sense'.<sup>135</sup>

I'm not going to summarize the evidence submitted to this star chamber, beyond saying that this was an issue which mattered hugely to a vociferous minority who claimed to represent the Catholic majority view. Other religious and social groups—the Church of Ireland, the Boy Scouts etc—submitted very little and very neutral evidence. The Chief Rabbi did not even bother to reply.<sup>136</sup> The Committee's recommendations on 28 Dec 1926 included a new draft Censorship Law.<sup>137</sup> O'Higgins set in train moves towards it, but was assassinated in reprisals by Republican extremists when on the way to Mass on 10 July 1927.<sup>138</sup> The new law was passed late in 1928 and in operation from early 1929. As just one small footnote, I return to that 'Black List' referred to in the small print on the 'Satan Smut and Co.' front page of the *Irish Independent*. It was indeed available and open for augmentation. Among the records on 'Evil Literature', in the Irish State Archives, you'll find both a printed Black List and a subsequent TS one, the only difference being that the latter adds (at the bottom, centre) '*Pears' Annual*'.

<sup>135</sup> See Louis Cullen (*op. cit.*), 262. The membership of the Committee included Prof. William Thrift (TCD) Thomas O'Donnell T.D. (Labour, Galway); Very Rev. James Dempsey; Rev. J. Sinclair Stevenson, Prof Robert Donovan (UCD).

<sup>136</sup> To judge by its absence from comprehensive 'Evil Literature' records of the Irish State Archives.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, The Committee reported on 28 December 1926. It recommended 'a new definition of the terms [indecent and obscene] so as to include not only what was grossly "indecent" and "obscene", but what was generally demoralising and offensive in sexual matters to the moral idea of the community generally' (262–63). It recommended 'a scheme of prevention, rather than application of the criminal law' since the problem was mainly with imported publications. A new permanent committee of nine to twelve representative persons 'with advisory powers so that Minister could proscribe offending periodicals' was recommended. One of the offences was the advocacy of birth control in all its forms (264).

<sup>138</sup> The perpetrators were known, but never stood trial.

**LIST OF SOME  
Objectionable Papers & Periodicals**

News of the World	Girl's Companion
The People	Answers Library
Sunday Chronicle	Home Companion
Reynold's Newspaper	Woman's Weekly
London Opinion	How Bells
The Passing Show	Picture Show
Eve (The Lady's Pictorial)	Woman's World
The Referee	Eve's Own Stories
London Life & Society	My Pocket Novels
London Mail	Peg's Paper
Bits of Fun	Dainty Novels
The Winning Post	Smart Fiction
*The Sporting Times (Pink 'Un)	London News
	Woman's Life
	Lloyd's Weekly News
The Smart Set	Smart Novels
Mascot Novels	Home Stories
Vogue	Illustrated Police News
Peg's Companion	Thompson's Weekly News
Betty's Paper	

**LIST  
Of Some  
OBJECTIONABLE PAPERS & PERIODICALS.**

News of the World.	Girls' Companion.
The People.	Answers Library.
Sunday Chronicle.	Home Companion.
Reynold's Newspaper.	Woman's Weekly.
London Opinion	How Bells.
Passing Show.	Picture Show.
Eve (The Lady's Pictorial)	Woman's World.
The Referee.	Eve's Own Stories.
London Life & Society.	My Pocket Novels.
London Mail.	Peg's Paper.
Bits of Fun.	Dainty Novels.
The Winning Post.	Smart Fiction.
*The Sporting Times (Pink 'Un).	London News.
	Woman's Life.
	Lloyd's Weekly News.
The Smart Set.	Smart Novels.
Mascot Novels.	Home Stories.
Vogue.	Illustrated Police News
Peg's Companion.	Thompson's Weekly News.
Betty's Paper.	

Pears' Annual.

\*The Editor of this publication got four months' imprisonment for immoral articles in his Journal.

Plates 28-29. Two 'Black Lists' from the 'Evil Literature' papers, a printed and subsequently a typed list of 'Some Objectionable Papers and Periodicals', the latter showing the addition of *Pears' Annual*. Images courtesy the National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

## CENSORSHIP: YEATS'S PRESCIENCE

On 7 June 1923, when the Censorship of Films Bill had been debated, WBY had told the Seanad how 'Artists and Writers' including Synge and Goethe had wrestled with the moral problems of reader-response, insisting against press exaggeration 'I think you can leave the arts ... to the general conscience of mankind'.<sup>139</sup> By 1926, as the clamour for a new Censorship Act forced the Evil Literature Committee into being, the *Statesman* came under unrelenting attack from *The Catholic Bulletin* and *Our Boys*. Senator Yeats responded with 'The Need for Audacity of Thought'. Russell had published several of Yeats's essays,<sup>140</sup> but feared this one might 'endanger [the] existence' of his paper,<sup>141</sup> so ferocious was the sectarian attack on what the Irish-Ireland *Leader* had called the 'Hairy Fairy coterie'.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>139</sup> 'A terrible responsibility has been thrust upon me. I merely rose to say that I thought I could comfort the mind of the Senator who proposed this amendment. Artists and writers for a very long time have been troubled at intervals by their work. I remember John Synge and myself both being considerably troubled when a man, who had drowned himself in the Liffey, was taken from the river. He had in his pocket a copy of Synge's play, 'Riders to the Sea', which, you may remember, dealt with a drowned man. We know, of course, that Goethe was greatly troubled when a man was taken from the river, having drowned himself. The man had in his pocket a copy of 'Werther', which is also about a man who had drowned himself. It has again and again cropped up in the world that the arts do appeal to our imitative faculties. We comfort ourselves in the way Goethe comforted himself, that there must have been other men saved from suicide by having read 'Werther'. We see only the evil effect, greatly exaggerated in the papers, of these rather inferior forms of art which we are now discussing, but we have no means of reducing to statistics their other effects. I think you can leave the arts, superior or inferior, to the general conscience of mankind. [I, 1147-48]' (SS 52).

<sup>140</sup> In 'Compulsory Gaelic' he was to fight to keep open Ulster's eventual union in a United Ireland: see *Irish Statesman* 14 March 1925; CW10 168-77. See Lady Gregory's *Journals* 1, 25 July, 568.

<sup>141</sup> When finally published in *The Dial*, February 1926, 'The Need for Audacity of Thought' contained a note by Yeats: 'The Irish periodical which has hitherto published my occasional comments on Irish events explained that this essay would endanger its existence'. See CW10 383, n. 318. On the *Catholic Bulletin's* response, see below 208-11.

<sup>142</sup> 'Current Topics', *The Leader*, 21 February 1925, 56-57. *The Leader* even averred that Yeats was not an Irishman but an Englishman in all but 'an accident of birth', thus taking up the very criticism of *The Catholic Bulletin* after Gosse's attack (see above, 156, n. 72).

In February 1926, it appeared in *The Dial*, which had first published 'The Second Coming' in 1920. It was then republished in T. S. Eliot's *New Criterion* in April 1926, where it appeared as 'The Need for Religious Sincerity', a textual change which suggests that, from an English point of view, it had required 'audacity' in Ireland even to question the 'religious sincerity' of Catholic clerics.<sup>143</sup> For Yeats this had been the question raised by the 'Cherry Tree Carol' burning.

[A]ll follows as a matter of course the moment you admit the Incarnation. When Joseph has uttered the doubt which the Bible also has put into his mouth, the Creator of the world, having become flesh, commands from the Virgin's womb, and his creation obeys. There is the whole mystery—God, in the indignity of human birth, all that seemed impossible, blasphemous even, to many early heretical sects, and all set forth in an old 'sing-song' that has yet a mathematical logic. I have thought it out again and again and I can see no reason for the anger of the Christian Brothers, except that they do not believe in the Incarnation. They think they believe in it, but they do not, and its sudden presentation fills them with horror, and to hide that horror they turn upon the poem (*CW10* 199).

Yeats then proceeds to contrast his own beliefs with the confusion of the poem's critics.<sup>144</sup>

I do not believe in the Incarnation in the Church's sense of that word, and I know that I do not, and yet seeing that, like most men of my kind these fifty years, I desire belief, the old Carol and all similar Art delight me. But the Christian Brothers think that they believe and, suddenly confronted with the reality of their own thought, cover up their eyes.

While 'The Madonna of Slieve Dun' had 'roused as much horror as the Cherry Tree Carol'.

<sup>143</sup> *New Criterion* 4:2, April 1926: see Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot* Vol 3 1926–1927 (London: Faber & Faber, 2012), 78 for Eliot's letter acknowledging receipt of the TS entitled 'The Need for Audacity of Thought' from A. P. Watt & Sons, 15 February 1916. The subsequent change of title may have been by Eliot himself, but no correspondence e.g., with Yeats) survives on the subject. The printing also contained Yeats's explanatory note about why it was not being published in the *Irish Statesman*.

<sup>144</sup> See also Catherine E. Paul, 'W. B. Yeats and the Problem of Belief', below 295–311.



Mr. Lennox Robinson and I want to understand the Incarnation, and we think that we cannot understand any historical event till we have set it amidst new circumstance. We grew up with the story of the Bible; the Mother of God is no Catholic possession; she is a part of our imagination.

[N]either the Irish Religious Press nor those Ecclesiastics [who resigned from the Carnegie Committee] believe in the Second Coming. I do not believe in it—at least not in its Christian form—and I know that I do not believe, but they think that they do.

To believe is to accept that the consequences of belief are not 'unendurable'. Belief makes minds 'more abundant, more imaginative, more full of fantasy even ... to deny that play of mind is to make belief itself impossible'.

Summoning further writers stirred by 'a perception of the infinite' such as Joyce and Synge but with due allowance for the differences between their art and his lyric mysticism,<sup>145</sup> Yeats then declares that the 'intellect of Ireland is irreligious' and that

its moral system, being founded upon habit, not intellectual conviction, has shown of late that it cannot resist the onset of modern life .... We are quick to hate and slow to love; and we have never lacked a Press to excite the most evil passions' hence the need for 'audacity' of speculation and creation.

Berkeley had provided Yeats with his classic catch-phrase for Irish Exceptionalism, 'We Irish do not hold with this', but modern Press demagoguery was pitiless. He did not 'condemn those who were shocked by the naïve faith of the old Carol or by Mr. Lennox Robinson's naturalism' but claimed

a right to condemn those who encourage a Religious Press so discourteous as to accuse a man of Mr. Lennox Robinson's eminence of a deliberate insult to the Christian religion, and so reckless as to make that charge without examination of his previous work; and a system which has left the education

<sup>145</sup> Yeats also cites here the cry of Ruysbroeck: 'I must rejoice without ceasing, even if the world shudder at my joy'. Yeats took this from the epigraph to J. K. Huysmans' *À Rebours* (Paris: Bibliothèque Charpentier, 1884, 1891) 'Il faut que je me réjouisse au dessus du temps ... quoique le monde ait horreur de ma joie, et que sa grossièreté ne sache pas ce que je veux dire'. Huysmans' source is the opening words of Jan van Ruysbroeck's second canticle, 'Il faut que je me réjouisse au-dessus du temps, quoique le monde ait horreur de ma joie, et que sa grossièreté ne sache par ce que je veux dire' as found in Ernest Hello's *Rusbrock L'Admirable* (Paris, 1869), 283.

of Irish children in the hands of men so ignorant that they do not recognise the most famous Carol in the English language.<sup>146</sup>

The Evil Literature Committee is unlikely to have read *The Dial* or the *New Criterion* and the essay is not in their Archive.<sup>147</sup> Nor are the two final shots in Yeats's 'vain battle' against Censorship. On 18 July 1928, he was taken ill during what was to prove his last Senate meeting, and he formally retired on 28 September, 'The Censorship and St. Thomas Aquinas' having been published by *The Irish Statesman* on 22nd, amid several weeks of debate and letters on the Censorship Bill. According to Yeats's reading of Aquinas (possibly with the help of Iseult Gonne—her daughter-in-law Imogen Stuart said Iseult Stuart should have been an historian of religion<sup>148</sup>—the Censorship Bill's definition of 'Indecency' was theologically unsound. The social imperatives of the Vigilantes were therefore contrary to Catholic belief as found in its official doctrine, the *Summa Theologica* of St Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).

The Bill declared that 'the word "indecent" shall be construed as including "calculated to excite sexual passion"', a 'definition, ridiculous to a man of letters, must be sacrilegious to a Thomist' said Yeats. The wording of the act was a 'blunder'. St. Thomas had laid down that 'the soul is wholly present in the whole body and in all its parts—"*anima rationalis est tota in toto corpore et tota in qualibet parte corporis*".<sup>149</sup> Yeats thought this doctrine an especial glory of the Catholic Church, responsible for the radical change in Western Art, whereby Byzantine depictions of a Christ with 'a face of pitiless intellect', or of the Mary as 'a sour ascetic', a 'pinched, flat-breasted virgin holding a child like a wooden doll' gave way to the fullness of Renaissance art. After Aquinas, the Virgin could be depicted as 'a

<sup>146</sup> All of these quotations are taken from 'The Need for Audacity of Thought', *CW10* 199–200.

<sup>147</sup> *The Catholic Bulletin*, eventually however, did, and, for the moment, saved its powder. See below, 208–10.

<sup>148</sup> Information from Anna White to Deirdre Toomey.

<sup>149</sup> Plato and Descartes [in the 17th c.] had 'considered the soul as a substance completely distinct from the body'. ['L]ike a pilot at the helm' it could 'control the movements of the whole organism'. Plato had placed the soul in the brain, while Descartes relegates it to 'the minute portion of [the brain], the pineal gland' (*CW10* 211).

woman so natural nobody complained when Andrea del Sarto chose for his model his wife, or Raphael his mistress, and represented her with all the patience of his "sexual passion". Titian could paint 'an entirely voluptuous body', worthy of the [15th line in] Browning's 'A Toccata of Galuppi's', '[O'er t]he breast's superb abundance where a man might base his head'. Titian's 'Sacred and Profane Love' (1514), is usually interpreted as showing Profane Love or Aphrodite Pandemos clothed, as on the left, while on the right, is Venus Urania (Heavenly Venus), unclothed.

Were 'the lawyers who drew up the Bill, and any member of the Dáil or Senate who thinks of voting for it' to glance at this painting, says Yeats, they should 'ask themselves if there is no one it could not incite to "sexual passion"'. '[A] criticism growing always more profound establishes that [immoral painting and immoral literature] ... are bad paintings and bad literature'; he wrote, a 'sin always in some way against "in toto corpore"'. Censorship should be left to the judgement of those 'learned in art and letters' or 'to average educated men'. It was not necessary to 'compel them ... with a definition'. Only one Thomist wrote in to *The Irish Statesman* to protest Yeats's interpretation but as he confused Boethius with Augustine, he can be disregarded.<sup>150</sup>

Yeats's insistence on education's prevailing over ignorance—a constant theme in these three essays—grows with 'The Irish Censorship', published on 29 September in *The Spectator*. Few Senators would have read it, for *The Spectator* sold little more than 200 copies each week in Ireland.<sup>151</sup> 'The Irish Censorship' 'would have formed the substance of his speech on censorship had he still been a member of the Senate' says Donald Pearce.<sup>152</sup> but all three essays offer deep insight into Yeats's aesthetic, moral, and religious

<sup>150</sup> John Howley 'a Thomist of over forty years' standing' claimed the essay foundered on a category error, but claimed that Aquinas' argument came from Augustine and not Boethius (*Irish Statesman* 6 October 1928, 981–92). Another unsigned letter dismissed Yeats as 'not even a tyro' in Thomist studies, and as too reliant on Cardinal Mercier's *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1921; YL 1305): see 'Mr. Yeats and St. Thomas' in the *Dublin Standard*, 29 September 1928, 12.

<sup>151</sup> Eason's took 200 copies, and the rest were a few direct subscriptions. See Cullen, 271.

<sup>152</sup> SS 175 (headnote).



Plate 30. Titian's 'Sacred and Profane Love' (1514), Borghese Gallery, Rome. Image Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Titiano\\_-\\_Amor\\_Sacro\\_y\\_Amor\\_Profano\\_\(Galer%C3%ADa\\_Borghese,\\_Roma,\\_1514\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Titiano_-_Amor_Sacro_y_Amor_Profano_(Galer%C3%ADa_Borghese,_Roma,_1514).jpg)

beliefs, as well as polemical purpose. 'Nothing is unimportant in belief', says Owen Aherne in *The Tables of the Law* (M2005, 195). Yeats once told Cecil Salkeld that he believed Eternity was not a matter of duration, but something as short as 'the glitter on a beetle's wing'.<sup>153</sup> In numerous places he claims that 'Eternity is the possession of one's self, as in a single moment', an idea he had from Aquinas in 1894, when he first saw and read Villiers de L'Isle Adam's *Axel*. There Aquinas is quoted as saying—the translation is H. P. R. Finberg's—'For eternity, as Saint Thomas well remarks, is merely the full and entire possession of oneself in one and the same instant'.<sup>154</sup> Aquinas objected to the Boethian idea that eternity was 'interminable' and drew a distinction between eternity and 'aeviternity', or everlasting duration, as in the 'sempiternal'.<sup>155</sup>

If the soul 'is wholly present in the whole body and in all its parts—"anima rationalis est tota in toto corpore et tota in qualibet parte corporis"', Yeats believed that this kind of eternity could be a supernatural irruption of the eternal into the temporal.<sup>156</sup> The sensing in the body, for an instant, of the soul's eternal self-possession. was

<sup>153</sup> NC 249. See also below, 311–16.

<sup>154</sup> The soul 'coming into possession of itself forever in a single moment' (CW13 61; CVA 73) is an idea familiar from *Mythologies* (M 348), and elsewhere, including 'Leo Africanus' (YA19 333), notably in *Explorations* (37) where Yeats attributes it to Aquinas, via Villiers de L'Isle Adam. Indeed, in *Axel* (I, VI) one finds 'Car l'éternité, dit excellemment saint Thomas, n'est que la pleine possession de soi-même en seul et même instant' (*Axel* (Paris, 1890), 35); or, as in *Axel* 1925 'For eternity, as Saint Thomas well remarks, is merely the full and entire possession of oneself in one and the same instant' (60). Since this phrase becomes for Yeats a key statement upon what he refers to as 'Beatific Vision' (*A Vision*, xii) it would have been worth-while for the editors to have pursued the matter to the *Summâ Theologica* (Part I, *Quaestio* 10) where Aquinas addresses himself to testing the Boethian doctrine that eternity is 'interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio' (*De Consolatione Philosophiae*, V, 6). Aquinas returns to the matter in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (I, 15), in discussing God's eternity, but it is in the *quaestio* referred to above that he draws from Boethius's definition a distinction between aeiternity and eternity which, though never formulated as such by Yeats, comes close to the essence of his thinking. See Gould, Review of G. M. Harper and W. K. Hood (eds.), *A Critical Edition of W. B. Yeats's 'A Vision'* (1925) in *Notes and Queries*, 28. 5 (October 1981), 458–60.

<sup>155</sup> OED thinks Johnson wrong for defining (1755) 'Euiternity' as 'duration not infinitely, but indefinitely long'.

<sup>156</sup> CW10 211–12 and n.

a matter of *miracle*, not of vision. Thus, in *Rosa Alchemica* (1896), 'it seemed to me I was so changed that I was no more, as man is, a moment shuddering at eternity, but eternity weeping and laughing over a moment'.<sup>157</sup> 'Shudder' in all its forms—Yeats used it in all its combinations no fewer than fifty-four times—frequently indicates a supernatural encounter.<sup>158</sup>

Yeats deplored the Bill which, he says, '[t]he Free State Government ... hates, which must be expounded and defended by Ministers full of contempt for their own words'. Yeats also deplored the 'Society of Angelic Welfare', the young men who 'stop trains armed with automatics and take from the guard's van bundles of English newspapers', as happened in Dundalk on 1 May 1927.<sup>159</sup>

The 'enthusiasts' were 'all the better pleased because the newspapers they burn are English, and their best public support has come from a newspaper that wants to exclude its rivals ... every country passing out of automatism passes through demoralization' before passing on 'into intelligence'.<sup>160</sup> Above all he deplored the 'incredible ignorance' of the burning of 'a glory of the mediaeval church as popular in Gaelic as in English'. '[S]candalised by *its naiveté*', Craven, as we have seen, had

believed it the work of some irreligious modern poet; and this man is so confident in the support of an ignorance even greater than his own that a year after his exposure in the Press, he permitted, or directed his society

<sup>157</sup> *VSR* 137; *M2005* 183.

<sup>158</sup> Sometimes this occurs during orgasm, as in 'On Woman' or in 'Leda and the Swan' but also, as in 'The Phases of the Moon', when creatures of the full moon 'Are met on the waste hills by countrymen | Who shudder and hurry by: body and soul | estranged amid the strangeness of themselves'. Some, he thought, resisted thus being 'overwhelmed by miracle', with 'horror'. See *CW14* 19; *AVB* 25; *CW10* 199.

<sup>159</sup> 'Some thousands' of up to eleven English Sunday newspapers were forcibly removed at gunpoint by masked vigilantes, sprinkled with petrol, and set alight, causing damage to the station, and scorching the train. See e.g., 'Revolvers and Petrol: English Papers Burned at Dundalk', *The Irish Times*, 2 May 1927, 8, though the story was widely reported.

<sup>160</sup> Yeats thought that the 'great numbers of small shopkeepers and station-masters who vaguely disapprove of their methods approve those motives [and cannot see why the perceived] good of the nine-tenths, that never open a book, should not prevail over the good of the tenth that does ...'. (*CW10* 217).

to base an appeal for public support [the paid advertisement in the *Irish Independent* with which I began] which filled the front page of a principal Dublin newspaper, upon the destruction of this 'infamous' poem.<sup>161</sup>

The Censorship of Publications Bill, 1928 proposed a five person committee under the control of the Minister of Justice who 'would pronounce on books and periodicals complained of by recognised associations and say whether they are 'indecent', which word 'shall be construed as including calculated to excite sexual passions or to suggest or incite to sexual immorality or in any other way to corrupt or deprave', or whether, if it be not 'indecent' it inculcates 'principles contrary to public morality', or 'tends to be injurious or detrimental to or subversive of public morality'. This included paintings and advertisements for birth control devices. The Minister of Justice would 'control ... the substance of our thought, for its definition of "indecency" and such vague phrases as "subversive of public morality", permit him to exclude *The Origin of Species* [*sic*], Karl Marx's *Capital*, the novels of Flaubert, Balzac, Proust, all of which have been objected to somewhere on moral grounds, half the Greek and Roman Classics, Anatole France and everybody else on the Roman index, and all great love poetry'. Yeats was sure that the

Government does not intend these things to happen ... but in legislation intention is nothing, and the letter of the law everything, and no Government has the right, whether to flatter fanatics or in mere vagueness of mind to forge an instrument of tyranny and say that it will never be used,

especially not in a society with such backward education and teaching as Yeats averred Ireland's to be. He knew from experience that theatre 'rioters—to-day's newspaper burners ... rock the cradle of a man of genius'. The current rage would eventually 'bring the stage under a mob censorship acting through "recognized associations"'. Above all, the immense popularity of censorship as the twenties drew to a close in reality exploited what Yeats saw as an under-educated body, the ordinary Catholic population. 'Zealots' led to 'helots', as

<sup>161</sup> On this 'exposure', c. October 1926, see below, 208–10.

he had told the *Manchester Guardian* on 22 August 1928.<sup>162</sup> He was certain that ‘Our imaginative movement has its energy from just that combination of new and old, of old stories, old poetry, old belief in God and the soul, and a modern technique’. The Irish *were* different. ‘Synge’s “Playboy” and O’Casey’s “Plough and the Stars” had been attacked because, like “The Cherry Tree Carol”, they contain what a belief, tamed down into a formula, shudders at, something wild and ancient’.<sup>163</sup> It is in that exultant light that we must recall the remark to Derek Verschoyle in 1933 ‘my writings have to germinate out of each other’.

When he made it, Yeats was writing what he declared to be his last book review and retreating from a lifetime’s ability to make creative unities out of irreconcilable realities.<sup>164</sup> ‘Vain battle’ was a theme of ‘the embittered heart’ (*VP* 629), but, retired from public life in an embittered Ireland, he preferred, as he told the *Sunday Times*, as he departed for Rapallo, to be ‘out of politics’. Censorship, ‘the greatest attack on liberty of thought made by any West European nation’ was ‘driving Intellect into Exile’. He was adamant: until education was improved, local democracy was not going to be efficacious, a point also made in *On the Boiler* (*EE&I* 439–41). ‘I’d like to spend my old age as a bee and not as a wasp’.<sup>165</sup>

The new Censorship of Publications Act became law early in 1929; the *News of the World* was banned in 1930 for seven years until loss of revenue made the wholesalers successfully lead an appeal to the Government.<sup>166</sup> Though Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* and other books were soon banned by the Censorship of Publications Board, *Ulysses* was never banned. Not only did the Act enshrine Catholic values purportedly shared by the 93% of the population

<sup>162</sup> A piece bitterly attacked by the *Catholic Bulletin* in its comprehensive summaries of the press battles around the new Censorship Bill: see notes in Appendix 1 below.

<sup>163</sup> *CW10* 218. See also above, on ‘shudder’ in Yeats, 197 and n. 158.

<sup>164</sup> See above 124, n. 4, ‘I spent about ten days on the thing and its not worth the trouble. It is something else altogether dressed out to look like a review’ he told Verschoyle.

<sup>165</sup> See below, Appendix, 208.

<sup>166</sup> Cullen’s is the best account of this period.



who were of that religion, it suited the home-grown cultural vision of De Valera. Self-suppressions such as the Galway library committee's removal and burning of books from libraries in 1924 and 1925, continued.<sup>167</sup> Ireland remained split between the zealots of Vigilance and those who annually sang the 'Cherry Tree Carol' in churches, Catholic and Protestant.<sup>168</sup> In the 1937 Constitution, blasphemy was prohibited by Article 40.6.1.i. The 1939 Emergency Powers Act extended censorship of newspapers in war-time, and the Censorship of Publications Act was replaced and strengthened in 1946. The common law offence of blasphemous libel, applicable only to Christianity and last prosecuted in 1855, was ruled in 1999 to be incompatible with the Constitution's guarantee of religious equality. Birth control, practised by the well-to-do in Yeats's day, and foreseen by him as increasingly necessary foreshadowed what (in 2009) was to mark the slow unravelling of Censorship: the perception that its prevention 'favour[ed] one religion at the expense of another'

<sup>167</sup> The self-suppression and burning had happened when the catalogue of what became the County Galway Libraries had been reviewed by the Archbishop of Tuam, and on the instructions of the Carnegie Trust, between December 1924 and February 1925. The categories of books included treatises 'on philosophy and religion which were definitely anti-Christian works; novels of the following type—(1) Complete frankness in words in dealing with sex matters; (2) insidious or categorical denunciation of marriage or glorification of the unmarried mother and the mistress; (3) the glorification of physical passion; (4) contempt of the proprieties or conventions; (5) the details and the stressing of morbidity'. By 1928, attempts were being made to dampen down publicity: 'Mountains had been made out of molehills, and the committee had been made a kind of cockshot. Whatever was done was honestly and conscientiously done in the moral interests of the people, and they feared no publicity or criticism and had no apology to make. ... the kind of books that had been burned were one-and-sixpenny novels "in which things were put slightly bluntly". Every book written by Bernard Shaw should not be withdrawn'. Moreover, 'not one per cent of the Irish people could object to the books that had been burnt ...'. See 'Book-burning in Galway: Library Sub-Committee's "Explanation"', *The Irish Times*, 3 December 1928, 8, also above, 170, n. 102, and below, Yeats's *Sunday Times* interview, in the Appendix below.

<sup>168</sup> For evidence of its use in Carol Services in the period, see, e.g., *The Irish Times*, 20 December 1910, 3, mentions Hyde's English and Irish versions); 19 December 1924 (5); 26 December 1925 (6); 2 January 1926 (6); 31 December 1938 (4). It was a popular favourite at carol service at St. Patrick's Cathedral, but was not, it seems, confined to Church of Ireland services.

and so was unconstitutional.<sup>169</sup> Ireland remains the only European country to (re)enact a Blasphemy Law (2009) in this century, and now faces a referendum on the issue, shelved after the *Charlie Hebdo* assassinations.

In 1940, T. S. Eliot, a poet English by choice, reminded a Dublin audience that Yeats's life had been the history of his own times. By implication, so is his work. The *Catholic Bulletin* obituaries, however, grandly rejected the whole idea that Yeats had even been an Irish poet.<sup>170</sup> In true republican style, they were a volley of shots over the grave.

Setting Yeats's writings about censorship back into these contemporary Irish seas of print provides more than annotation of them. Yeats's perspective upon Irish fissiparity demonstrates afresh the wisdom of Roy Foster's remark that Yeats 'possessed a protean ability to shift his ground, repossess

<sup>169</sup> This did not mean that they may not propose legislation 'asked for by one Church alone, but that they must show that the welfare of the State demands it'. See 'The Irish Censorship', in *CW10* 214–18 (217). The 1937 Constitution of Ireland states that 'The publication or utterance of "Blasphemy, seditious, or indecent matter is an offence which shall be punishable in accordance with law"'. This was ruled unconstitutional in 1999 because it conflicted with the Constitution's guarantee of religious equality. A new law, the Defamation Act 2009, section 36, restores the offence of 'Blasphemous Libel'. It has yet to be enforced. Ireland is the only European country to have enacted a blasphemy law in the twenty-first century, and it provides for fines of up to €25,000, simply because blasphemy was forbidden under the 1937 constitution. The text defines the crime where: *he or she publishes or utters matter that is grossly abusive or insulting in relation to matters held sacred by any religion, thereby causing outrage among a substantial number of the adherents of that religion, and (b) he or she intends, by the publication or utterance of the matter concerned, to cause such outrage.* Article s.36 (3) provides that—'it shall be a defence to proceedings for an offence under this section for the defendant to prove that a reasonable person would find genuine literary, artistic, political, scientific, or academic value in the matter to which the offence relates'. Pressure to repeal the law resulted in a referendum promised for 2015 but delayed beyond the end of this Parliament because of other referenda considered more controversial, including that held last May on equality of marriage. In the UK (except Northern Ireland) Parliament abolished the common law offence of blasphemous libel in Britain in 2008. The Northern Ireland government refuses to do so.

<sup>170</sup> The reviews of obituaries and the writings of Aodh de Blacam and Stephen Quinn, even of Daniel Corkery, quoted in the editorials of the *Catholic Bulletin*, 29:2, February 1939, 75–77; 'The Position of W. B. Yeats' 29:3 March 1939, 183–83; and 'Further Placings for W. B. Yeats', 29:4 April 1939, 241–44 offer well-nigh deplorable invective against Yeats and Russell.

the advantage and lay a claim to authority—always with an eye to how people would see things afterwards' in 'the wake of the many and inevitable unforeseen setbacks' (*Life* 1 xxxi)

Nearly all my exhibits are to be found only in paper archives. Despite the growth of online databases, access to primary materials themselves is indispensable, and archivists and librarians are crying out for them to be used. How remote they seem from theme-based, abstraction-driven, 'top-down' pedagogies, such as 'Modernism, where only a few archival materials are routinely retweeted from the few who've been there. Advanced study is to be distinguished from primary study not by abstraction, or recourse to the *idées reçues* of 'Theory'. Professors Bouvard and Pécuchet often steer students to formulaic research questions and predictable methodologies whereby they 'interrogate'—without understanding what the word means—current criticism, and fail to get into the archive for themselves—as arguably some of their professors have failed to do.

All editors write footnotes to some future 'bottom-up' annotation-based literary history. Editorial furtiveness, by hinting that a matter is not worth annotation, flees from readerly anticipation. To Finn McCumhail, 'the sweetest music is the music of what happens'.<sup>171</sup> That is the editor's *deformation professionnelle*. 152 years after Yeats's birth, and 77 years after Eliot's words, Yeats can still be patronized by 'imposed views' rejecting him from a Nativist point of view or subjugating him into new narratives of Modernism, both perspectives ultimately mere historical curiosities. Meanwhile, the circumstances of his writing life remain open to fresh discovery.



<sup>171</sup> See Lady Gregory, *Gods and Fighting Men* (1904), 312; see *Gods and Fighting Men etc.*, with a Preface by W. B. Yeats (Gerrards Cross: Irish University Press in assoc. with Colin Smythe Ltd., 1970), 246–47. See also CL3, 363 and n. 1 Yeats had sought the quote from Lady Gregory on 8 May 1903. Henry Nevinson reported on Yeats's lecture 'Heroic and Folk Literature' at Clifford's Inn, illustrated by Florence Farr and Pixie Smith, 12 May 1903 (*Daily Chronicle* 13 May 1903, 7).

## APPENDIX

*I print below (1) Yeats's interview with the Manchester Guardian's Irish Correspondent on 22 August 1928 and (2) with a special correspondent of the Sunday Times, 21 October 1928. Both concern the impending Censorship in Ireland. In the light of the above essay, they require little by way of annotation. I have, however, added a short summary of the impact which such statements by Yeats had upon The Catholic Bulletin, which had evidently kept a vigilant eye on all that he had published on Irish Censorship, both in Seanad speeches, in Irish periodicals, and in English journals.*

## 1.

'Censorship in Ireland.

The Free State Bill.

Senator W. B. Yeats's Views.

(From our Irish Correspondent.)'

*Manchester Guardian, 22 August 1928, 5.*

The Free State Censorship Bill has at length been printed and published, some weeks after its introduction into the Dáil. It will come up again for consideration in October, and Mr. De Valera has promised facilities to secure swift passage of a measure based on the report of the Evil Literature Commission. The important clauses of the bill are briefly as follows.

A censorship board is to be set up consisting of five fit and proper persons appointed by the Minister of Justice to hold office for three years. A majority of four members of the Board can on receipt of a complaint from a recognised association advise the Minister to prohibit the importation of any book which is indecent, or obscene, or tends to inculcate principles contrary to public morality or is otherwise, in the opinion of the Board, subversive of public morality. A periodical may similarly be banned if the Board holds that its recent issues have frequently been indecent, obscene, or subversive of public morality. The definition of 'indecent' is extended to cover matter calculated to excite sexual passion or in any other way to corrupt or deprave. Further, it is to be unlawful without permit to print, sell, or distribute any book or periodical which might reasonably be supposed to advocate the unnatural prevention of conception. Lastly, section 3 of the Indecent Advertisement Act of 1889 is to be deemed to include

advertisements which relate to any venereal disease, or to drugs, appliances, or methods for preventing conception.

### Importing the Index.

In an interview with your correspondent Senator W. B. Yeats commented upon the bill as follows:-

This bill, if it becomes law, may inflict a dangerous wound on the Irish intellect. At the least it will degrade us in the eyes of the modern world. The first Board of Censors appointed will probably include men of liberal minds, but the Board will be exposed to organised pressure brought to bear by associations of honest zealots, who will have the support of 'our greatest newspaper', which is interested in excluding competitors from the Irish market. If the Board resists this pressure, it will be applied to the Cabinet, and at the end of three years a new Board will be appointed, perhaps by the rival political party, to give effect to the popular or ecclesiastical view of the 'interests of public morality'. Then if a new scientific work is published, as important and as disruptive of popular beliefs as 'The Origin of the Species' was in its day, we may find the book excluded from Ireland. Some of the recognised associations would like to give legal validity to the whole Roman Index Expurgatorius, and if they can control the Board they can do so under this Bill. The works of Anatole France are on the Roman Index and have a large sale in Dublin, much to the alarm of the zealots.

### The Zealot's Opportunity.

I will show you how unlikely it is that the Board will be able to resist the pressure. You will notice that the Bill outlaws the advocacy of artificial birth control. You may take it that in this respect the views and practice of the well-to-do class here are much the same as the views and practice of the well-to-do class in any other European country. Yet I doubt whether a one single member of the Dail will be bold enough openly to oppose this clause in the bill. There, you see, is our weakness. Every educated man in Ireland hates this bill. I suspect that every member of the Cabinet hates it. Whence the delay in publication. But the zealots have been wise in their generation; they have struck at the moment when the country is unprepared to resist. The old regime left Ireland perhaps the worst-educated country in Northern Europe: with some boys leaving school at twelve, some never going at all, and teachers who never opened a book out of school hours. We were helots, and where you have the helot there the zealot reigns unchallenged. And

our zealots' idea of establishing the Kingdom of God upon earth is to make Ireland an island of moral cowards. In ten years' time, when our new School Attendance Act and our new teachers' training colleges have done their work, our zealots would be laughed at if they pressed for legislation of this sort. But today there is great danger that they will have their way, or most of it, and impose their shackles upon our thoughts.

To return to the substance of the bill. I can't attempt now to examine the bearing of the new definition of indecency upon literature. This is a question which will have to be examined in detail by my fellow-authors. But I call your attention to the fact that the bill provides for the attendance of a prosecutor, but nothing is said about facilities for defence. Again, you see that advertisements for venereal disease are to be illegal.

#### Driving the Young in Blinkers.

We should encourage the wretched sufferers to seek treatment, not hide remedies from them. It may be reasonable to protect them against quack remedies, but this is not the object of a clause in a censorship bill, based on the recommendation of a Commission which did not contain a single medical man. The object is to hide the remedies that the penalties of sin may be the greater. It is mediaeval legislation. The object of the whole bill is to hide knowledge from the eyes of our young people lest knowledge be abused. The report of the Evil Literature Commission strove to reconcile them to this by suggesting that other countries are 'ahead' of us and England in their zeal for maintaining what is alleged to be the Christian standard of sexual morality [*sic*]. But the report did not tell them how far foreign legislation against birth control, for instance, is the result of the capitalist desire for more cheap labour or of the militarists' desire for increased manpower—abundant crops of cannon-fodder. There is a taint of hypocrisy about the whole proceedings. Everyone knows that the practice of the well-to-do class will not be affected by this legislation. It is the poor who are to be condemned to continue in virtuous ignorance and to suffer accordingly.

The zealots are alarmed by what people call 'the post-war demoralization', and they would therefore drive our young people in blinkers. The young people of Ireland do not deserve to be treated as if they were fools or dolts. They need no more protection than the young people of England or France. Let our zealots do what they will, they cannot retain the old order unchanged in Ireland. The new world keeps breaking in. Our young people are right to welcome it, and they must learn to choose the good and eschew the evil for themselves.

## 2.

MR. YEATS ON IRISH CENSORSHIP.

DRIVING INTELLECT INTO EXILE.

NEW BILL 'FULL OF DANGER'.

*Sunday Times* 21 October 1928, 21.

By A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Mr. W. B. Yeats, the Irish poet, thinks literature is in for another Victorian era. He sees censorship becoming a cult, particularly in Ireland, where the literary movement he champions is gravely threatened.

Mr. Yeats is now in London en route to Rapallo, where he is going to spend the winter. Yesterday he said to me, referring to the Irish censorship proposals: 'They are the greatest attack on the liberty of thought by any West European nation'.

The Bill empowers the Minister of Justice to appoint a board of five persons who will give judgment on books or periodicals submitted to him on the complaint of certain 'registered associations' (such as the Catholic Truth Society). If the board decides that a book is 'indecent' it will be banned. One section of the Bill forbids the sale or distribution of any book or periodical which advocates or contains an advertisement of any book or periodical which advocates birth control.

## CONSCIENCE OF MANKIND

'The Bill', said Mr. Yeats, 'means that the five men appointed by the Minister of Justice will be responsible for the intellectual life of the nation. The Minister has said that no author, however great his name, shall escape consideration by the board.

"A work of art", it has been said, "is a portion of the conscience of mankind", but that conscience must dwindle in Dublin to the conscience of five men. For instance, the Minister's recognised associations would be bitterly disappointed if a novel like Liam O'Flaherty's "The Informer" were passed by the Board, though it is the finest piece of work by an Irishman since the founding of the Free State.

'Already priests in Galway have publicly burnt the works of Shaw and Maeterlink [*sic*], and an attempt has been made to take the novels of Balzac out of Rathmines public library. It is clear the Minister means to strike at literature.

'This is a Bill full of danger. Even if amended as suggested much of the greatest literature in the world will be excluded from the country.

'The section on birth control will allow the police, without reference to the Minister, to seize Shaw's "The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism" because it contains a page or two on contraception.

'This section will automatically exclude periodicals like "Nature", "The New Statesman", and "The Spectator". And this exclusion will make it practically impossible for a scholar to know what is being said or done throughout the world on his subject. It will strike at the efficiency of the Irish people, more and more so with the problem of the increasing population. Ireland will become increasingly insular'.

#### THE WAY OF CENSORS

'I dread the effect of the Bill, unless radically altered, on the whole future intellectual life of Ireland', Mr. Yeats added. 'No matter how good the intentions of the censors may be, blunder after blunder will be committed. That is the way of censors everywhere, even when they have no sectarian influence prompting them.

'Thirty years ago, when the present literary movement in Ireland began, every Irish writer was writing for the English market and living in England. We have created a native literature, a vigorous intellectual life in Dublin. But the blundering of a censorship may drive much Irish intellect into exile once more and turn what remains into a bitter, polemical energy.

'We have created something at once daring and beautiful and gracious, and I may see my life's work and that of my friends—Synge, "Æ.", and Lady Gregory—sinking down into a mire of clericalism and anti-clericalism'.

Mr. Yeats is going to Rapallo, tired of long controversies, and, it would seem, dejected by the Government proposals. In future he will be in Dublin only in the summer. He has done much for Ireland; his



theatre is a world-wide success, but he is finished with politics. His term as a Senator is over, and he has not sought re-election.

'Yes, I am glad to be out of politics', he concluded. 'I'd like to spend my old age as a bee and not as a wasp'.



Gogarty does not just get Yeats's wonderful pride when 'An Old Poem Rewritten' appeared in the *Statesman* (a rebuke to Russell's stunted love for the early work as much as anything). 'To some spiteful persons' has the hawk soaring above the crowd of starlings, and never 'stoop[ing] to strike'—a just assessment of Yeats's restraint with his detractors at the 'chattering dyke' of the Catholic press. After the Nobel prize, his realm of international reference and influence simply took him beyond the Irish audience he yet tried to educate, so as to take them with him.

In response, these interviews were predictably dismissed in the Irish Catholic press. After the *Manchester Guardian* interview, the *Irish Independent* sneered at Yeats's description of 'Zealots' in 'Censorship: Mr. Yeats's Peculiar Views' (23 August 1928, 5). The *Sunday Times* interview was dismissed thus 'As a Bee—Not a Wasp: Senator Yeats in his old age' (*Irish Independent*, 22 October, 6). *The Observer* offered support by way of a noble letter from Charles Ricketts. Hearing of measures by the puritanical Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson-Hicks—who banned *The Well of Loneliness* and forced the expurgation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*—to introduce Censorship in England, Ricketts grandly dismissed him from the Miltonic perspective as a 'temporary official' bent on reviving 'Mrs Grundy' (21 October 1928, 10).

*The Catholic Bulletin* had been silent after the publication of 'The Need for Audacity of Thought' (in the US, 'The Need for Religious Sincerity' in England). In September, however, 'Purging the Pride of Pollexfen' appeared over the name of 'Molua'—a *nom de plume* notorious even then.<sup>172</sup> 'Molua' pretended to be merely a 'reader'

<sup>172</sup> See above 140, n. 40.

of the paper, but Corcoran's hand was immediately recognisable in the relentless alliteration of the title and of almost every sentence in the piece which was not a quotation from 'The Need for Religious Sincerity'. He had found an autographed—he speculates a presentation—copy of the April 1926 *New Criterion* (5/-) on the Dublin Quays in August for 4<sup>d</sup> (he never discovered *The Dial* printing). Yeats's essay was a crucial document for him. After four pages of flourish and triumph over Yeats's note to the piece, Corcoran elected to

exhibit ... classified specimens of the wares refused by Plunkett House, Merrion Square ... as Senator W. Butler Pollexfen Yeats leads off on a note about the Irish Christian Brothers, we, too, shall accord them precedence. Of course, we apologise for the company in which we have to range them: but they will have consolation when they see the effect they have had on the proud spirit of Pollexfen.

(a) 'Some weeks ago, a Dublin friend of mine got through the post a circular from the Christian Brothers'.

(b) 'I have a right to condemn ... a system which has left the education of Irish children in the hands of men so ignorant'.

The ellipses are his own. What follows is a further page and a half of quotes from Yeats, offered as if their falsity in terms of belief were self-evident, and with no attempt even to oppose them with the invincible dogma Corcoran believed himself to share with all of his paper's readers. The piece returns, several times, to what Yeats had written about the Christian Brothers. The words suppressed are shown below in bold.

I have a right to condemn those who encourage a Religious Press so discourteous as to accuse a man of Mr. Lennox Robinson's eminence of a deliberate insult to the Christian religion, and so reckless as to make that charge without examination of his previous work; and a system which has left the education of Irish children in the hands of men so ignorant that they do not recognise the most famous Carol in the English language.

When he quotes Yeats on the Christian Brothers 'they do not believe in the Incarnation. They think they believe in it, but they do not', he suppresses its context, again, about the 'Cherry Tree Carol'

[A]ll follows as a matter of course the moment you admit the Incarnation. When Joseph has uttered the doubt which the Bible also has put into his mouth, the Creator of the world, having become flesh, commands from the Virgin's womb, and his creation obeys. There is the whole mystery—God, in the indignity of human birth, all that seemed impossible, blasphemous even, to many early heretical sects, and all set forth in an old 'sing-song' that has yet a mathematical logic. I have thought it out again and again and I can see no reason for the anger of the Christian Brothers, except that they do not believe in the Incarnation. They think they believe in it, but they do not, and its sudden presentation fills them with horror, and to hide that horror they turn upon the poem (*CW10* 199).

Such an utterance (Corcoran concludes) is

an index of what the Senator styles ... 'thinking' done with 'diplomacies and prudences put away': a phrase that is also his bitter comment on the new prudence of Plunkett House regarding his 'Notes on Irish Events'. Mr. Yeats concludes with a sentence on the Irish Christian Brothers: 'I have a right to condemn a system which has left the education in that hands of men so ignorant'. Excellent testimony, this, to their educational zeal and efficacy. The Pride of Pollexfen is being Purged.<sup>173</sup>

'Molua's' piece omits Yeats's point of departure, the burning 'in effigy' of *Pears' Annual*, the preservation of the centre-fold of 'The Cherry Tree Carol' as an example of 'devilish literature', its circulation accompanying a circular, and the evidence for the Christian Brothers' 'ignorance' of a Carol of which 'Dr Hyde has given us an Irish version in his *Religious Songs of Connaught*' (*CW10*, 198). This *suppressio veri* via 'retweet' may be read as panic and bluster, but it gave undeniable publicity to the Christian Brothers' ignorance. Whether this is the 'exposure' in the Press to which Yeats refers in 'The Irish Censorship' or whether some the paper took up the challenge and offered further exposure is not clear (at the time of writing, December 2017).

In the end, a pride in his own mulishness prevailed with Bro. Canice Craven. *Our Boys* issued its 'Satan, Smut & Co.' advertisement on 27 October 1927. After the passage of the Bill became inevitable, the *Bulletin* attempted to sum up with a fresh arrogance the entire

<sup>173</sup> *The Catholic Bulletin*, 16:9, September 1926, 937–43 at 943.

press controversy over the impending Irish Censorship in its editorials for October, November, and December. Its first act was to dismiss 'The Need for Audacity of Thought' and its charges against Craven's ignorance as 'a peculiarly vicious attack on Irish Catholic Schools and teachers'.<sup>174</sup> For the *Bulletin*, the Censorship of Publications Bill, 1928 was simply the 'Evil Literature Bill', and its initial focus in October was on the connexion between 'Yeats, Russell and Foul Literature'. The 'Mahatma' and the 'Yogi' respectively were to be pilloried for their very professional synchronising of their statements in the English and Irish Press. Thus, because the *Manchester Guardian* interview appeared on 22 August and the *Irish Statesman* editorialized on the same subject on the following day, it was an occasion for the *Bulletin* to engage in comparative textual criticism. It rejoiced that the 'subsidised' *Irish Statesman* was in such financial difficulty that Russell had brought Yeats to see that 'The Need for Audacity of Thought' would 'endanger [*The Irish Statesman's*] existence' and so placed it in *The Dial* and *The Criterion* (see above, 190 n. 141.) The *Bulletin's* focus, as ever, was to provide a running commentary on the respective views of the *Statesman*, *The Irish Times*, and of course the hated English papers, almost as if refereeing a match between those organs of opinion rather as if it were not itself a player. Time was on their side, the *Bulletin* felt: the *Irish Statesman* could be starved into submission. For the *Bulletin*, the 'cult of Joyce' had led to the moral degeneracy in the name of 'noble literature' championed by the Mahatma and the Yogi and all at Plunkett House, and when AE hoped that a passage from what was to become *Finnegans Wake* (1939) was not a 'Mysterious mush', the *Bulletin* crowed and reprinted the passage. Yeats's *Manchester Guardian* interview had been candid about class and birth control; he and Russell were therefore 'Purveyors of filth ... strut[ting] on their own sewage heaps'.<sup>175</sup> When *The Irish Times* quoted with broad sympathy from a speech by the Bishop of Durham against the 'moral chaos' of contemporary values, the *Bulletin* captiously alerted that

<sup>174</sup> *The Catholic Bulletin*, 18:10, October 1928, 988.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 988–92.

paper to its flip-flopping support for more liberal views.<sup>176</sup> against its birth control editorialized. Under the heading 'Plunkett House Activities', the December *Bulletin* emphasized the alignment between the *Statesman*, Trinity College, and the *Irish Times* when it came to amendments sought to the Censorship Bill.<sup>177</sup> Yeats did not lose all waspishness: '[O]ne cannot be non-political in Ireland' he wrote to Dermot MacManus, before mentioning a deputation from the Academy [which] saw the Minister of Justice on Monday about the banning of Shaw's book & I think may get the ban removed. If so it will be the first check to the censors.<sup>178</sup> The Minister said it was the pictures they minded upon which I unrolled before his plainly astonished eyes a large photograph of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel & pointed out that there were not even fig-leaves.<sup>179</sup>

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 18:11, November 1928, 1103–04.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 18:12, 1209–14 and ff.

<sup>178</sup> According to Wikipedia, 'as late as 1976 the Censorship of Publications Board had banned the Irish Family Planning Association's booklet "Family Planning". The Health (Family Planning) Act, 1979 deleted references to "the unnatural prevention of conception" in the 1929 and 1949 censorship Acts, thus allowing publications with information about contraception to be distributed in Ireland. The Regulation of Information (Services Outside the State for the Termination of Pregnancies) Act, 1995 modified the 1929, 1946 and 1967 Acts to allow publications with information about "services provided outside the State for the termination of pregnancies"'. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contraception\\_in\\_the\\_Republic\\_of\\_Ireland#Ban\\_on\\_sales\\_1935.E2.80.931978](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contraception_in_the_Republic_of_Ireland#Ban_on_sales_1935.E2.80.931978). Shaw's book banned in 1933 was *The Black Girl in Search of Her God*. See also Julia Carlson ed., with a preface by Kevin Boyle, *Banned in Ireland: Censorship and the Irish Writer*, edited for Article 90 (London: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>179</sup> *CL InteLex* 5886, 31 May [1933].

## ‘Uttering, Mastering it’? Yeats’s Tower, Lady Gregory’s Ballylee, and the Eviction of 1888<sup>1</sup>

James Pethica

ON 2 OCTOBER 1916, YEATS began the enquiries that would result the following May in his purchase of the medieval tower at Ballylee, a property he had long ‘coveted’ (*CL InteLex* 3043). Just a week earlier he had made final revisions to ‘Easter, 1916’ at Coole Park, having returned there from France after a turbulent summer during which he proposed for the last time to Maud Gonne and then unsuccessfully courted her daughter Iseult.<sup>2</sup> His purchase of the tower—the first property ever owned by the fifty-one-year-old Yeats—marked a significant shift in his relationships with both Gonne and Lady Gregory; but it was above all a conflicted expression of his recommitment to Ireland in the wake of the Rising. Writing to John Quinn in May 1916, he had acknowledged feeling that a ‘world

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—If you would like to know whether further information has been discovered since this article was written, that may help your own research, write to the author at [jpethica@williams.edu](mailto:jpethica@williams.edu). Feedback is always welcomed.

<sup>2</sup> For the personal and political contexts of Yeats’s initial enquiry about Ballylee, see Pethica, “‘Easter, 1916’ at its Centennial: Maud Gonne, Augusta Gregory and the Evolution of the Poem”, *International Yeats Studies*, 1. 1 (2016), 30–53.

seems to have been swept away' by the events of Easter week, and that his instinct was to 'return to Dublin to live, to begin building again'. But he also admitted that he dreaded 'the temptation to controversy' he would face if he returned (*CL InteLex* 2960). He had known for some months that the lease on the London flat he had rented since 1897 was ending, and that he would be obliged to move. His purchase of Ballylee was thus in part a compromise, giving him an Irish address where he would 'have a place to keep my pictures and my books' but where he might be distanced from contemporary Dublin literary and political obligations (*CL InteLex* 3043).

In the poems he wrote over the next ten years, Yeats made Ballylee a central symbol. Located in a secluded fold of the Galway countryside, it was close by the ruins of the home of Mary Hynes—a local beauty of pre-Famine times praised in song by the blind nineteenth century Irish poet Antoine Ó Raiferaí (Anthony Raftery) whose verse he and Gregory had collected and celebrated in the late 1890s. For Yeats, it was thus rooted in Irish tradition and closely associated with poetic inspiration. He would represent it, too, as a Shelleyan tower, conducive to visionary study and occult meditation. But most of all Ballylee was, he stressed, an 'ancient' place once occupied by men at arms and long witness to 'tumultuous' wars. It was hence a '[b]efitting' home and emblem of 'adversity' for an ageing man surveying the violence of Irish history, recent and past (*VP* 419–20).

This complex but essentially romantic symbolism was the deliberate construction of a man defiantly seeking a redoubt against modernity. In the Tower poems, he would starkly acknowledge the brutalities of the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War, and represent Ballylee as an apt location from which to offer a warning 'trumpet blast' or last testament to the young of the rising generation.<sup>3</sup> Deploring the degraded culture he saw as proliferating in Ireland, Yeats ever-more-assertively held up Anglo-Irish leadership of the late eighteenth century as the ideal embodiment of the country's heritage, extolling the mastery, cultivation, creativity and 'pride' of

<sup>3</sup> *The Tower (1928): Manuscript Materials*, ed. by Richard J. Finneran (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 53, 55, 72.

‘[t]he people of Burke and of Grattan’ as the qualities from the past that should be emulated (*VP* 414). Like his final testament and ‘credo’, ‘Under Ben Bulben’, the Tower poems celebrate this Ascendancy (and distinctively Protestant) tradition in scorn and ‘mockery’ of a culture which had in his view now lost its capacity for imagination and for the ‘self-delighting’ reverie he saw as essential to individuality (*VP* 480, 427). As Donald Torchiana emphasized, ‘aside from [its] Norman men-at-arms, the social landscape [Yeats] dreamed forth’ in his figurations of Ballylee ‘is that of Protestant patriot, flamboyant landlord, half-mounted gentry, wandering Gaelic poets, and peasant beauty in a world that [in fact] came to an end in Ireland about the time Raftery died and Victoria took the throne’.<sup>4</sup>

Yeats was well aware that in these idealizations he was quite deliberately turning away from current Irish actualities in favour of the ‘abstract joy’ and extravagance of his own ‘Poet’s imaginings’ (*VP* 427, 415). The poems of *The Tower* (1928) are indeed often at their best when they are most alert to and self-critical of that extravagance and turning away. Nonetheless, in *The Winding Stair* (1933) he would further intensify his assertion that it was only Ascendancy leadership that had given Irish culture shape and identity and hence created the nation. The drafts of ‘Blood and the Moon’ open with the proposition that Ballylee’s physical towering above the ordinary cottages ‘clustering round’ it was emblematic of the way that ‘great’ men had risen above ‘coman life’ and the ‘general mind’ by ‘Expressing’ and thereby ‘mastering’ it.<sup>5</sup> This proposition remained central to the poem through to its final form. With magisterial indifference to historical actualities, Yeats emphatically declares in ‘Blood and the Moon’ that Ballylee was his ‘ancestral’ home, and that ‘Goldsmith and the Dean, Berkeley and Burke’—the key figures in his pantheon of Anglo-Irish creativity—had in the past themselves actually ascended

<sup>4</sup> Donald Torchiana, *W. B. Yeats and Georgian Ireland* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 303. John Butler Yeats responded with mischievous acuity to his son’s purchase of the tower, writing that ‘the poet’ is ‘always *conservative* and attached to the legendary’ and ‘obstinately averse to change’ (*LTWBY2* 328).

<sup>5</sup> W. B. Yeats, *The Winding Stair (1929): Manuscript Materials*, ed. by David R. Clark (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 61, 63.



its winding staircase (*VP* 480–81). Earlier, in 'Meditations in Time of Civil War', he asserted that only '[t]wo men' had ever 'founded' in the tower as owners and occupants during its many centuries: a 'man-at-arms' (whom he also described as an 'ancient bankrupt master' now remembered only in 'fabulous' stories), and Yeats himself (*VP* 420, 412). It is a mythologizing which categorically erases all but the political and personal histories he was invested in—and also, notably, the people who were actually living in the tower when he purchased it.

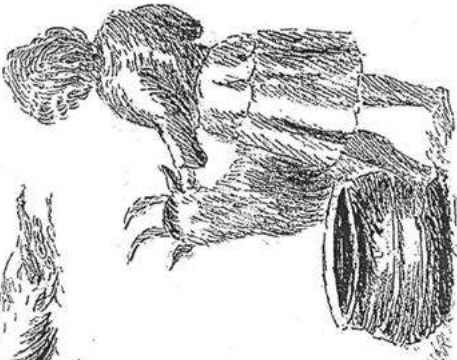
Among some newly-available records from the Gregory estate is a cache of letters written in 1888, when a rent dispute involving the tenants occupying Ballylee escalated into an eviction proceeding. The correspondence includes letters from Sir William Gregory to the tenants, to his land agent, to his lawyer, and to the local parish priest whose mediation he sought; and also to Gregory, written from Ballylee castle by both Patrick Spelman, whose family had lived there since the 1820s, and, most strikingly, by his daughter, Elizabeth Cunningham. This archive gives acute insight into the realities for both Irish tenants and landowners in the period just after the violent Land War of the early 1880s, and restores to view something of the personal and political histories that Yeats so determinedly erased in his assertive construction of a mythic Ballylee.

## I

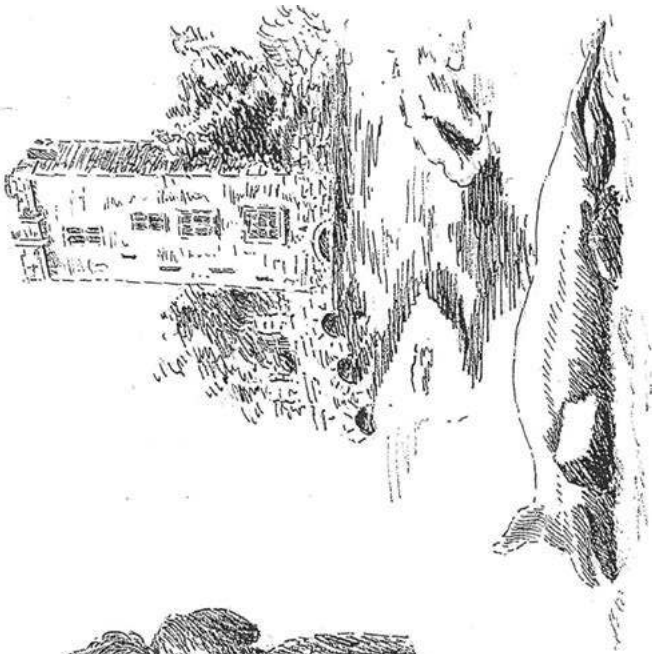
Yeats's first sight of Ballylee almost certainly came during one of his earliest day visits to Lady Gregory at Coole Park in August 1896, when he was staying nearby at the home of Edward Martyn. As Gregory later recalled, 'When Yeats first came on a visit to Tillyra he came one day to walk with me from Lissatumna to Ballylee in search of some folk lore—and on the way I asked him—& I had counted much on his answer—what I could do to help that would best help Ireland'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Gregory, *Holograph Memoirs*, Berg Collection, NYPL.

*Ballylee Castle*



*Maud Cunningham*



*Aug 14 - 95 -*

Plate 31. Sketches made by Lady Gregory at Ballylee, 14 August 1895. None of the Cunninghams' daughters is identified as 'Maud' on the 1901 Census, so this may have been a nickname or Gregory's error for 'Margaret' (aged about 6 in 1895). Image courtesy Colin Smythe.

Given his hopes at that time of establishing an Irish order of magical and hermetic study on 'Castle Rock' in Lough Key in Roscommon (*CW3* 204), his depiction of the 'square ancient-looking house' which serves as the Temple of the Alchemical Rose in his recently-published story *Rosa Alchemica* (*M2005* 184) and, perhaps most importantly, the appeal of the 'ancient' Norman tower he had just seen at Tillyra,<sup>7</sup> where the 'monk-like' Martyn kept his study purposefully distant from the ornate Gothic extravagance of the main house (*CW3* 289–90), Yeats may even at this earliest encounter have felt a degree of possessive impulse on seeing Ballylee. We know with certainty that he returned there repeatedly and eagerly over the next three years; and by as early as 1904 he apparently told John Quinn of his 'dream' of owning the property.<sup>8</sup>

His first published mention of Ballylee, in the 1899 essay 'Dust Hath Closed Helen's Eye', already attends carefully to the romantic beauty of the tower's setting—detailing, for instance, the 'old ash-trees throwing green shadows upon a little river' and also the 'great stepping-stones' he would worry about preserving as negotiations over his purchase proceeded in 1917.<sup>9</sup> But the essay begins with quite specific mention of the actual people living in the tower and its neighbouring dwellings: 'There is the old square castle, Ballylee, inhabited by a farmer and his wife, and a cottage where their daughter and their son-in-law live, and a little mill with an

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Symons, Yeats's fellow-guest at Tulira in August 1896, wrote in *The Savoy* (October 1896) that he had discovered there 'a castle of dreams', where 'in the morning, I climb the winding staircase in the tower, creep through the secret passage, and find myself in the vast deserted room above the chapel which is my retiring-room for meditation; or following the winding staircase, come out on the battlements, where I can look widely across Galway, to the hills'. Yeats was also enchanted, and recalled that 'the square old tower, and the great yard where medieval soldiers had exercised' had appealed both to his own and to Symons's 'sense of romance' (*Mem* 100).

<sup>8</sup> B. L. Reid, *The Man from New York: John Quinn and His Friends* (New York: Oxford University Press 1968), 306.

<sup>9</sup> See *CL InteLex* 3174, 3176. Yeats's first written mention of Ballylee may have been his manuscript revision of 'Ballykeele' to 'Ballylee' in the printed text of AE's poem 'The Well of All-Healing', as shown in Plate 32.

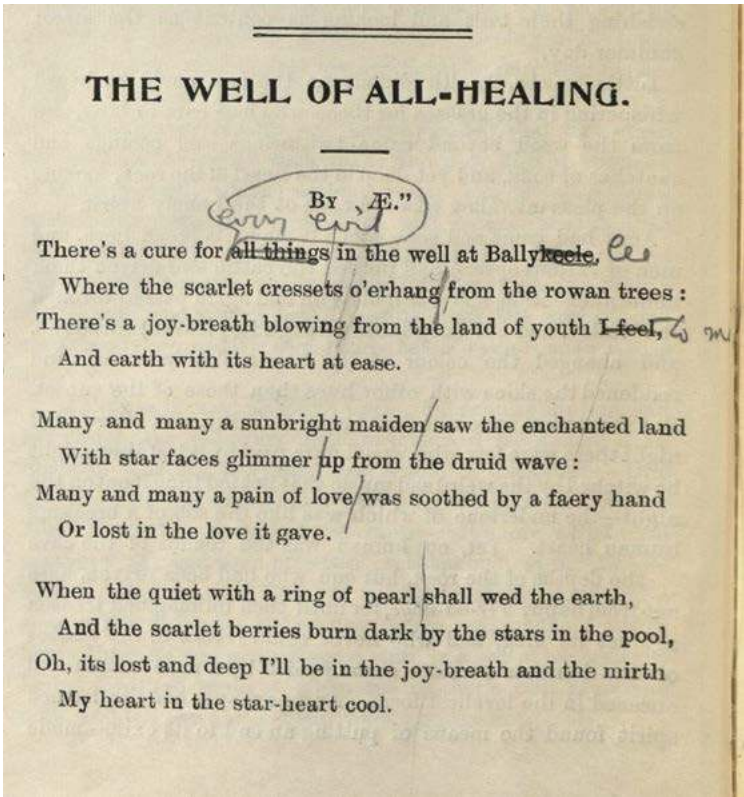


Plate 32. Possibly Yeats's first written mention of Ballylee in a manuscript revision of 'Ballykeele' to 'Ballylee' in the printed text of AE's poem 'The Well of All-Healing', in Lady Gregory's copy of *A Celtic Christmas* 1897. Image courtesy John J. Burns Library, Boston College.

old miller' (M2005 14). These inhabitants have been given basic identification by Yeats scholars over the years, with the farmer living in the tower being named as Patrick Spelman; the cottage dwellers as James Cunningham and his wife, Elizabeth, *née* Spelman; and the 'old miller' as Michael McTigue. The 1901 Census of Ireland shows that Spelman was by then 88 years old, and his wife Sarah, *née* Carty, 75; James Cunningham was 48 and Elizabeth Cunningham 38; while Michael McTigue was 72, and living at the Ballylee mill

with his younger brother, John. Patrick Spelman, James Cunningham and Michael McTigue, the Census additionally confirms, all spoke Irish as well as English. In Yeats's account, however, they remain nameless figures, of interest and significance principally as sources of the folklore he had visited them to collect. They are mentioned not to establish their individuality but as a background cast that serves to ratify his presence and to heighten the impression of authenticity and specificity in what they tell him.

Yeats's early visits to Ballylee came during the period of intensive folklore gathering he conducted between 1897 and 1901 with Lady Gregory amidst the first enthusiasms of their friendship. Her energy, connections with the local countryside, skill in recording what they told her, and, later, her growing competence as an Irish speaker, gave Yeats fuller access to a milieu and a resource he had long craved to know better, but, by then, had increasingly come to realize he was ill-fitted to access or interpret comprehensively alone.<sup>10</sup> With her assistance, he was able to feel that his work had 'come closer to the life of the people' (*Myth* 2005 1). This brought him a fresh excitement of discovery, resulting in a series of new folklore essays, a revised and extended edition of *The Celtic Twilight* (1902), and, after many deferrals, their jointly-edited two-volume collection *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* (1920), a project Yeats first planned in 1898 and described at that time as 'the big book of folk lore' (*CL2* 323).

But for all his renewed enthusiasm, and his conviction that Lady Gregory had 'a greater knowledge of the country mind and country speech than anybody I had ever met with' (*VPI* 1296), even in this intense new phase of gathering, Yeats remained quite narrowly-focused in his interests as a folklore collector, being as much determined to find proof of his existing convictions as invested in making precise sociological observations or 'scientific' assessments of

<sup>10</sup> See Pethica, 'Yeats, Folklore and Irish Legend', in *The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Marjorie Howes and John Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 129–43.

what they heard. As he later admitted in *Autobiographies*, his primary object was still 'to find actual experience of the supernatural' and thereby discover 'the most violent force in history' (*CW3* 299). His essays of the period are predominantly concerned with demonstrating the survival of pre-Christian beliefs and superstitions amongst the peasantry—or as Lady Gregory put it more bluntly, showing that 'Ireland is Pagan, not Xtian' (*Diaries* 151)—and in recording evidence of otherworldly enchantments, and of the visionary or quasi-magical powers of the seers and healers he met. The people he mentions are representative figures, significant because of their aptitudes or experiences, and for the support they provide for Yeats's beliefs, and not for their individual qualities or for what they reveal, more broadly, about the actualities of Irish rural life. In 'Dust Hath Closed Helen's Eye', for instance, an 'old weaver' is mentioned because he can relate stories his mother told him about Mary Hynes, a local beauty of pre-Famine times, and because his son 'is supposed to go away among the Sidhe' (*Myth* 2005 16). The man himself—John Forde, who lived less than a mile from Ballylee, and who was later remembered as the last weaver in the area—is otherwise not of concern.

Recalling Yeats's enthusiasm for folklore in this period, and especially for the 'peasant speech' Yeats celebrated as Lady Gregory's 'great discovery', George Moore would a decade later be openly dismissive, accusing Yeats of being merely a voyeur and snob, who cared little for the culture he claimed to be recording and interpreting: 'I don't think that one can acquire the dialect by going out to walk with Lady Gregory. She goes into the cottage and listens to the story, takes it down while you wait outside, sitting on a bit of a wall, Yeats, like an old jackdaw, and then filching her manuscript to put style upon it'.<sup>11</sup> Moore's critique zeroes in unerringly on the crucial question of whether in putting 'style' on Lady Gregory's transcriptions of the folk tales she heard, Yeats had made something that was distinctively his own, or whether he was fundamentally distanced from the material

<sup>11</sup> Yeats, 'Modern Ireland', *Massachusetts Review* (Winter 1964), 259; Moore, *Ave* (London: William Heinemann, 1911), 348–49.

and interested in it merely as a source and inspiration. For Moore, Yeats was at heart merely an appropriator who had 'filched' both from Gregory and from the countrypeople by taking what was essentially a common cultural resource and publishing it over his own name.

Moore's critique was published in *Ave*, the first volume of his biting memoirs, in 1911—by which time Yeats's turn away from the romantic forms of his 1890s Nationalism was already clear. Even by the time he published the revised edition of *The Celtic Twilight* in 1902, Yeats's folklore writings reflect a growing element of disdain for the Irish countrypeople and an increasing stress on the power and primacy of individual artists rather than on the collective value of anonymous folk-poetry. 'By the Roadside', for instance, the closing essay to that volume, asserts that while folk-art is indeed 'the soil where all great art is rooted' it is only the creations that 'a single mind gives unity and design to' which are of true consequence. Only 'a few people', Yeats stresses, 'favoured by their own characters and by happy circumstance, and only then after much labour, have understanding of imaginative things' (*Myth* 2005 91). While the folk-songs he heard by the roadside voiced powerful emotion, then, he claims that it is only the literary and artistic genius of a few pre-eminent makers—those who actually created the songs, and by implication poets such as himself—who embody true creative power. The essay thus directly anticipates his blunt assertion in 'Blood and the Moon' that only 'great' men could rise above 'the general mind' by 'Expressing' and thereby 'mastering' it.

By 1903, in his review of Lady Gregory's *Poets and Dreamers*, Yeats would dismiss 'the Irish countryman' more openly as being essentially 'prosaic' and of value merely as 'the clay' in which the 'footsteps' of the higher folk-artists might still be traced (*UP*2 303). Three decades later, when recalling his early folk-lore gatherings with Lady Gregory, he would refer to the countrypeople as 'those peasants' (*CW*3 299)—a phrase expressive of both his sense of distance from, and his dismissive superiority to, figures he had by then come to think of as merely collective.

## II

Lady Gregory's own enthusiasm for folklore, and her work as a collector, have received relatively modest scholarly attention. As a late convert to Irish nationalism, as a Protestant, as the owner of a landed estate, and as a woman, her declared wish to 'be nearer to the people' (*CW3* 299) and her efforts to learn Irish, were in her own lifetime often viewed with suspicion—as embodying patrician forms of condescension and self-interest, or as being, at best, a 'halfway house' towards authentic nationalism.<sup>12</sup> More recently, the scope of her folklore gatherings, both independently and on Yeats's behalf, has been more widely acknowledged; but their value has continued to be perceived as limited by the rather programmatic quality of her use of them as part of her declared effort to bring back 'dignity to Ireland'.<sup>13</sup> So too, the 'Kiltartan' speech she popularized—the aspect of her work Yeats most praised—has continued to be regarded as artificial, or even as patronizing to the Irish countrypeople, in its reductive and repetitive use of a few core Irish syntactical constructions and verbal patternings. What has not been adequately assessed is how intimate and knowledgeable her contacts with the countrypeople around Coole actually were, and how much 'nearer to the people' she truly was than Yeats.

Gregory's Irish writings of the 1880s and early 1890s categorically reflect an increasing desire for closer connection with and understanding of the rural culture of her Galway home, and a steadily heightening attention both to her own political and economic

<sup>12</sup> In a letter to Eoin MacNeill in May 1899, asking him to mute criticism of the Irish Literary Theatre in *An Claidheambh Soluis*, Douglas Hyde pointed out that Lady Gregory was on the Executive Committee of the Gaelic League and stressed that she and the other participants in the new theatre movement 'are not enemies to us. They are a halfway house'. Quoted by Gareth Dunleavy in 'The Pattern of Three Threads: The Hyde-Gregory Friendship', *Lady Gregory: Fifty Years After*, ed. by Ann Saddlemyer and Colin Smythe (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987), 134.

<sup>13</sup> See Gregory to Yeats, 25 December 1903, Berg, in which Gregory already refers to this favourite dictum as her 'old formula'.



situation and to the likely prospects for the landlord class more generally in the wake of the Land War. Her short stories dating from 1890, in particular, centre on moments of discovery and disruption for central characters who seek to be part of, or who want to interpret, the local community.<sup>14</sup> Her unpublished diaries of the period in turn show her beginning to act on that desire for greater connection. They show, too, that she was drawn to Ballylee in particular, and was well acquainted with the people living in its immediate vicinity, long before she first took Yeats there in 1896. In the late 1880s, the diaries detail numerous visits to the old tower and its environs. An entry of 5 September 1887, for instance, records that she 'walked home by Ballylee', and its thumbnail accounting of all the locals she had seen, and of their news and circumstances, confirms her close familiarity with and interest in an entire local sociology as she moved from cottage to cottage:

Young Connell has disease of the hip & wants to go to Dublin—The Farrells & Macklins are still fighting—Mrs Hood, in consequence of all my gifts to her wants 'a lock of scallops' from Wm—Mrs Howley sits alone in her large kitchen missing her mother very much—The other Noons who are building a new house are now ill with the fever—Mrs Quirk wants more spinning to pay for a bonif—Little Jane Hynes was dusting the dresser—her father has not married again & she keeps the house—Old Brennan, for whose funeral I gave £1 last year is walking about as lively as ever—but thinks he is going blind.<sup>15</sup>

By 1886 or earlier, she had begun to develop a particularly close connection with the Brennan family, who lived adjoining the tower at Ballylee. She noted of a visit to them that summer that Old Brennan and family had 'received me with open arms'.<sup>16</sup> A water-colour she saved, probably dating from 1887 or 1888, shows 'Mr Brennan singing "G[rea]t Coole Demesne"'.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See *Lady Gregory's Early Irish Writings, 1883–1893*, ed. by James Pethica (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, forthcoming 2018).

<sup>15</sup> Diary, entry for 5 September 1887 Berg.

<sup>16</sup> Diary, entry for 17 August 1886, Berg.

<sup>17</sup> See Plate 33. Probably by Eleanor Persse, née Gough (1854–1935) who married Lady Gregory's brother Algernon (1845–1911) in 1886.

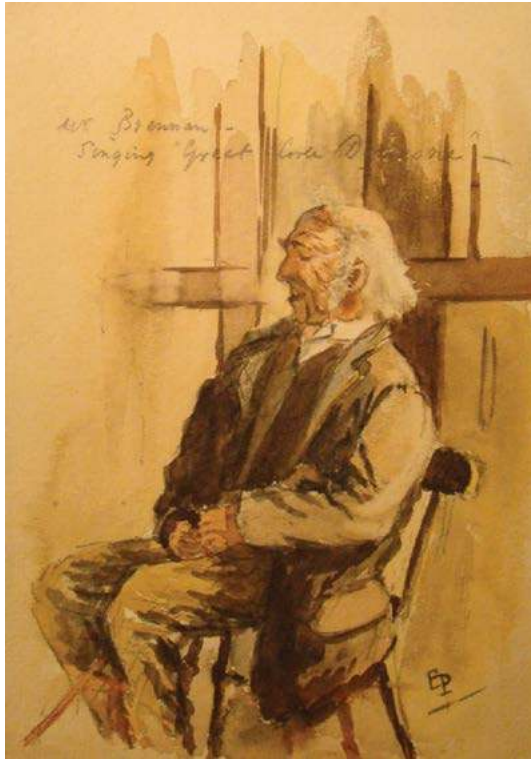


Plate 33. 'Mr Brennan singing Great Coole Demesne', water-colour by 'E. P.' (probably Lady Gregory's sister-in-law, Eleanor Persse) circa.1888. Image courtesy the Berg Collection (Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations), New York Public Library.

And her diary for 6 October 1887 records that shortly before leaving Coole to spend the winter in Rome, she and Sir William Gregory 'Drove to Mrs Cahels & walked back by Ballylee, seeing Brennans etc—& giving parting gifts'.<sup>18</sup>

She may by this point already have known that both the Brennan family and their neighbours the Cahel (or Cahill) family were staunch Republicans. But if not, she certainly did by May 1888,

<sup>18</sup> Diary, entry for 6 October 1887, Berg.

when she recorded that Thomas Brennan (the son of 'Old Brennan') was 'carried off to Galway Jail on charge of being concerned in a Moonlighting outrage' along with Michael Cahill, oldest son of that family. Both Cahill's mother and Brennan's brother came to Coole to appeal to her for help. Persuaded of Brennan's innocence, she went to Galway and personally gave the Resident Magistrate in the case 'a good character of the Brennan family' and a letter that was shown to the solicitors.<sup>19</sup> On 3 September 1888 she recorded that Brennan's brother 'had stood by the gaol gate [in Galway] to see the prisoners taken in—& Thomas had called out to him "If Lady Gregory is come home go to her to help me"'. And when Thomas Brennan was freed the following week she noted that 'Brennan came to thank me for his brother's release—He "hadn't had a bit of peace since he saw Col[onel] Tynte reading a letter in Court with Coole Park on the head of it"—"Sure Lady Gregory could bring a man from the foot of the gallows & she giving one a character"'.<sup>20</sup> Her diary is silent on the verdict for Michael Cahill—who became known locally as 'Docks' Cahill because of his frequent court appearances, and who remained a staunch Republican—but her relationship with that family, too, subsequently became much closer, with Michael Cahill's son Patrick in due course becoming one of her trusted staff at Coole.

Besides these close personal connections with the families around Ballylee, the tower itself was also a cherished landmark for Lady Gregory well before she met Yeats. Along with the monastic complex and round tower at Kilmacduagh, the ruined Abbey at Corcomroe, and a few other local historic sites, it was a place she routinely took visitors to Coole to see from the mid 1880s on. Her sketchbooks preserve several pen-and-ink drawings she made at Ballylee in August 1895, including two of the tower and one of the mill-wheel.

<sup>19</sup> Diary, entries for 25 May to 3 June 1888, Berg. Not being convinced of Cahill's innocence, however, she was unwilling to write and act in his defense. Though 'sorry for old Mrs C' she was 'not so sorry as I should be had she not asked for tea & medicine in the same breath with denouncing the informer against her son'.

<sup>20</sup> Diary, entries for 3 June to 12 June 1888, Berg. Forty years later, AG would recall these events as involving 'Brennan the Moonlighter'; *Lady Gregory's Journals: Volume 2*, ed. by Daniel J. Murphy (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987), 363.



2. Sketch by Lady Gregory, dated 14 August 1895.

Plate 34. Ballylee Castle, detail of sketch by Lady Gregory dated 14 August 1895 (see above, Plate 31). Image courtesy Colin Smythe.

While staying with Gregory in May 1897—just eight weeks before Yeats himself arrived at Coole for his first summer stay—Lady Layard recorded being taken there, and also meeting with the McTigues at Ballylee mill:

[W]e went to see an old castle on the Gregory property—which is inhabited by peasants. A high tower with cabins round it. We also went to a curious old mill hard by dating from the time of the castle. The old miller was a tall fine featured distinguished looking man. He was delighted to see Augusta[,] showed us the mill & then insisted on taking us to see his wife .... She received us with effusion—& they both talked freely & were very amusing.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Enid Layard, journal entry for 24 May 1897, British Library.



Plate 35. The Millwheel and Tower at Ballylee, Sketches by Lady Gregory, n.d.  
Image courtesy Colin Smythe.

Lady Layard's record of the visit makes no direct mention of the Spelmans or the Cunninghams—the inhabitants of the tower and its adjoining cottages. Spelman is indeed mentioned only once in Gregory's own diaries. But she was well familiar with both these families, too, having been intimately involved in their tenancy of the Ballylee property.

In *Autobiographies*, writing after Gregory's death, Yeats would claim that Lady Gregory's marriage and her travels with Sir William Gregory 'to Ceylon, India, London, Rome' had 'set her beyond the reach of the bitter struggle between landlord and tenant' during the Land War. He preferred to see her as having retained an uninterrupted sense of Ireland 'in its permanent relationships'—namely a fundamentally 'feudal' sense of mastery and obligation to her tenants, shaped by a sense of noblesse oblige (*CW*3 295). His view of Gregory has perforce powerfully inflected later critical attitudes to her politics and her writings. However, the record of the Ballylee eviction of 1888, now available in the rediscovered cache of letters,

shows how little he really knew about her earlier life and her personal and political commitments when making that sweeping judgement.

### III

In the summer and autumn of 1888, with the events of the Land War still repercussing dangerously, Sir William Gregory reluctantly began legal proceedings against Patrick Spelman, who had not paid rent in two years. Lady Gregory was fully party to the tense exchanges that followed, serving as amanuensis for her husband and also directly assisting his efforts to mobilize support for his actions. The survival of the core correspondence in the case restores to view a crucial and revealing episode on the Coole Park estate—showing the Gregoryses attempting to uphold their property rights in a manner that was just and that would maintain their good relations with other tenants on the estate if possible, while also highly aware of their diminished authority, embattled position and questionable future prospects.

Having received at least two direct assassination threats during what he had termed the ‘landlord shooting season’ in 1880–1881, and having seen his own agent need to be guarded in public by armed police for some months in 1882,<sup>22</sup> Sir William was doubtless aware of the need for caution when reading the first letter in the case that survives. In measured and highly respectful language, pleading her father’s case, Elizabeth Cunningham asserted her family’s long-standing tenancy (‘for over 60 years’) and her own ‘inheritance’ interest in the property, and charged that the arrears of rent were solely caused by sub-tenants not paying her father. But the letter ends with a veiled threat—‘Copy kept for the press’—if Gregory would not reconsider his ‘error’ and refrain from proceeding with an eviction (Document 1). Lady Gregory, too, was by this time also highly alert to the dangers of taking a firm line against tenant non-payments. Her 1883 memoir *An Emigrant’s Note Book* alludes to

<sup>22</sup> *Sir William Gregory, K.C.M.G.: An Autobiography*, ed. by Lady Gregory (London: John Murray, 1894), 369; Lady Gregory, diary entries for July 1882 (Berg).

several of the Land War murders that had taken place in the Galway region, and she would make the 1889 assassination attempt against Lord Clanricarde's agent, Edward Shaw Tener, a central incident in her short story 'Peeler Astore' written in 1890 or soon after.<sup>23</sup>

The long-standing tenancy Elizabeth Cunningham stressed is confirmed by numerous sources. Samuel Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* (1837) lists 'P. Carrig Esq' of Ballylee Castle as occupying one of the 'principal seats' of the region around Coole Park; while the Gregory estate records detail a 31-year lease agreement signed by Carrick in 1851 for a nineteen-acre parcel including the castle at Ballylee.<sup>24</sup> Carrick's tenancy, which included at least forty additional acres of land nearby, was indeed one of the most substantial on the Coole estate, and the significant social position Samuel Lewis had indicated by terming him 'Esq' is confirmed by *Slater's Directory*, which in 1881 lists Carrick as being one of the two dozen 'gentry' in the region around Gort. At some point soon after 1881, probably following his death, Carrick's lease of Ballylee had devolved to Patrick Spelman, his nephew, at the same terms of rent.

Elizabeth Cunningham's letter acknowledges that her father had sub-let some of his land, but claims that he was only minimally behind in paying his rents. She makes an appeal to old loyalties and to a long-standing personal connection, rather than simply to matters of money, and lays stress on the fact that in proceeding with an eviction Sir William would not merely be doing an injustice to a man who had improved the property at his own expense but would also be cheating her own and her husband's reliance on coming into the tenancy in due course. As she surely well knew, direct violence against landlords and their agents, though much reduced after the signing of the Kilmainham Treaty in April 1882, had continued intermittently ever since, and landlord-tenant relations had come under new strain with the inception of the Plan of Campaign and its press for the reduction of rents. Indeed, in November 1886 Sir William Gregory had written to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, alarmed that the 'harmonious' conditions at Coole had been roiled by a 'violent speech' John Dillon had delivered

<sup>23</sup> See *Lady Gregory's Early Irish Writings, 1883–1893*, 48, 213–28.

<sup>24</sup> National Archives, Dublin; document 2001/108/7/1/2.

in Gort. Informing Hicks-Beach that his tenants were in consequence now demanding discounts of 28 per cent on their rents, Gregory regretted he must now 'take vigorous steps to enforce payment, but I think it right in case there is disturbance to let you see that I am not to blame'.<sup>25</sup> Despite its quietly threatening postscript, however, Elizabeth Cunningham's letter gives no indication that either she or her father knew that, as sitting tenants, they could appeal to a Land Court under the terms of the 1881 Land Act to prevent a landlord from proceeding with an eviction until the Court's judgement of the case had been made; or that they could apply to the Court for compensation for any improvements they had made to the property. That apparent unfamiliarity would significantly weaken their position as the case unfolded.

Either in response to the veiled threat, or perhaps anticipating it, Gregory shrewdly applied both to the newly installed Bishop of Galway, Francis McCormack, and to the local parish priest of Gort, Father Jerome Fahey, for counsel. Long diligent in seeking the support of the Catholic clergy and the Galway hierarchy during his career as an M.P., Gregory was well aware that sanction from Fahey, in particular, would be crucial in shaping local opinion and help inoculate him from charges of proceeding capriciously or unfairly. He and Fahey, who was appointed to the parish in 1876, were on excellent terms. They shared a keen enthusiasm for local history and preservation, and had collaborated closely in 1879 and since on restorations of the monastic ruins at nearby Kilmacduagh. Fahey would publish his major scholarly work, *The History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Kilmacduagh* in 1893, was a founding member of the Galway Archeological and Historical Society along with Lady Gregory in 1900, and subsequently worked with her in promoting the Irish language. After Sir William's death in 1892, he continued to advise both Lady Gregory, and, later, Robert Gregory, on disputes or tensions with tenants, right up until the finalization of the sale of most of the Coole estate to the Congested Districts Board in 1915, shortly before his own death in 1919.

As her diary shows, Lady Gregory personally met with both Bishop McCormack and Father Fahey at some point early on in

<sup>25</sup> Gregory to Hicks-Beach, 12 November 1886, Bodleian Library.



the proceedings to explain the 'ins and outs' of the Spelman case to them, and noted that she considered 'William has acted with justice and moderation'.<sup>26</sup> Fahey's first surviving letter to Sir William regarding the dispute (Document 2) confirms his collegial readiness to back Sir William's 'arrangement' in the case, his cool disposition towards Spelman, and his concern, too, for the sub-tenants—'poor people'—caught up in the dispute. But the same day as receiving this supportive message, Sir William also heard from Patrick Spelman, in a letter written from 'Ballylee Castle', which significantly clarifies the nature of the dispute (Document 3). As his daughter had done, Spelman asserts that his failure to pay the head rent since November 1885 was purely a consequence of not having received payments from his sub-tenants. One of these individuals, he charges, had deliberately tried to ruin him by poisoning his cattle, and both are accused of 'dark séances' with Gregory's agent, Algernon Persse—Lady Gregory's brother—in seeking to get control of their respective holdings. Persse, he further charges, is prejudiced against him, and had treated him unfairly by refusing to act on his suggestion that the sub-tenants should be pursued independently for their liabilities. The reliability of these charges and complaints is uncertain, but Spelman may indeed have had good grounds for feeling he had been hard done by in not receiving the rent abatements given to other tenants on the estate. His letter emphasizes that both Algernon Persse and Sir William himself had verbally agreed to his proposal that they should take over collection of the sums due from his sub-tenants and credit him accordingly—a proposal he charges was witnessed by Algernon's brother Alfred, and at the time judged by him 'very just'. He closes by asking Sir William for arbitration on the case by two prominent local landowners—Walter Shawe-Taylor and James Galbraith—on the grounds that a neutral judgement by men 'whose knowledge of such matters will guide to a fair arrangement, satisfactory alike to all parties, they having no interest but God and Justice'. It is unclear whether he was aware that Shawe-Taylor was married to Lady Gregory's older sister Elizabeth, or that Galbraith was also distantly related to her.

<sup>26</sup> Diary, retrospective entry dated 28 October [1888], Berg.

In response, Sir William Gregory evidently asked Algernon Persse to make a careful review of Spelman's rental payments and his agreements with his sub-tenants—now identified as McTigue and [John] Fahy—and he also sought the legal advice of another local landowner, Andrew Bellew Nolan of New Park, who, as Spelman had noted, was about to replace Persse as agent for the Coole estate. Algernon Persse's response (Document 4), written from Lady Gregory's childhood home at Roxborough, confirmed the extent of the arrears, and observed that James Cunningham, Spelman's son-in-law, had never been formally recognized as a tenant on Spelman's holdings. Persse recommended replying with a 'clear statement of the facts of the case', but counseled Gregory to 'avoid if possible a public controversy on the subject as Land League ideas of equity might not coincide with ours' and also urged him 'not to write anything that that slippery customer Spelman could lay hands on as grounds of an action for libel'.

Assured of the state of the accounts and the leases, Sir William called Spelman's sub-tenants, along with James Cunningham, to Coole Park, where he laid out his proposals for a settlement. As he reported to Father Fahey the next day (Document 5), all 'willingly gave up possession [of their holdings] & said they would abide by my decision'. His letter reflects a strenuous effort to come to an equitable solution. While terminating Spelman's lease and establishing McTigue, Fahy and Cunningham as direct tenants, with all the legal rights and protections that this entailed, he was careful to ensure that Spelman would retain 'his house & an acre of land'—the tower at Ballylee and its immediate surroundings—along with an annuity of £8 per year to be paid to him and his wife during their lifetimes by James Cunningham. Gregory's letter notes that Cunningham had, since his marriage to Spelman's daughter, in fact been the main source of such rental payments as had been made. McTigue, Fahy and Cunningham, he stressed, were 'rejoiced' at these terms; and he alone was the loser in the settlement, since giving up more than £70 that would otherwise have been due to him.

Spelman's acceptance of this settlement was, however, brief. On the same day that Sir William reported the agreement to Father Fahey, Andrew Nolan, his incoming land agent, informed him that

Spelman had now written 'in the usual tone' to protest (Document 6). This letter does not survive. Shrewdly, Sir William in any case chose to reply not to Spelman, but to his daughter, Elizabeth Cunningham, who had evidently written to him to complain. The copy he retained of his letter (Document 7), written in Lady Gregory's secretarial hand, stresses the generosity of his settlements for the sub-tenants. 'You are certainly the last person who should complain of this settlement so singularly favourable to your husband' he concluded, '& Spelman knows well that most landlords would in similar circumstances have ejected both him & your husband'. Gregory also reported to Father Fahey regarding the agreement. Fahey entirely approved, but his collegiality did not prevent him from registering serious concern about increasing tensions on another farm Sir William had recently let, and he urged Gregory to empower him to intervene before the 'strong feeling' emerging there intensified further (Document 8). Fahey's opening reference in this letter to 'our Architect' alludes to the designs he and Gregory were preparing for the establishment of a new school at Kiltartan. The building was commenced in 1891 on land given by Gregory on a 99-year lease, to a design by Lady Gregory's brother Frank Perse. The school was in operation until 1960, and the building is now the Kiltartan Gregory Museum.

On 13 October 1888, Sir William received a reply from Elizabeth Cunningham, addressed from 'Ballylee Castle', asking 'to be excused' for her intervention in the dispute, and thanking him for his 'kindness' in making the settlement (Document 10). But when Algernon Perse went to Ballylee two days later to serve Spelman with the official notice of the transfer of his holding to his son-in-law and to his former sub-tenants, Spelman offered a final round of defiance. He again claimed that Gregory had broken a previous agreement with him, that he was being cheated out of the value of the improvements he had made, that the previous agent—Gregory's cousin, Charles—would never have allowed his dispossession, and that his own son-in-law had concocted his 'ruin' (Document 11). But since he was either unaware that he might appeal to the Land Courts, or unwilling to do so, Spelman had by this point been effectively presented with a *fait accompli*. Given the 'gratified' agreement of Cunningham, McTigue and Fahy, the fact that Sir William had strenuously avoided simply

evicting Spelman, and that the land in question remained in the hands of his family and his former sub-tenants under 'judicial rent'—giving them the full protections established by the 1881 Land Act—Spelman now lacked any convincing grounds for protest or for mobilizing public opinion against the Gregorys.

## IV

The case was thus now settled in legal terms; but a portion of one further letter by Elizabeth Cunningham, written from the tower at Ballylee also survives (Document 12). This remarkable document allows us a brief but sharp insight into her personal circumstances, both during and before the proceedings against her father, and thus of the conditions and situation for her—as a woman, a wife, a daughter, as well as a tenant—on a small Irish holding of the period.

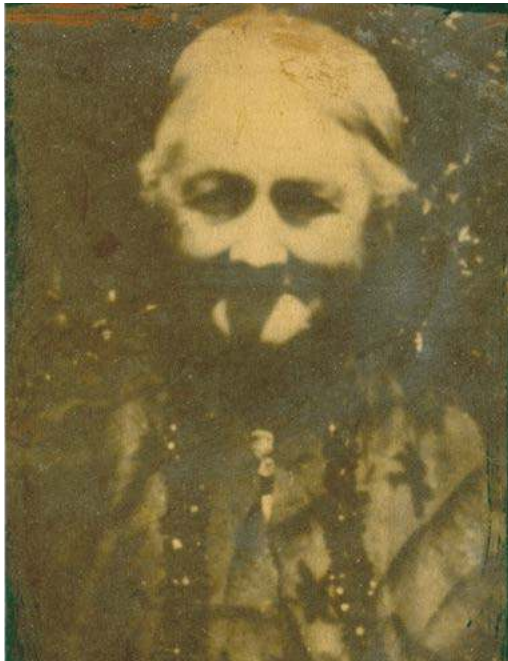


Plate 36. Elizabeth Cunningham (c. 1861–d. 1945) late in life. Image courtesy Private Collection, Ireland.

While Spelman's letters in the case reflect considerable strategic artifice, there is nothing in the surviving record to call into question the sincerity of this affecting document, especially given the apologetic tone Elizabeth Cunningham had taken in her previous address to Sir William on 13 October. Her situation was, it seems, a truly invidious one, caught in the middle of the hostility between her father and her husband. As his letters show, Spelman's suspicion that his son-in-law had been deliberately plotting to deprive him of his holding—'concocting my ruin'—included a belief that James Cunningham had conspired directly with Sir William's land agent. For his part, regardless of the validity of Spelman's charges, Cunningham surely had ample reason to be hostile to his father-in-law, not least since, according to Sir William's assessment, he had 'kept down the rent' for Spelman since marrying his daughter, despite having no tenancy rights on the land.

But it is Elizabeth Cunningham's self-testimony, as a woman at a time and in a culture in which she had few possibilities of independent agency, which makes this letter so telling. Married off abruptly in 1883 at the age of 20, without her own wishes being taken into account—'they did not consult with me until I was ordered out to the chapel to have it done'—she had now been caught between controlling parents who, she says, had 'kept me since I was a child in fear of them that any thing the[y] ordered me I should do it', and a husband who had not married her for love, but for the promise—'by a deed made at [the] marriage'—of succeeding to her father's holding. Spelman had approved of Cunningham for the arranged marriage simply because he was solvent—'any man would do ... that had the money'—and had then apparently exploited him to sustain a holding that was not his own. Worse yet, for all Sir William's conviction that James Cunningham's intention had 'been honest throughout' and that he was a man worthy of being helped, Elizabeth Cunningham's letter instead tells of a man threatening her with violence when he discovered she had intervened on her father's behalf. She had already had at least two children since the forced marriage, and was either pregnant with or had recently delivered a third by the autumn of 1888. The 1901 Census reports her as by then with eleven children, with the oldest aged 17 and the youngest—delivered when Elizabeth was

37—aged just one year old. According to the Census enumerator's report, the thirteen members of the family lived in a cottage by the tower with at most four rooms, and possibly as few as two. By 1911 she had had three more children, the last when she was aged 43. If she had had a 'hard life' prior to the proceedings of 1888, and was now being harshly blamed by both her parents and by her husband for jeopardizing their respective interests, what followed was surely no easier.

A final letter to Patrick Spelman from Sir William, sent from the Gregorys' London residence on 30 October 1888, marks the end of the Ballylee correspondence. The surviving document, a secretarial copy in Lady Gregory's hand, refuses further arbitration, dismisses Spelman's continuing accusations, and bluntly advises him 'to reconcile yourself with Cunningham & to accept the arrangement made with him—Otherwise he will not consider himself bound to make the annual payment [to you] which he is ready to do' (Document 13). The 'arrangement' appears to have held, though what degree of reconciliation, if any, took place between Spelman and his son-in-law is unclear. Patrick Spelman was alive, aged 88, in 1901, and still living in Ballylee Castle with his wife Sarah, then aged 75, while the growing Cunningham family continued to live in the adjoining cottage. When Lady Gregory's son Robert reached his majority the following year, he assumed full legal ownership of the Coole estate. He would sell all but the core demesne of Coole to the Congested Districts Board in January 1915—a transfer which included the Ballylee properties. This opened the way for Yeats's purchase of the tower, which was finalized, after many delays, in late May 1917. The Cunningham family stayed in residence there until earlier that month, at which point they were allocated acreage by the Board at Castletown, about a mile away between Ballylee and Coole.

## V

Sir William Gregory's course of action during the dispute shows him trying throughout to avoid the severe and dangerous step of actually evicting Patrick Spelman, and seeking to engineer a settlement that would be as fair as possible to all concerned. He was by this point

proud of his record as a progressive landlord, and the fuller evidence now available of his advocacy of Land Reform in Ireland from the 1860s onwards, and of his conduct on the Coole estate, makes clear that he had good grounds for that pride. Even at the height of the Land War in 1881–1882, when he quickly intuited that the power of the landlord class was terminally compromised, he remained convinced of the need for legislation that would secure tenants' rights, and of the inevitability of comprehensive land transfers, despite his recognition that these would significantly weaken his own position and reduce his income.<sup>27</sup> And while he objected to the provisions of the compulsory purchase schemes that were formulated later in the decade, he independently offered generous terms to his own tenants for outright purchase of their holdings in 1886, only to be met with refusal.<sup>28</sup>

When editing his unfinished autobiography after his death, Lady Gregory would stress in 1894 that her husband had been 'glad at the last to think that, having held the estate through the old days of the Famine and the later days of agitation, he had never once evicted a tenant'.<sup>29</sup> And in later life she would repeatedly hold up this claim as central to her account of the Coole Park tradition and legacy. When facing the twin threat of Gladstone's Home Rule Bill and the Plan of Campaign in 1886, Gregory himself defiantly told Father Fahey that 'so far as I am aware there has never been an ejection on the Coole estate in the memory of man' and he asserted to Michael Hicks-Beach, then Chief Secretary for Ireland, that 'I have been owner of my property for 41 years & have never ejected a tenant'.<sup>30</sup> But the Coole Park records do not sustain these claims. Charles Gregory's receipt books as agent clearly record payment of the substantial legal

<sup>27</sup> See *Lady Gregory's Early Irish Writings, 1883–1893*, 39–43 and 115–26.

<sup>28</sup> Brian Jenkins, *Sir William Gregory of Coole* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1986), 292.

<sup>29</sup> *Sir William Gregory K.C.M.G.*, 360.

<sup>30</sup> Gregory to Fahey, 16 May 1888, Diocesan Records, Galway—my thanks to Sister de Lourdes Fahy, R. S. M., for her help in accessing this correspondence; Gregory to Hicks-Beach 12 November 1886, Bodleian.

costs for an ejectment decree in July 1869, while a memorandum of an agreement from May 1880 records the ejection of Patrick Carty from a tenancy on lands adjoining Ballylee.<sup>31</sup> Since Patrick Spelman ultimately acceded to the compromise Gregory proposed in 1888, and remained a tenant, albeit on a single acre of land, he was not formally 'evicted', although he was indeed legally 'ejected' from most of his holding.

Sir William had, however, given a more scrupulously accurate and full account of his record as a landlord at least once, and on an occasion at which Lady Gregory was herself present. When introducing his new bride to the staff and tenants at Coole for the first time, at a dinner on 18 August 1880 for more than a hundred guests—of whom Patrick Spelman, being amongst his principal tenants, was surely one—Gregory made a speech observing that during the century and more that the estate had been in his family's possession 'he was not aware that a single capricious eviction had ever taken place on it'. 'Eviction for non-payment of rent had taken place', he acknowledged, 'but very rarely and then almost always in cases when the tenant was incorrigible and had been ruined by drunkenness and other misconduct'.<sup>32</sup> This statement squares precisely with the ample evidence of his liberalism, his considerable investment in being a good landlord, and his aversion to authoritarian measures. The speech makes no effort to distinguish between 'ejectment' and 'eviction' but assumes that his hearers well know that his actions in the few cases in question were reluctant, and just. He admits that Coole tenants had indeed on occasion been turned out of their holdings, then, but only in cases of clear cause, with full due process, and when no other course seemed possible. In her later writings, however, Lady Gregory appears to have conveniently forgotten both her husband's generally careful distinctions between 'eviction' and 'ejectment', and, more importantly, his qualifying term 'capricious', and to have indulged in a degree of myth-making of her own.

<sup>31</sup> National Archives, Dublin.

<sup>32</sup> *Galway Vindicator*, 21 August 1880, 6.



## VI

Given that she first introduced Yeats to Ballylee in 1896, Lady Gregory must have been pleased that he so quickly shared her enthusiasm for the 'old square tower' and its location. And she was surely amongst the first to be party to the 'dream' of owning the property he mentioned to John Quinn in 1904. Indeed, a letter she wrote to John Redmond in Spring 1903, while he was helping prepare what became the Wyndham Land Act, suggests that she may, even at this early point, already have had in mind the specific aim of safeguarding Yeats's interest in the tower. Voicing her concern that current law gave no protection to 'old historic buildings' not considered important enough to be maintained by the Board of Works, she suggested to Redmond that appropriate wording should be added to the forthcoming legislation. 'There is for instance a fine old castle, Ballylee, on my son's property—partly inhabited by a tenant, whose house is built on to it' she told him. 'Should this tenant (not a very satisfactory one) buy his holding, would he have the power of pulling down this castle by degrees, say to build outhouses?' A local cromlech, she added, had 'already been destroyed for building or road mending'.<sup>33</sup>

After Robert Gregory sold Ballylee in 1915, she took an active part in facilitating Yeats's purchase. She personally negotiated with the Congested Districts Board in March 1917 over the price to be paid, when Yeats, in increasing anxiety about the likely cost, gave her 'full power' to act for him and agreed to 'do exactly what you think' (*CL InteLex* 3173–74, 3178). Two months later, with Yeats away in London, she met with the representative of the Board at the tower to receive the legal map that recorded the property boundaries and confirmed his ownership. To mark the occasion, she wrote with some ceremony to Yeats on 2 June 1917, sending him a bunch of grass, thatch from the cottage roof, and a stone from the castle wall 'as signs & markers of your possession'. She also reported the following day to John Quinn that these items constituted a 'seisin'—an old

<sup>33</sup> Gregory to Redmond, 4 April 1903, NLI.

legal term denoting the ownership of a feudal fiefdom—thereby indicating both her awareness of Yeats's key motivations in making the purchase, and her readiness, at this point, to abet them.<sup>34</sup> When he neglected to acknowledge the symbolic items she had packed 'with such care', she sent Yeats a letter chiding him but showing that she also understood, and wanted to encourage, his interest in the tower as a creative inspiration: 'I thought you cd at the least have written a poem on them!'<sup>35</sup> Over the course of the next two years, she acted repeatedly as Yeats's agent and helper, overseeing renovation and construction work at Ballylee, and relaying accounts, advice and reports of progress to him in her letters. During the remainder of her life she would be called on again many times to serve as *de facto* caretaker for the tower and its adjoining cottages.

As has long been recognized, Yeats's purchase of Ballylee—the first property he had ever owned—was in part an affirmation of his long partnership with Gregory. He would indeed declare in 'Meditations in Time of Civil War' that 'an old neighbour's friendship' was one key reason that he had 'chose[n] the house' (*VP* 423). Moreover, as he acknowledged to her, this decision to relocate into 'her' Galway landscape was a choice which entailed leaving aside a long-harbour'd ideal of returning to the cherished places of his childhood: 'If I did not get Ballylee I would probably have built a thatched cottage on a site I chose long ago in Sligo'.<sup>36</sup> But his purchase was also, as she well understood, in part a declaration of independence—he would henceforth be staying at Ballylee during his summers, rather than with her at Coole—and in part a gesture of appropriation, since the tower had previously been part of the Gregory estate. Although she dutifully facilitated his acquisition of the property, even her earliest responses to the purchase register elements of unease on her part. She was quick to remind him, for instance, that her son Robert 'didn't

<sup>34</sup> Gregory to Yeats, 2 June 1917, Berg. Gregory to Quinn, 3 June 1917, Berg.

<sup>35</sup> Gregory to Yeats, 13 June 1917, Berg.

<sup>36</sup> WBY to Lady Gregory 16 June 1917 (*CL InteLex* 3262). Some two weeks earlier, when finalization of the purchase of Ballylee was imminent, Yeats notably wrote to Graham Mackintosh that Sligo 'is still the town of my dreams' (*CL InteLex* 3250).

get one penny for the castle' when transferring it to the Congested Districts Board.<sup>37</sup> And after negotiating the low purchase price for Yeats, she managed to insinuate, simultaneously, that he should feel under obligation to her for this, and that had she sought to reclaim it for herself she could have done so at no cost at all: 'To take my due, I shd say [Henry] Doran said the low price was allowed by the Board as a compliment to me—& if I wanted it for myself, they wd give it for nothing!'<sup>38</sup> While she certainly wanted to implicate herself more closely in his ownership of and plans for Ballylee, both practically and creatively, she was thus at the same time resentful and anxious about the element of independence his purchase embodied.

The shifting grounds in their relationship already register in 'The Wild Swans at Coole', drafted by Yeats at Coole in October 1916 during the period he resolved to make the tower his own.<sup>39</sup> He had returned to Coole on 16 September 1916, following a turbulent summer in Normandy, during which he had proposed first to Maud Gonne, and then to her daughter, Iseult, only to be refused by both. Although he acknowledged a degree of guilt to Lady Gregory for his extended absence—'I had a gloomy night of it, thinking that for the first time for nearly twenty years I am not at Coole at the end of August' (*CL IntelLex* 3022)—the stay in France had effectively confirmed the primacy of her influence, and the effective eclipse of Maud Gonne's. His letters to Gregory that summer repeatedly seek counsel on how to proceed in his crisis of uncertainty over whether to commit himself to either Maud or Iseult, and they mark his reliance on her as a 'refuge' from his own potential weakness of resolution (*CL IntelLex* 2987, 2996). But in returning to Coole, he was also acutely conscious of the limitations, and indeed constraint, inherent in his relationship with Gregory. The poem acknowledges the beauty and security of Coole, but also recognizes that to stay there

<sup>37</sup> Gregory to Yeats, undated [February 1917], Berg.

<sup>38</sup> Gregory to Yeats, ?14 March 1917, Berg.

<sup>39</sup> For some account of the composition of 'The Wild Swans at Coole' and Yeats's relationship with Gregory during the period after his return from Normandy in September 1916, see "'Easter, 1916'" at its Centennial: Maud Gonne, Augusta Gregory and the Evolution of the Poem', 43–5.

would be a passive falling back into habit, with the 'dry' autumnal woodland paths under an 'October twilight' powerfully conveying his consciousness of age and sterility (*VP* 322). Yeats's letter of enquiry about Ballylee to William F. Bailey on 2 October 1916 hence marked a deliberate effort to move beyond the safe but staid habits of his long co-dependency with Gregory.

Given the sale of all but the core Gregory demesne lands in 1915, and then Yeats's rapid deployment of Ballylee as a symbol of the Ascendancy traditions for which Coole had hitherto been his prime example, Lady Gregory was inevitably conscious that the estate had been in some sense replaced; much as she was soon aware, when Yeats married, that she, also, had been in some sense replaced. Characteristically, she was careful not to make her resentments at these shifts too obvious. Only a few barbed comments survive in the written record to indicate the strength of her feelings about his haste or his choice in proposing to Georgie Hyde-Lees so quickly after his pursuit of Maud and then Iseult Gonne: Yeats's acknowledgement in October 1917 that 'you had hurt me very much by something you said about being married in the clothes I bought to court Iseult in' is one rare example (*CL IntelLex* 3340). But in a letter to John Quinn in August 1917, after a passage acknowledging the war-time decline in her own income, and the 'hardship' being caused at Coole by the fact that the Congested District Board had still not completed their payment for the lands sold in 1915, she for once unburdened herself quite candidly about her opposition to Yeats's purchase of Ballylee.

Her complaints begin as a list of pragmatic reasons why his acquisition of a romantic ruin was in her view unwise:

You are quite right about Yeats and Ballylee, he little knows what he is in for. I never encouraged him to buy it, and would have actually opposed it but that it seemed ungracious, being in our neighbourhood. He has a roofless castle and a dilapidated cottage. All I could do, when he had actually entered into negotiations with the Board, was to go and see their chief official and get the price knocked down from £80 to £35. I felt then that if he wants to throw it up, he will only have lost that much. There will be mason and architect, and then painting and woodwork and furnishing. And then, it is too damp a place for him to spend more than a few summer months in; and it must be kept aired and watched in winter time. And then

servants and guests and food ... he has had little experience of all this. I always say one should keep one's permanent expenditure as low as possible and then if there is a little money to spare one can travel or help a friend or buy some delightful thing.<sup>40</sup>

The last sentence here hints at her deeper personal grounds for disapproval, and resentment. Having supported and subsidized Yeats through her loans and gifts since 1897—determinedly using her 'little money to spare' to help him with furnishings for his London flat, hampers of food and ready cash in the early years of their friendship, and then later giving more costly and discretionary gifts such as the Kelmscott Chaucer she and other friends had presented to him for his fortieth birthday in 1905—she was highly alert to the element of self-indulgence and vanity in his ambitious plans for Ballylee, and to the way that those plans, now that he for the first time had money of his own 'to spare', registered so little in the way of residual gratitude on his part or of sensitivity to her situation. She had sent him twenty pounds 'with pleasure' in response to his request for a loan in April 1916, but made the significance of that loan clear by adding that financial affairs at Coole were now 'very bad' and that she was consequently 'afraid I must ask you to pay what will cover your food (not your lodging, I don't want to make by you)' when he came to stay that summer.<sup>41</sup> Just as her own circumstances were becoming significantly reduced, then, and as her own claim to landed status had effectively ended with her son's sale of most of the Coole estate, Yeats, the long-time recipient of her patronage, was effectively in the process of moving out, and focusing his energies and resources on a project that, as many of his friends readily observed, was rooted in neo-feudal pretension. Almost at the very moment she had asked Yeats to begin to pay his way, he had sidestepped any clear register of obligation for or acknowledgement of her years of support.

Gregory's letter to Quinn casts her reasons for disapproving of the purchase of Ballylee as both protective of Yeats's financial interests and attentive to his future domestic happiness. She was, she

<sup>40</sup> Gregory to Quinn, 11 August 1917, Manuscript Division, NYPL.

<sup>41</sup> Gregory to Yeats, 18 April 1916, Berg.

stressed, 'trying to restrain him from spending money on Ballylee at all until whatever wife he finds has seen it; she may not like the place at all or may wish things done differently'.<sup>42</sup> The glancing cut here at Yeats's determination to marry even without having a specific partner in mind—'whatever wife he finds'—might be easily overlooked. But having been her confidant in a *tête à tête* at the height of their brief intimacy in New York in 1913—during which Yeats's use of her money to visit Maud Gonne in Paris in 1898 was one of many long-harboured grievances Gregory angrily voiced, revealing her possessiveness and her limited empathy for Yeats's emotions or interest in his life beyond her—Quinn was particularly well-placed to have understood the sense of proprietorial loss and sense of replacement informing these surface expressions of pragmatic concern and support.<sup>43</sup>

## VII

Gregory's financial and practical warnings would in due course, however, prove well-founded in many respects. Whatever ideals of convenient neighbourliness Yeats had anticipated, for instance, were complicated and badly undercut even before he and his new bride, George Yeats, took up a first brief residence in the restored cottage at the tower's foot, in September 1918. Following a barbed and ugly argument on 17 April 1918 at Coole between Yeats and Margaret Gregory—now the *de facto* owner of the estate since Robert Gregory's death that February—the Yeatses abruptly left, recognizing that they were no longer welcome guests, and temporarily took lodgings in Galway city. Lady Gregory arranged for them to rent nearby Ballinamantane House for the summer, but Margaret's hostility to Yeats remained intense long thereafter.<sup>44</sup> Tellingly, he did not stay overnight again at Coole for nearly four years—returning alone, and when Margaret Gregory was absent, in March 1922; and Lady

<sup>42</sup> Gregory to Quinn, 11 August 1911, Manuscript Division, NYPL.

<sup>43</sup> William M. Murphy, *Prodigal Father: The Life of John Butler Yeats (1839–1922)* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 404–5.

<sup>44</sup> See Pethica, 'Yeats's "Perfect Man"', *Dublin Review* 35 (Summer 2009), 18–52.

Gregory pointedly turned down his repeated and rather plaintive requests to come and stay in early 1919, presumably being unwilling to challenge Margaret's new rights of ownership. Yeats did not stay at Coole again together with George until August 1923, and then just for a single night, again during Margaret's absence. This souring aside, relations between Lady Gregory and George Yeats had also been strained from the outset, with the younger woman conscious of, and shrewdly resistant to, Gregory's possessive and proprietorial manner towards her husband (*Life* 2 122–23). Those strains would always remain, and the 'old neighbour's friendship' Yeats had extolled as one of his reasons for purchasing the tower was a relationship thereafter kept largely separate from his married life: when he came to visit Gregory at Coole he typically came alone.

The actual restoration of the property was also a far more expensive, protracted and frustrating experience than Yeats had anticipated. He and George spent some ten weeks in the restored cottage in summer 1919, but at this point only the lower floor of the tower was in usable condition despite their heavy round of payments for work over the previous year. He optimistically told his father in May 1917 that making the tower 'habitable' would take 'no great expense' and actually be 'an economy' in comparison to keeping rooms in London (*CL InteLex* 3241). But by July 1919 he had to acknowledge that it still needed 'another years work under ones own eyes' before it would be the 'fitting monument & symbol' he wished for (*CL InteLex* 3632). Even more consequentially, this first extended stay in 1919 would be followed by an unexpected hiatus of more than two and a half years during which the Yeatses did not return to Ballylee at all, as local conditions became more dangerous during the Irish War of Independence. Untended, the part-restored tower was broken into and suffered damage at least twice, leaving Yeats worried about the potential theft of the timber and the 'very beautiful, very expensive' slates being stored there for repair of the tower's roof, and of the '£300 worth' of their furniture and other personal possessions at the property. 'If we lost these things' he told Gregory, 'I could not afford to replace them & would have to give up Ballylee for

years' (*CL InteLex* 3742, 3835). Increasingly worried about money, he informed her on 30 December 1920 that he was giving serious thought to leaving for Italy and 'living cheaply' there for a year as a way to retrench (*CL InteLex* 3837). The next few months would be the low point in his aspirations for the property. Writing to Olivia Shakespear in November 1921 at the height of his despondency over the two years of conflict that had raged, and at the likelihood of civil war breaking out once the Anglo-Irish Treaty was ratified, Yeats foresaw only 'bitterness' and 'blood & misery' in Ireland. 'If that comes' he told her, 'we may abandon Ballylee to the owls & the rats, & England too (where passion will rise & I shall find myself with no answer), & live in some far land' (*CL InteLex* 4039).

It was also during this period that his long friendship with Gregory came closest to breaking. Disdainful of his apparent disengagement from, or avoidance of, the political turmoil in Ireland, and from the actualities of the violence she was witnessing first-hand, she began sending reports on local Black and Tan atrocities to *The Nation* in October 1920 as a series of anonymous articles, without telling Yeats she had done so. This was the first time in the more than twenty years of close collaborative exchange between them that she had kept her writings private from him in this way. And when he informed her of his plans to 'live cheaply' in Italy, and then two days later added guiltily and unconvincingly that '[e]ven if we stay away a year you must not think we are deserting Ireland', she replied tersely on 4 January 1921, observing merely that this would allow him to 'escape' the rains of Ireland.<sup>45</sup> But the level of her annoyance at this political and personal apostasy in 'escaping' registers clearly in a biting letter she had written to John Quinn just two days earlier, which momentarily unveils her lingering frustrations over Yeats's marriage, and her sharp resentment of the 'ease' she saw him as now enjoying, far beyond the conflict in Ireland, and far beyond her ambit: 'I don't know what Yeats means by talking of want of money. His wife has

<sup>45</sup> Gregory to Yeats, 4 January 1921, Berg.



money, though perhaps not so much as he was led to believe, and they live in extreme comfort, and ease'.<sup>46</sup> That he should be complaining now about his finances, given that he had so readily and so recently committed 'almost the whole' of the money he made on his five-month American lecture tour in 1920 to the reconstruction work at Ballylee, can only have confirmed her own earlier wariness about the project and her sense of Yeats's self-indulgence (*CL InteLex* 3736). And most tellingly of all, her letter of 4 January 1921 to Yeats makes no mention that Margaret Gregory had four days earlier resolved to sell or rent Coole Park—a shock that had left Gregory expecting to have to move out, and depressedly reflecting on her advancing age and inutility: 'what does the last phase matter, except to be in no one's way'.<sup>47</sup> She confided in Quinn, and sought his help in possibly finding an American tenant, and also asked Lennox Robinson for advice as to whether a government agency might purchase the woodlands she loved. However, her letter to Robinson specifically asks him not to mention the matter 'even to Yeats'.<sup>48</sup> Her silence on the matter suggests that she could not now trust Yeats to keep the news private, and, just as damningly, both that she did not expect an empathetic or useful response from him, and that her anxieties were no longer something she was ready to share with him.

It was during this hiatus—both from Ballylee and from Gregory's esteem—that Yeats's plans and viewpoint began to shift in ways which led to both creative, political and personal repair in the relationship. In April 1921, while, living in Oxford, he started drafting the sequence of poems, initially titled 'Thoughts on the Present State of the World', which became 'Meditations in Time of Civil War'. The poems, he told Olivia Shakespear, were at root a 'lamentation over lost peace & lost hope' (*CL InteLex* 3899). They mark the beginnings of a transition from the largely romantic impulses that had informed his purchase of Ballylee, toward the bitter, vatic, disdainful mode that

<sup>46</sup> Gregory to Quinn, 2 January 1921, NYPL.

<sup>47</sup> *Lady Gregory's Journals: Volume 1*, ed. by Daniel J. Murphy (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1978), 216.

<sup>48</sup> Gregory to Robinson, 14 January 1921, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

is central to his later representations of the tower. Most importantly, the sequence shows that he was already beginning to question or complicate his aristocratic pretensions in having bought a 'castle' and was beginning to recast Ballylee as an emblem of starkness, and as a location appropriate to witnessing and interpreting the violent and embattled actualities unfolding in Ireland. Soon after finishing the poem, he gave instructions for renovation on the tower to be restarted, and resolved to return there 'with our children' the following Spring, the continuing violence and political conflict notwithstanding (*CL InteLex* 3960). Lady Gregory remained sceptical, writing only of his 'possible return' even after Yeats alerted her in March 1922 to the date of his departure for Ireland, and even though he had by then made plain his interest in possibly taking a position in the new Free State government and his growing determination to once again take a direct role, political or not, in the reconstruction of the country.<sup>49</sup>

In early April 1922, he and George Yeats and their two small children duly took up residence at Ballylee again, spending most of the next five months there. Yeats was finally a close observer of, and vulnerable to, the turmoil of the Civil War. He would also at last see first-hand the troubled conditions Lady Gregory had been defiantly recording and enduring at Coole, including her distress at the burning of her childhood home, Roxborough, that August. He narrowly missed being at Coole on 10 April when she was threatened by a former tenant and responded by showing 'how easy it would be to shoot me through the unshuttered window'<sup>50</sup>—an event he later mythologized in 'Beautiful Lofty Things'. After raiders came to the house on 13 May, he volunteered to come and sleep at Coole, an offer of protection she was 'glad to accept'.<sup>51</sup> Over the next four months he would be a regular visitor, re-establishing the routines of both personal and creative exchange that had sustained their earlier years of friendship. It was during these months and the next five years, as

<sup>49</sup> Gregory to Yeats, 26 February 1922, Berg.

<sup>50</sup> *Lady Gregory's Journals: Volume 1*, 337.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 356.

a regular visitor to Coole and Ballylee, that he completed his major Tower poems.

### VIII

The Yeatses came to Ballylee for at least a part of each of the next five summers, though only for brief stays in 1923 and 1924. In 1925 they made two extended stays, but these were to some extent compromised by Yeats's fear that he might have to sell the property to cover the increasing debts of the Cuala Press (*CL InteLex* 4711). Much longer visits followed in 1926 and 1927, but that latter year was effectively their final period of residence. Yeats came alone to stay at Coole the following summer, but Ballylee was shut up, and remained so save for occasional inspection visits thereafter. While Yeats's health was probably the dominant factor in this abandonment, Gregory's own expectation that she would shortly be obliged to leave Coole following the sale of the property to the Irish Forestry Department certainly played some part. When she told Yeats of this likelihood in January 1927 he replied that, if so, he would act in solidarity by leaving Ballylee, 'because without me they would not care to come'.<sup>52</sup> 'Blood and the Moon', the final poem he wrote there in August 1927, quietly registers these looming possibilities. While more assertive than any of the previous 'tower' poems in its declaration of Ballylee as a 'powerful' symbol, that declaration is then qualified and undercut, with the tower also described as being, like contemporary Ireland, 'half dead at the top' (*VP* 480, 482).

'Blood and the Moon' nonetheless offers Yeats's most emphatic assertion that Norman and then Ascendancy leadership—ruthless but powerful—had created the Anglo-Irish culture of the late eighteenth century that he most valued:

<sup>52</sup> *Lady Gregory's Journals: Volume 2*, 164. Ann Saddlemyer notes that the publication of *The Tower* in February 1928 also likely caused some 'inevitable dissipation of the original magic' of Ballylee itself, now that its symbolic power had become 'emblazoned' in and on the cover of that volume. Saddlemyer also observes a 'ruthlessness of separation' in George Yeats's readiness to 'rent out the property to strangers' by 1930; see *Becoming George: The Life of Mrs W. B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 406.

A bloody, arrogant power  
 Rose out of the race  
 Uttering, mastering it,  
 Rose like these walls from these  
 Storm-beaten cottages—(VP 480)

That essentially hieratic notion of Ballylee has long continued to hold significant sway in the critical literature. But the ‘mastering’ Yeats celebrates was entirely dependent, as far as his own possession of the tower was concerned, first on Lady Gregory’s purchase negotiations on his behalf, and then on the resettlement of its inhabitants—Elizabeth and James Cunningham and their many children—by the Congested Districts Board.

The Cunningham family would remain in the neighbourhood long after Yeats himself last stayed in Ballylee. Lady Gregory, characteristically, maintained a close connection with them, as she did with many other families who had once been Coole tenants. When Bernard Cunningham, Elizabeth’s youngest son, fired shots at a neighbour in a local dispute, she repeatedly tried to help him—even writing to James MacMahon, the Under-Secretary for Ireland, in an effort to get him out of jail.<sup>53</sup> But unlike 1888, when she was able to engineer Thomas Brennan’s release, this time she had no success—a telling index of the decline of landlord class influence in a now much-changed Ireland. Yeats, by contrast mentions the family only fleetingly in his letters—once in 1916 to say he feared Cunningham might demolish the tower for building stone before the purchase was finalized (*CL InteLex* 3073), and once in 1925, having heard news of the family from Lady Gregory when visiting Coole (*CL InteLex* 4732). When told by Lord Gough at a chance meeting in Gort in November 1916 that the castle at Ballylee ‘was inhabited by educated people within recent years’ he duly reported this to Lady Gregory in a fashion that suggests some surprise but little or no curiosity, and no apparent memory of having met Patrick Spelman (*CL InteLex* 3070).

Gort locals would indeed in due course amply register and attest to Yeats’s indifference to them when he was at Ballylee. Lady

<sup>53</sup> *Lady Gregory’s Journals: Volume 1*, 314–16.

Gregory's gatekeeper Paddy Hehir recalled that Yeats 'never bothered with anyone', while the Fahy family, who lived directly adjoining Ballylee and supplied Yeats with milk and ferried him to Gort and to Loughrea station by pony-and-trap, recalled that 'he would never speak to them ... nothing, not even a thank you'.<sup>54</sup>

In an interview in New York in November 1903, Yeats declared 'I don't think a man has any right to invent his own symbols. Instead they should come from 'the life and traditions of the people'.<sup>55</sup> But in his figurations of Ballylee, the mythologizing of his own utterance, creativity and mastery, eclipsed any concern with the actual life at his door. He was either oblivious to or knew nothing of the significant recent history of the tower, and of Lady Gregory's involvement in both the eviction of 1888 and in the politics of the Land War more generally. Rather than it being she who was set 'beyond the reach of the bitter struggle between landlord and tenant' during the Land War, we need to acknowledge more stringently the extent to which it was, instead, Yeats who was distanced from or unwilling to attend to the actualities of that struggle, and its consequences for the social and political realities of Ireland, during his ownership of Thoor Ballylee.

<sup>54</sup> Paddy Hehir, interview with Peadar Ó Conaire, *Guaire*, 9 October 1980, 25; 'The Tower that enchanted Yeats', *New York Times*, 1 October 2015, AR18.

<sup>55</sup> *World* (New York), 22 November 1903, courtesy the Gregory estate, The Naval and Military Club, London, and the Bodleian Library.

APPENDIX: DOCUMENTS<sup>56</sup>

Document 1  
Elizabeth Cunningham to Sir William Gregory

Ballylee  
27 Sept / 88  
Sir William

I am very much distressed at the treatment received by my father at your hands yesterday. He is no pauper and wants no charity he is able and willing to pay his own rents but not the rents of others and wants nothing but justice, which it appears you deny him—by giving over or *selling* to the poisoners of his cattle my inheritance which he improved in in [sic] building alone to the amount of £200—his sub tenants (now sought to be favoured by you) never expended 6d—My father inherits gentlemanly principles beyond the common herd, and should not be so illtreated in his decline of life by you. I therefore beg of you not to induce or foster the cause of any tragedies here—but reconsider your error and continue my kind and good father in the enjoyment of his rights. My father and granduncle were paying £61.2.2 yearly here for over 60 years and now because he owes £20 to be paid by him in two installments £10 Nov and £10 at Xmas his and my interest is to be confiscated.

Heaven forbid Sir William

Your obedient servant  
Elizabeth Cunningham

Copy kept for the press if required

[envelope for the above postmarked 29 Sep 88 Gort]

<sup>56</sup> Documents now on deposit at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, courtesy the Gregory estate; The In & Out, Naval and Military Club, London; and the Bodleian Library

Document 2  
Father Jerome Fahey to Sir William Gregory

Gort—4 Oct 88

My dear Sir William Gregory

I was away from home all yesterday: and your esteemed favour therefore remained unacknowledged longer than I could wish.

I well hope that the arrangement to which you are good enough to refer will be productive of peace—much needed at Ballylee. I do not think it probable that the person referred will come to us for sympathy. At least if he intends coming I have heard nothing of it.

As there are so many interests involved I would be glad indeed to know the nature of the arrangement—which shall I hope relieve the poor people of the worry & expense of litigation in future.

I am glad & grateful at having the old capitals at Kilmacduagh relieved of their "ivy crowns".

I remain dear Sir W. Gregory  
Very respectfully yours,  
J. Fahey

Tho retaining the Archeological Journal longer than I should, I am taking care of it & will soon return it safely. Tis very interesting. JF

Document 3  
Patrick Spelman to Sir William Gregory

Ballylee Castle, Gort 4 October 1888

To, Sir William H. Gregory  
K.C.M.G.  
Coole Park, Gort

Sir William

In justice to myself and perhaps to you also, I offer the following remarks on your late undigested decision in my case. In doing so I essay to state it partly from the beginning as a prelude to more light on the subject hereafter, as it cannot be possible that you thoroughly understand the injustice and robbery thereby designed to be inflicted on me—

I am the representative of a 66 years family tenancy here, the curtailed holding and rent for the past 40 years being 37 ½ acres at £61.2.2 yearly—but in '83 reduced by a fair rent agreement to £52 and subject to £10 more reduction under the abatement act of 1887 which would make it now £42—and heretofore to your knowledge subject to the undertenancies—

I have paid up to November '85 and my undertenants not paying rent without law, I was unable to pay the head rent, and offered your agent Mr Persse two years ago to take their names and mine on the estate books for individual liabilities, which offer Mr Alfred Persse who was present said to his brother your agent was very just & fair. Your agent promised then to consider it and do so, and yet did not, but subsequently issued a writ against me for the whole rent, including the running Gale for 104 to November '87—and followed in due course by an eviction notice under the '87 Act, which determined the tenancy in August last, at which time I was cited to Coolepark before yourself, your agent Mr Persse and Mr Nolan the incoming agent. I then explained my position, stating that my subtenants owed me £70 in November, one three years and the others one year, which if I was put in a position to collect, or give over to you as an arrear against them, I would myself be responsible for the balance, by being allowed the accrued abatements, given to all other tenants on the property, but not allowed me of 10–15–20 and 25 per cent for the past five years, amounting in the aggregate to say £35—in addition I stated my ability to pay one year's rent for the land in my possession, and you apparently agreed to this, asking me questions as to my family and who would succeed me in



my holding, to which latter query I replied my daughter, who was already in possession of part of it—asked other questions as to the undertenants giving possession for the purpose of the new arrangement. I could only answer for my self, and expressed my willingness to do so, on the conditions specified of my continued occupancy at a reasonable rent, which rent you at the time thought could be left for future consideration, and so that day's proceedings ended you having matured the course of future proceedings. I was again cited to Coole Park on the 26th Sep last for the final regulation and carrying out the arrangement as I thought, on these lines—there appeared to be some dark seances going on in the office when I arrived, by calling in separately my subtenants, who I understand made individual bids of £40 and £50 as fines on their respective lots, and on my interests therein and you and your agents present and future came to the conclusion of so disposing of my personal rights and occupancy and thus breaking your former intention and agreement with me, by accepting these fines, and calling me in offered me, oh mirabili dictu charity and pauperism for life as a solacium for the robbery and confiscation of my inherited rights and interests in my little patrimony—

I have expended £200 on buildings alone here on the assurance of having done so for the whole farm—I am willing and able may have offered to pay two years rent on my present holding, without a real personal, yet a technical debt on it, to be wiped off if I get justice—

But I verily believe you don't see the case, with any clear view of its necessary equity to the past, but now to be robbed tenant in favour of the midnight poisoner of £70 worth of my cattle, who never paid you any rent here, but I now give you the alternative of the arbitration of Mr Shaw Taylor and of Mr Galbraith on the case, whose knowledge of such matters will guide to a fair and just arrangement, satisfactory alike to all parties, they having no interest but God and Justice while Mr Persse to your own knowledge was, and is prejudiced against me and [in] favour of his Bullock buyer, yet his only accusation against me was that I cut my winter's turf on my bog which I had before he was born, and sold two acres of conacre meadow, but in the mean time I hold on firmly & independently to my just rights.

I am Sir William  
 Respectfully yrs  
 P.Spelman  
 Ballylee Castle  
 Gort—  
 4<sup>th</sup> October 1888

Document 4  
Algernon Persse to Sir William Gregory

Roxborough,  
Loughrea.  
Co. Galway  
Oct 6 [1888]

My dear William:

I send you enclosed answers to your enquiries about Spelman's holding—& as regards your reply to Mrs Cunningham's letter, as there is a likelihood of its appearing in print I would suggest that it should contain a short & clear statement of the facts of the case which could be easily taken in by the public—something like the following—I wish to point out to you the inaccuracy of your opinion of my arrangements regarding your father's holding. They were made equitably according to my convictions between all the parties concerned and my views are supported by Msrs Persse & Nolan &c &c

In the first place I am owed £104 or two years rent to 1 Nov 87 and as I cannot agree with you that your father is at present, or has any hope in the near future of being able to make any payment in liquidation of arrears I deal with your husband who has an interest nearly if not as great as you father's in the holding as by a deed made at your marriage it is assigned to him at your father's death. I accept from your husband £30 in cash in liquidation of arrears £104 and let him the holding, the sub-tenants becoming tenants direct to me and their rent being deducted from the judicial rent becomes the rent of the future. And in all this I cannot see any injustice.

I do not profit by the transaction as I only get a percentage of the arrears due—the interest in the holding is preserved to your husband after your father's death and a house and garden with an annual sum in money is insured to your father and your mother during their lives to be paid by your husband—And the subtenants Fahy & McTigue will get the benefit of any allowance made to the other tenants on the property & not as heretofore have to pay their liabilities in full to the day without any reduction whatever—

Of course it would be wise to avoid if possible a public controversy on the subject as Land League ideas of equity might not coincide with ours & you should be careful not to write anything that that slippery customer Spelman could lay hands on as grounds of an action for libel.

[passage here regarding rentals and tenancies elsewhere on the Coole Park estate omitted from transcription]

We had not as good a cattle fair at Ballinasloe as was expected

Yours sincerely  
Algernon Persse

[enclosed]

Replies to queries.

1. Cunningham was never recognized as a tenant.
2. Spelman owed £104 or two years rent to 1 Nov 1887. I have no authentic record of how the rent was divided between Cunningham & McTigue. I have heard but forget—
3. Spelman did not get the allowance on the two gales due 1 May 1885 & 1 Nov 1885 amounting together to £6-10—as the gales were not paid in due time—and he did not of course receive any allowances on the two years from 1 Nov 1885 to 1 Nov 1887—as he made no payment whatever on account of the rent accruing due for that time.
4. It is not quite accurate to state that if Spelman had paid the amount received from McTigue and Fahy there would only be a small amount due by him.

## Document 5

Sir William Gregory to Father Jerome Fahey (secretarial copy in Lady Gregory's hand)

Coole  
Oct 8—1888

My dear Father Fahey

I have now got figures from Mr Persse & as you may hear me denounced as unjust & griping by those who are ignorant of the facts of Spelman's case I am anxious you should know the whole truth.

I can only say that McTigue, Fahy, & Spelman's son in law Cunningham who are much to be considered as Spelman went away after the decision invoking blessings on me for my generosity by them. Yet one may be generous to several & yet act unjustly by one so now let us see how Spelman has been treated.

Spelman is the only tenant recognized on the holding. Fahy and McTigue are sub tenants of his, & there are arrangements between him & Cunningham as to the settlement of the holding with which I have nothing to do.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> Nov 1887 Spelman owed two years rent. Another year should be almost due though half of it wd not be received till April.

The sum due to 1<sup>st</sup> Novr is £104. Of this Spelman offered £10 promising another £10 *perhaps* in the Spring & desiring me to look to Cunningham for the remainder.

Of course I had no remedy against Cunningham but I had very sincere commiseration for him as he had, if I was rightly informed been the person who had since his marriage with Spelman's daughter kept down the rent.

Spelman, McTigue, Fahy and Cunningham were ejected by me legally. They all willingly gave up possession & said they would abide by my decision. On the advice of Mr Persse & Mr Nolan I agreed to take McTigue & Fahy as direct tenants at the same rent & without receiving one shilling of fine which Spelman alleges to have been given.

To Cunningham I give the rest of the holding on the payment of £30 in cash in liquidation of the whole of the arrears of £104.

To Spelman is secured his house & an acre of land & Cunningham covenants to pay him £8 per annum during his life & that of Mrs Spelman, & of course he is free from all liabilities so far as I am concerned.

The unfortunate subtenants are of course rejoiced as they will henceforth be treated as the rest of my tenants, for it will be hardly credited that not only was excessive rent levied on Fahy but he had as well as McTigue to pay the uttermost farthing at the time when I was giving large reductions.

Spelman says he did not get these reductions. I reply he would have got them had he paid.

The person in the transaction who really gets off badly is myself, as I only receive £30 out of £104—but I shall not repine if I can help Cunningham on his legs for I really believe his intentions to have been honest throughout.

Believe me  
Yrs sincerely  
W. H. Gregory

Document 6  
Andrew Bellew Nolan to Sir William Gregory

New Park  
Loughrea  
8<sup>th</sup> Oct 88

My Dear Sir William

I enclose Spelman's letter—it is in the usual tone—nothing in it—I can quite understand your unwillingness to have recourse to extreme measures with this Tenant and if I might make a suggestion, I would place the following *final* alternative before him—There are four tenants on this farm practically at the present time and if you made all tenants under yourself thus giving Spelman the 10 or 12 acres to himself at *his proportion of rent* gathering all arrears possible out of him, it might & ought to settle this matter amicably—I have no apprehension that in the future I would not be able to make him pay his rent & in any case the risk would be small, but I would not let him back as *sole* tenant under *any circumstances*—He might be made tenant for his life with reversion to Cunningham.

If you should think well of this proposition after consultation with A Perse, it might be well to make it on paper so as to give him time to consult his people—

I am yrs very faithfully,  
A. Bellew Nolan

P.S. Since writing enclosed letter I have walked Mrs Carty's farm—it consists of a strip of land running between Loughrea Road and Bog—part of some fields close to road is worth £1 per acre but there is considerable portion of each field <?set> among bog and I have averaged 6 acres <?> at 15s/- per acre, £4-10/-, and 7 acres at 10/- £3-10-0 making a total for the farm of £8-0-0 the valuation being £7-5-0 and the present rent £10-0-0.

I explained to Mrs Carty it is quite optional on your part to make any reduction, so that if you consider £8 too low there is no need to give it. ABN

## Document 7

Sir William Gregory to Mrs Cunningham (secretarial copy in Lady Gregory's hand)

Coole

Oct 8 1888

Mrs Cunningham

I wish to point out to you the inaccuracy of your opinion of my arrangements regarding you father's late holding. They were made equitably & most generously according to my view towards all the parties concerned, & I have acted on the advice of Mr Persse & Mr Nolan both of them without any prejudice against your father, both men of much experience.

In the first place I beg of you to remember that I am owed £104 or two years rent of Ballylee till 1<sup>st</sup> Nov 87 and as I cannot agree with you that your father has any hope at present or in the near future of being able to make any payment in substantial liquidation of these arrears, or of being able to pay accruing rents I have dealt with your husband who has an interest nearly if not as great as your fathers in the holding the whole of which is assigned to him as I understand on your father's death.

I accept from your husband £30 in cash in liquidation of arrears of £104, the sub tenants becoming direct to me & their rent will be deducted from the judicial rent. I have not taken from these subtenants one shilling by way of fine as stated by your father that I have done nor have I increased their rent.

In all this I see no injustice. The subtenants are satisfied & gratified, your husband whom I naturally supposed you would sympathize with is satisfied & gratified, the interest in the whole holding is preserved to him & his house & garden together with an annual payment of money is ensured to your father & your mother during their lives. This your husband has agreed to but of course if your father resists the settlement I shall not hold your husband to the payment.

The subtenants Fahy and McTigue will henceforth get the benefit of any allowance made to the other tenants & will not as heretofore have to pay their rent in full to the day without any reduction whatever.

You are certainly the last person who should complain of this settlement so singularly favourable to your husband, & Spelman knows well that most landlords would in similar circumstances have ejected both him & your husband.

I remain etc

W. H. Gregory

Document 8  
Father Jerome Fahey to Sir William Gregory

Gort 10 Oct 88

My dear Sir William Gregory

Your favour of the 8<sup>th</sup> did not reach me till yesterday evng; and as I was busy with our Architect I deferred writing till now.

I do not think there will be any diversity of opinion as to the desirability of protecting Fahy and McTigue from the worry to which as subtenants they have been subjected in the past—I am not surprised they should have given marked expression to their appreciation of your arrangement.

My feelings towards Cunningham were not unlike your own—those of genuine sympathy. I have known him for many years, and have always thought him to be industrious & self-respecting. He is I think a man sure to get on. I shall be much disappointed if he do not succeed under his present favourably altered circumstances.

Spelman will of course feel the changes. But he may be more happy—perhaps more fortunate—in his altered circumstances than he had been when things were entirely in his own hands. Altogether I share your pleasing anticipations of the good results which should arise from the arrangement.

But I feel I would be wanting in candour if I did not also say that I look with very serious apprehensions to the outcome of the misunderstanding, present & prospective, as regards the Corker farm. I refer to it again only because I am satisfied that you wish to know what I may think of matters which involve the happiness of your tenants & my parishioners. I regret to say a strong feeling is already manifesting itself regarding the letting; and I am sure the feeling will grow. I earnestly wish you would place the olive branch in my hands and that I could speak of peace—while ever cordial feelings may yet be maintained.

I remain dear Sir W. Gregory  
Very respectfully yours,  
J. Fahey



Document 9  
 Father Jerome Fahey to Sir William Gregory

Gort 13 Oct 88

My dear Sir William Gregory

Permit me to thank you for your kind note, and to express my feelings of concern that I give you so much trouble. I sincerely trust with you that a better state of feeling will result from this arrangement you are good enough to propose—

In the renewed acknowledgement of your kindness & courtesy

I remain my dear Sir W Gregory  
 Yours respectfully  
 J. Fahey

Document 10  
 Elizabeth Cunningham to Sir William Gregory

Ballylee Castle  
 October 13<sup>th</sup>/88

Sir William

I received your reply and beg to inform you that I am not to blame for the mistake which I have made in interfering in the matter as I was innocent enough to be lead by my mother who gave me the copy of the letter which I sent to you. I now beg to be excused and am truly thankful for your kindness as I now believe were it not matters would have been worse—

I regret having troubled you so much.

I am Sir William  
 Your obedient servant

Elizabeth Cunningham

Document 11  
Patrick Spelman to Sir William Gregory

[15 Oct 1888]  
Sir W. H. Gregory  
K.C.M.G.—Coole

Sir William

Your agent Mr Persse came here at 6 o'clock tonight to give possession of my holding to Cunningham.

I promised to give you that possession in August last *on the condition* of being continued in my holding like the others at a fair rent, and I hold to *that condition* still and to nothing else. I have already fully explained this undertaking & agreement to you. I ask you therefore to reconsider the terms of that *agreement* with me.

I can hear that you have written to my daughter but that *letter was intercepted* by Cunningham, and she knows nothing of its contents.

Mr Persse has misled you on the whole proceedings and wants to lower your character as a landlord, but the case will see the light; even to his meanness in drinking whiskey in Cunningham's stinking bedroom, while concocting my ruin & robbery in selling him my inheritance but it is not effected yet while I am able & willing to pay my own rent, both in the present and in the future by getting Justice

Why deny it to me?

Are you aware of it?

Why would you throw me on the road side and give over my holding to my undertenants who owe me £70 in rent, it is an evil thing to be done by you are my age, the last near flicker of my life. Mr H. Charles Gregory would not allow it, in his agency.

Please don't go away without correcting this injustice, but yet allow me to live in respect as I have ever done to the present.

I have laid out £200 in buildings alone here, the debt by wit of £104 is liquidated by £70 due of the undertenants £35 the amt of abatement due to me and also the £20 in cash which I offered you in Coole and now again.

I am Sir William respectfully yrs  
P. C. Spelman  
Ballylee  
15 Oct 88

Document 12  
Elizabeth Cunningham to Sir William Gregory

*Private*

Ballylee Castle

October 17/ 88

Sir William

I took the liberty of writing you a second copy of a letter *dictated* for me. I suppose you understand what I mean. I beg of you Sir William to excuse my weakness in obeying all parties—but my parents have always kept me since I was a child in fear of them that any thing the[y] ordered me I should do it. So by the letters. Even my marriage they did not consult with me until [sic] I was ordered out to the chapel to have it done, which was the sorest trial that ever I had and regret it up to this day and when I spoke with my father about it he said any man would do him that had the money. Now my parents blame me for been [sic] the means of taking the house from over there heads and taking there portion of living from them.

Heaven knows I never had any thing to say to my father or husband's settlements and beg of your honor Sir William to throw any letters of him in the fire and not answer them. The first letter or copy you answered me my husband got it in the post and was going [to] have my life for copying any letter to you and said I wanted to ruin his interest. Of course Sir William it would be very impertinent of me to tell you how you would settle your own place. Sir William I have had a hard life between the two parties one balames [sic] me for taking part with the other

[remainder missing]

Document 13  
 Sir William Gregory to Patrick Spelman (secretarial copy in Lady  
 Gregory's hand)

3, St George's Place  
 Hyde Park Corner,  
 S.W.

Oct 30—1888

Mr Spelman

I have nothing to add to my reply to Mrs Cunningham's letter written by your dictation.

I have shown her that the only person who does not derive advantage from the arrangement I have made is myself. With the greater number of landlords you would have been ejected by the sheriff as you were alone responsible for the arrears.

Of course I am not going to submit the management of my estate to the arbitration of anyone.

You have accused me of two things & your statements are untrue—

1st You say I made an arrangement with you.

I made no arrangement.

I advised you as I did yr son in law & Fahy and McTigue to surrender their holdings as a settlement could then be made.

Had you and they not done so I should have been forced to have recourse to the sheriff which I should have much regretted.

2ndly You state I received a considerable sum in fines from Fahy & McTigue. I received nothing from them. I thought they had both been most hardly & unjustly treated by you & I was glad that justice was at length done to them.

There is no need of your continuing this correspondence. I advise you to reconcile yourself with Cunningham & to accept the arrangement made with him—Otherwise he will not consider himself bound to make the annual payment which he is ready to do.

I remain  
 Yours respectfully  
 W. H. Gregory



## Fighting Spirits: W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, and the Ghosts of *The Winding Stair* (1929)<sup>1</sup>

Lauren Arrington

IN HIS MEMOIR *Bad Boy of Music*, the avant-garde composer George Antheil—who met him in Rapallo—describes Yeats as ‘a veritable expert on seeing ghosts in broad daylight’:

We would often sit together discussing our project [the score for *Fighting the Waves*], when suddenly he’d say: ‘Hello. William’, and he’d tip his soft felt sombrero.

I’d follow his look and, seeing nobody within fifty feet of our table, I’d ask him, not without astonishment, where William was.

‘Right in the chair alongside of you; he’s the ghost of my indigestion’, Yeats would say.

Yeats would sometimes talk quite a bit to William, and also other Irish spirits who had been kind enough to come all the way from Dublin to see him.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [L.Arrington@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:L.Arrington@liverpool.ac.uk)? Apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

<sup>2</sup> George Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* (London, New York, etc.: Hurst & Blackett Ltd., 1947), 171. Antheil continued ‘the secret of my success in writing such true Irish music is contained in the fact that Yeats’s play is entirely about Irish

Yeats's teasing and Antheil's jocularitas aside, leaving Ireland was by no means an escape for Yeats from the haunting failures and unresolved resentments that lingered bitterly after the Irish Civil War. Following a successful trip to Sicily in the winter of 1925, where they travelled with Ezra and Dorothy Pound, Yeats and George Yeats planned a trip to Rapallo where Ezra and Dorothy Pound had decided to settle. Yeats's severe illness of autumn 1927 made the journey south all the more necessary. Indeed, the early months of 1928 were a period of physical recuperation as well as creative reinvention. This was the second sustained period that Pound and Yeats lived and worked closely together, and the poems of *The Winding Stair*, finished at Rapallo in March 1928, reflect the resurrection of their mutual exploration of Noh theatre as well as the importance of the new Italy to Yeats's vision for the emergent Irish state.

Once at Rapallo, in February 1928, and settled into a hotel recommended by the Pounds, Yeats began to attend to the connexions between his physical and mental well-being. The previous autumn, he had read Daisetz Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series*, and that book seems to have inspired his holistic approach. Shortly after his arrival, Yeats wrote to Olivia Shakespear, 'Part of my cure, by the by, is to walk slowly, even turn my head slowly, that my thought from sympathy with my movements may slacken. If it does not I may become my own funeral pyre'.<sup>3</sup>

Yeats believed that his illness was due in part to his bitter state of mind. In 1921, under threat of civil war, he had written to Olivia Shakespear,

I am deep in gloom about Ireland ... I see no hope of escape from bitterness, & the extreme party may carry the country. When men are very bitter, death

ghosts. With "William" sitting there alongside of me at the café every day, what else could have happened but that William soon became quite visible and even audible, giving me not only most valuable tips on ancient Irish music, but also singing old Irish melodies (in a rather cracked voice, I admit) while I hastily wrote them down in my notebook'. (*ibid.*)

<sup>3</sup> *CL InteLex* 5079. At Rapallo, Yeats made a concerted effort to simplify his life, to the extent that the furniture ordered for their apartment on the Via Americhe, which they moved into in autumn 1928, was 'without curves and complications', while George painted the furniture 'Chinese red' (*Life* 2 378–80).

& ruin draw them on as a rabbit is supposed to be drawn on by the dancing of the fox (*CL InteLex* 4039).

In that letter he is referring to what he understood to be the Republican state of mind, but his correspondence from Rapallo reveals that, seven years later, he believed that he had been taken captive by the same bitterness. On 23 February 1928, he wrote to Shakespear,

Once out of Irish bitterness I can find some measure of sweetness, and of light, as befits old age—already new poems are floating through my head, bird songs, of an old mans joy in the passing moment, emotion without the bitterness of memory (*CL InteLex* 5079).

A letter to Lady Gregory the following day echoes, ‘This is an indescribably lovely place .... Here I shall put off the bitterness of Irish quarrels, & write my most amiable verses. ... “The Tower” astonishes me by its bitterness’ (*CL InteLex* 5081).

In April 1928, only recently having arrived in Dublin, he was eager to return:

When I get back to Rapallo I hope to write verse again, but no more bitter passion I think. Re-reading THE TOWER I was astonished at its bitterness, and long to live out of Ireland that I may find some new vintage. Yet that bitterness gave the book its power and it is the best book I have written. Perhaps if I was in better health I should be content to be bitter.<sup>4</sup>

But bitterness was a quality he could ill afford, and *The Winding Stair*, published by the Fountain Press in 1929, shows Yeats in the process of self-overcoming, exemplified in that volume’s ‘A Dialogue of Self and Soul’.<sup>5</sup> The dialectical logic on which the poem is based—and which characterises *A Vision*’s solar and lunar cycles—was dramatized in Yeats’s relationship with Pound. In *A Packet for Ezra Pound*, first published as a small book by the Cuala Press in 1929 and later placed at the beginning of *A Vision* (1937), Pound is represented as a mirror, both ‘the opposite of all I have attempted’ and the reflection; Yeats

<sup>4</sup> *CL InteLex* 5104, to Olivia Shakespear, 25 April 1928.

<sup>5</sup> He later noted in the commentary to the 1933 Macmillan edition, the poem was ‘finished the day before a Cannes doctor told me to stop writing’, *VP* 831.



writes of himself in relation to Pound, 'I too a revolutionist'.<sup>6</sup> The claim is unexpected, upending his familiar positioning of his work in opposition to Pound's and collapsing the distance Yeats attempted to impose between himself and the idea of revolution, in both the Irish and Russian contexts and as an abstract idea.<sup>7</sup>

In *A Packet for Ezra Pound*, Yeats includes a poem 'Meditations Upon Death', which explores the question of oneness, the truth that is achieved through the dialectical process. The poem was not published in *A Vision* (1937) and was later rewritten as two poems, 'At Algeciras—A Meditation Upon Death' and 'Mohini Chatterjee', which were both included in the 1933 Macmillan edition, *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*.<sup>8</sup> Lines from the part of 'Meditations' that became 'Mohini Chatterjee' relay these instructions from 'the Brahmin':

Pray for nothing, say  
Every night in bed,  
'I have been a king,  
I have been a slave,  
Nor is there anything,  
Fool, rascal, knave,  
That I have not been'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *AVB* 6; *CW14* 6; *Life* 2 381–82.

<sup>7</sup> In another passage in *A Packet for Ezra Pound*, Yeats implies a similarity between himself and Pound when he advises Pound not to join the Senate of his own country: 'You and I, those impressive and convinced politicians, that young man reciting "Eugene Aram", are as much out of place as would be the first composers of sea-shanties in an age of steam' (*AVB* 20; *CW14* 20). Yeats read Wyndham Lewis's *Time and Western Man* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1927; *YL* 1126) at Cannes before arriving at Rapallo. In Ch 9 of Book 1 (itself entitled 'The Revolutionary Simpleton') Lewis characterizes Pound thus: '... Pound is not a vulgar humbug even in those purely propagandist activities, where, to my mind, he certainly handles humbug, bug quite innocently, I believe. Pound is—that is my belief—a genuine naïf. He is a sort of revolutionary simpleton!' (54). The epithet resonated with the way that Yeats was creating a new structure for the relationship of himself to some of his closest acquaintances. See also *Time and Western Man*, ed. with afterword and notes by Paul Edwards (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1993), 37.

<sup>8</sup> Harper and Paul note that the annotated copy of *A Packet for Ezra Pound* sent to Macmillan as setting copy for *AVB* suggests that Yeats 'may not have initially intended to cut the poem': see *CW14* 301–2, n. 47.

<sup>9</sup> *VP* 495–96. See also *CW14* xxxv.

Yeats's phrase 'I too a revolutionist' illustrates his dismantling of dialectical thought and his trying on of different personae ('fool, rascal, knave'). In *Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series*, which was so important to Yeats, Suzuki stresses the insufficiency of dialectical reasoning; he makes it clear that Zen is non-logical: '... Zen mistrusts the intellect, does not rely on traditional and dualistic methods of reasoning, and handles problems after its own original manners'.<sup>10</sup>

Explorations in non-dualistic thought were key to Yeats's attempt to discard 'Irish bitterness' during his convalescence. 'I too a revolutionist' was not only a means of positioning himself in relation to Pound but also relates to Yeats's political thought. In his little book, *W. B. Yeats and Japan*, Shotaro Oshima writes, 'He accepted Zen in order to build up a positive philosophy on which he could depend more firmly than on political anti-British thought or enthusiastic patriotism'.<sup>11</sup>

Oshima's book has a little hagiography and a lot of proselytizing about it; nonetheless, it identifies the connexion between Yeats's reading in Zen philosophy and his attempts to come to terms with the failures of the Irish revolution. The question of 'revolution'—personal and political—is addressed explicitly in Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series*: 'For what Zen proposes to do is the revolution, and the revaluation as well, of oneself as a spiritual entity'.<sup>12</sup> This is a 'complete revolution' that is 'cataclysmic' for the self and for society. Suzuki writes,

<sup>10</sup> Diasetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series* (London: Luzac and Company, 1927), 256, YL 2033. Hereafter, Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*. Yeats's copy has marginal strokes between 120–44, while line 16 'Enlightenment' of 120 has an annotation in his hand: 'will | Daimon | pure act'.

<sup>11</sup> Shotaro Oshima, *W. B. Yeats and Japan* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1965). 1; Yeats inscribed a copy of *The Winding Stair* to Oshima, including lines from the poem 'Tom O'Roughley': 'Wisdom is a butterfly | and not a gloomy bird of prey'. In July 1928, Yeats told Thomas Sturge Moore, who designed the frontispiece for *The Tower*, that he often included these lines from 'Tom O'Roughley' alongside his autograph: 'I remembered when I got back that when I sign a book for anybody I put a line of verse very commonly "For wisdom is a butterfly & not a gloomy bird of prey". I used to write—in cheerful youth "As to living our servants will do that for us". Can you leave me space on that design for such a line'. The result is reproduced in *YA* 180, Fig 1.

<sup>12</sup> Suzuki, 217.

The growth of the organism called society is also marked with painful cataclysms, and we are at present witnessing one of its birth-throes. We may calmly reason and say that this is all inevitable, that inasmuch as every reconstruction means the destruction of the old regime, we cannot help going through a painful operation. But this cold intellectual analysis does not alleviate whatever harrowing feelings we have to undergo. The pain heartlessly inflicted on our nerves is ineradicable. Life is, after all arguing, a painful struggle.<sup>13</sup>

The imagining of society as a body like the self, which had to undergo violent periods of destruction in order to reconstruct itself, resonated with Yeats's experience of convalescence at Rapallo, where he remade his 'bitter' *Tower* images and where he reworked both the personal and historical cycles of remaking in his notes for *A Vision* (1937). The ideas encountered in Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series* lay the foundations for the far-right ideas articulated in later work such as 'A Race Philosophy' (1933), where Yeats writes about the inadequacy of fascism and communism as political structures because they are based on 'reason' whereas society is 'the struggle of two forces not transparent to reason, the family and the individual'.<sup>14</sup>

'A Race Philosophy' was written the year before Yeats gave up his apartment in Rapallo, but as early as the first spring that he spent with Pound in Italy, Yeats was connecting Ezra Pound to his own bitterness about Irish politics. For example, in a letter to Lady Gregory on 1 April 1928, Yeats writes,

He has most of Maud Gonne's opinions (political & economic) about the world in general, being what Lewis calls 'the revolutionary simpleton'. The chief difference is that he hates Palgrave's 'Golden Treasury' as she does the Free State Government, & thinks even worse of its editor than she does of President Cosgrave.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> 'A Race Philosophy', NLI MS 30,280.

<sup>15</sup> *CL Intellex* 5097. For a discussion of Yeats, Pound, and Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, see Warwick Gould, 'The Unknown Masterpiece: Yeats and the Design of the *Cantos*' in Andrew Gibson ed., *Pound in Multiple Perspective* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 40–92, 42. On Pound's hatred of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* and its consequences see Warwick Gould, "'Witch" or "Bitch"—Which? Yeats, Archives, and the Profession of Authorship', in Warwick Gould and Thomas

Like Gonne, Pound was instrumental to Yeats's creativity, and—as in his relationship with Gonne—their friendship was charted according to the constellations of the recent past. Before Yeats married George Hyde-Lees in 1917, he spent three winters living with Pound in Stone Cottage, near Coleman's Hatch in Ashdown Forest, East Sussex. James Longenbach's book on this period aims to show how it was foundational to major turns in both of their work: Stone Cottage was a seedbed for *The Cantos* and for Yeats's later esoterica, but it was also a breeding ground for some of the unfortunate excesses of [Pound's 1935 treatise] *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* and *On the Boiler*.<sup>16</sup>

The dangerous element of their relationship lay in what Longenbach describes as Pound's sense of 'the secret society of modernism'.<sup>17</sup>

The correlation of Stone Cottage and Rapallo also presents a contrast. At Stone Cottage, Yeats and Pound were secluded from society, but at Rapallo, they were at the centre of a coterie. Pound claimed this group as his own 'Ezuversity', but the letters and memoirs of writers and artists who circulated through the little seaside town reveal that Yeats was often the greater draw.<sup>18</sup>

F. Staley (eds.), *Writing the Lives of Writers* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), 173–90.

<sup>16</sup> See James Longenbach, *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), xi–xii.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, xii. Longenbach's catchphrase took its origin in his 'The Secret Society of Modernism: Pound, Yeats, Olivia Shakespear, and the Abbé de Montfaucon de Villars', *YA4* 103–20. But in *Stone Cottage*, he specifies that it was Pound who 'began to think of Yeats and himself as an artistic and social elite—a secret society—that excluded even some of their closest friends' (*ibid.*, xi). Foster is more sceptical than Longenbach, describing Stone Cottage as a 'quasi-collaboration': see *Life 2* 380. On Yeats and claims for 'Modernism' in other essays in this volume, see above, 3–37, 179–81, 202, and below, 499, 535–36.

<sup>18</sup> George Antheil remarks on Yeats's approachability: I had never so much as met a Nobel Prize winner before, and now, every day, I could sit down with *two* of them [Yeats and Gerhard Hauptmann] and question them on all kinds of little mundane matters, such as what they were feeding their dogs on, had they read any good detective stories lately, etc.' (Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 180), before telling the story of how Yeats [and, it has been claimed, George Yeats: see *BG* 416], Hauptmann, Pound, and others helped him to write *Death in the Dark*, a self-confessed 'poorly-written but honest to God detective story' published in 1930 as by 'Stacey Bishop' by Faber & Faber, on a positive report by T. S. Eliot:

It was not just the busy private sphere of the literati that marks the difference. Rapallo—albeit provincial—sat squarely within Mussolini’s regime, a regime with which, in its early years, Yeats seems to have been in agreement as much as Pound. Ezra Pound had imagined, on moving to Italy, that he might be literary advisor to Mussolini. Yeats’s relationship to Italian fascism is less direct but nonetheless troubling. In August 1924—the same year that Pound moved from Paris to Rapallo—Yeats quoted Mussolini in his speech at the banquet held in conjunction with the Tailteann Games. He proclaimed, ‘as a great popular leader has said to an applauding multitude, “We will trample upon the decomposing body of the Goddess of Liberty”’ (*Life* 2 265). Foster observes that the speech was ‘marvellously at odds with the general tone of the evening’ (*Life* 2 266). But is it possible that Yeats interpreted the Games—the Free State’s attempt to use mass spectacle for purposes of cultural unification—as being in alignment with the tactics of the new Italy? After all, in November 1922, just a week after Mussolini’s March on Rome, Yeats had written to Herbert Grierson, Professor of English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, ‘The Ireland that reacts from the present disorder is turning its eyes towards individualist Italy’.<sup>19</sup> The adjective is puzzling, especially with reference to a regime

see Martin Edwards’s introduction to the New York, Locked Room International edition (2016), 9. For images of Yeats and Pound at the Café Aurum, Rapallo, see *YA7*, Plates 2 and 3, one of which is reproduced in *Life* 2, Plate 11.

<sup>19</sup> *CL InteLex* 4020. See also Stanfield ‘Free State’ in *In Context*, 58. In the *Commentary on A Parnellite at Parnell’s Funeral* (referring to the poem that was retitled ‘Parnell’s Funeral’ and published in *A Full Moon in March* [1935]) Yeats writes, ‘In the eighties of the last century came a third school: three men too conscious of intellectual power to belong to a party, George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, George Moore, the most complete individualists in the history of literature, abstract, isolated minds, without a memory or a landscape. It is this very isolation, this defect, as it seems to me, which has given Bernard Shaw an equal welcome in all countries, the greatest fame in his own lifetime any writer has known. Without it, his wit would have waited for acceptance upon studious exposition and commendation’ *VP* 834. The connexion between Ireland and Italy was developed by Yeats’s reading in philosophy; he discusses Berkeley’s *Commonplace Book* in *Commentary on A Parnellite*, and in a letter to Sir Frederick Macmillan, introducing Joseph Hone, Yeats wrote ‘He wishes to edit Berkeley’s *Commonplace Book* and translate for it the only adequate commentary. The commentary has been published in Bologna by Mario Rossi [...] The

that declared at its outset the supremacy of the corporate state over the individual. In the *Commentary on a Parnellite at Parnell's Funeral* (1935), Yeats describes George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, and George Moore as 'the most complete individualists in the history of literature, abstract, isolated minds, without a memory or a landscape' (VP 834–35). In the commentary, these three individualists serve as a transitional phase between 'an agrarian political party, that degraded literature with rhetoric and insincerity' and a new phase, marked by the death of Parnell, when 'we began to value truth [...] We had passed through an initiation'. In light of the development of Yeats's thought, it seems plausible that his praise of 'individualist Italy' signals his belief that contemporary Ireland was undergoing another transitional phase during the establishment of the Free State and that the new Ireland might look for guidance from its southern European counterpart.

In the two years between the Civil War and the Tailteann Games, Yeats's gaze on Italy had hardly slackened. One of the notables invited to speak at the Games was Gabriele d'Annunzio, whom Yeats was clearly intent on hosting—so much so that he wrote to him personally on 2 July, just a month before the Games were held, because d'Annunzio had not replied to the organizing committee's initial invitation. In the letter, Yeats addresses him as 'illustrious poet', but like himself, d'Annunzio was also a playwright, a statesman of sorts, as well as an architect of his country's aesthetics.<sup>20</sup> In March 1924 (just a few months before Yeats's letter), d'Annunzio had been given the title 'Principe di Montenevoso', awarded in celebration of his short-lived seizure and dictatorship of Fiume in 1919. During the nineteen months that he governed, d'Annunzio had created the components of corporate performance that Mussolini would later adopt, namely, the choreography of the crowd (which D'Annunzio

*Commonplace Book* is of great philosophical importance. Giovanni Gentile begins his chief work with an account of it, finds in it the prophecy of modern idealism; but thinks what Berkeley published during his life-time but a compromise and a falling away'. See *Life* 2 732, n. 147.

<sup>20</sup> *CL InteLex* 4582. Lucy Hughes-Hallett, *The Pike: Gabriele D'Annunzio: Poet, Seducer and Preacher of War* (London: Fourth Estate, 2013), *passim*.

directed through call and response), the use of costume—the black shirt worn by Fiume’s Legionnaires, the ‘Roman’ salute, and the song ‘Giovinezza’ (or ‘Youth’).<sup>21</sup>

Yeats’s interest in d’Annunzio can be traced to the first years of the twentieth century, although he makes it clear in his early letters about d’Annunzio’s work that he was undecided on its merits.<sup>22</sup> Just why Yeats was so keen on his presence at the Games is indicated by two points. First, Foster notes that in a draft of the Tailteann speech, Yeats referred to the ‘industrial unrest which had nearly sabotaged the opening of the Games’. He quotes the following passage, which was omitted from Yeats’s remarks: ‘We have exchanged revolver shots for strikes, illegal violence for the legal violence of a small minority that has claimed the right to deprive of the necessities of life and health many thousands’ (*Life* 2 265). Although the passage was unspoken, it suggests significant parallels between the political crisis in Ireland and what Yeats perceived as an Italian solution. The (Italian) National Fascist Party, formed in 1921, had at its inception banned the right to strike, in reaction against the nearly two thousand industrial strikes and nearly two hundred peasant strikes of 1920.<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, while it banned strikes, the Party asserted the supremacy of the state over the liberty of the individual. At the Tailteann Banquet, Yeats cited Mussolini’s authoritarianism as a cure for ‘nineteenth-century liberalism’, and he proposed that the task for future generations would be ‘not the widening of liberty, but recovery from its errors: that they will set their hearts upon the building of authority, the restriction of discipline, the discovery of a

<sup>21</sup> Robert Pearce, ‘D’Annunzio, Fiume and Fascism’, *History Review* 64 (Sept. 2009), 24.

<sup>22</sup> At this time Yeats’s own ‘line’ on D’Annunzio was uncertain, as he was to reveal in the *San Francisco Examiner* on 31 January 1904, where he admitted he could not “‘make out” the [sic] *The Dead City*”; Yeats wrote, ‘at present ... I do not like to say that I do not like D’Annunzio’s plays. ... I do see most lovely passages in his work, but it will take me perhaps a long time to understand him as an artist that has influenced the whole of Europe’ *CL* 3 269 n. 3, also *CL IntelLex*.

<sup>23</sup> For the wave of strikes, socialist protests, and clashes with police, and subsequent attacks on socialists by Fascist squads, see Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (London: Penguin, 2008), 421–25.

life sufficiently heroic to live without opium dreams'.<sup>24</sup> Similarly to 'individualist Italy' the idea of constructive authoritarianism would be developed in the *Commentary on A Parnellite at Parnell's Funeral*. Recalling the Huguenot artists who designed tapestries for the House of Lords depicting the Battle of the Boyne and the Siege of Derry, Yeats writes,

they celebrated the defeat of their old enemy Louis XIV, and the establishment of a Protestant Ascendancy which was to impose upon Catholic Ireland, an oppression copied in all details from that imposed upon the French Protestants [...] Armed with this new power, they were to modernise the social structure, with great cruelty but effectively, and to establish our political nationality by quarrelling with England over the wool trade, a protestant monopoly (*VP* 832–33).

The vision of an authoritarian government as a modernising force—in the social, political, and economic realms—strongly reflects Pound's writing from the same period about the United States, especially *Jefferson and/or Mussolini: l'idea statale. Fascism as I have seen it*, which was published the same year as Yeats's commentary. For example, in that book Pound also looks to the history of his country with France, writing

Jefferson participated in one revolution [...] He tried to educate another [...] While fat Louis was chewing apples at Versailles, Lafayette and Co. kept running down to Tom's [i.e. Jefferson's] lodgings to find out how one ought to behave, and how one should have a French revolution.<sup>25</sup>

He compares Mussolini's plan for a group of advisors, one representing each profession or segment of the workforce, to Jefferson who 'guided the ruling class. A limited number of the public had the franchise'.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Stanfield, *Context* 58 and *Life* 2 266.

<sup>25</sup> Ezra Pound, *Jefferson and/or Mussolini*, 14, <https://archive.org/details/JeffersonAndOrMussoliniPound1935>

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 17. Unlike Yeats, Pound did not endorse governance according to heredity; he points out that Adams believed in hereditary government while Jefferson, having no sons, did not; Pound goes on to assert that Adams was the only president to have produced a 'line of descendants who have steadily and without a break felt their responsibility and persistently participated in American government throughout its 160 years' *Ibid.*, 19.



Yeats also invited Pound to speak at the *Tailteann* banquet, promising that he would be a 'guest of the nation', would see the Games ('probably a great bore'), the annual Horse Show at Ballsbridge ('about the only thing we do really well'), and would 'be present when I crown in the name of the Irish Academy certain books'. He teased, 'You will also probably be invited to certain country houses, and will be generally made much of, and meet everybody who is to be met, and have admirable opportunities for your usual violence and brutality'.<sup>27</sup> Yeats and George would offer to host no one else at Merrion Square 'in order that [Pound's] temperament may have full sway and exercise' (*CL IntelLex* 4567). Pound did not take them up on the offer.<sup>28</sup>

Yeats's speech at the Games, which expresses his ambition for the coming generation to 'discover' the 'heroic' life, points to his ongoing efforts, in the words of Michael Valdez Moses, 'to create a ritualistic, heroic, cultic, and anti-democratic form of dramatic tragedy from 1916 onwards'.<sup>29</sup> Essential to this new form was Yeats's interpretation of Japanese Noh theatre, which was the chief accomplishment of the three winters that he spent with Ezra Pound at Stone Cottage: he returned to Noh tropes and other images

<sup>27</sup> The communicators put Pound at Phase 12, characterized by 'intellectual ugliness' and 'violence', although this was also 'the phase of the hero, of the man who overcomes himself, who spends his life in oscillation between the violent assertion of some commonplace pose, and a dogmatism which means nothing, apart from the circumstance that created it'; see Catherine Paul, 'A Vision of Ezra Pound', in Neil Mann, Matthew Gibson, and Nally eds., *A Vision: Explications and Contexts* (Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2012), 252–68; 254–55.

<sup>28</sup> Pound may have initially planned to go to Dublin. A letter from Desmond Fitzgerald to Pound states, 'W. B. Y. tells me that you are coming over here for the *Tailteann* Games and that you habitually have trouble about your passport. I enclose notes which may assist you if any hitch arises about your passport. I am looking forward to seeing you'. Desmond Fitzgerald to Ezra Pound (11 July 1924) in Mary Fitzgerald, 'Pound and Irish Politics', *Paideuma*, 12. 2 (Fall 1983), 383.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Valdez Moses, 'The Rebirth of Tragedy: Yeats, Nietzsche, the Irish National Theatre, and the Anti-Modern Cult of Cuchulain', *Modernism/modernity*, 11. 3 (Sept 2004), 561–79 (562). Focusing wholly on the imperial (in Moses' words 'colonial') relations between Ireland and Britain, Valdez Moses reads Yeats's dramatic innovations as a 'surprisingly progressive and forward-looking critique', 563; the Italian dimension especially calls the 'progressive' nature of the form's politics into question.

drawn from Japanese culture in the poems for *The Winding Stair*, finished at Rapallo.

At the conclusion of their last winter in Sussex, and just a couple of weeks before the Easter Rising, Yeats had produced his first play for dancers, *At the Hawk's Well*. The consanguinity of these occurrences underscored the connexion between ancient Japan and modern Ireland in his imagination. The colophon to *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* makes the link explicit: 'Finished on the twentieth day of July, in the year of the Sinn Fein Rising, Nineteen Hundred and Sixteen'.<sup>30</sup>

The Noh form, like Yeats's reading in Zen Buddhism, was put into the service of his responses to recent events in Irish history, codifying emotions that were too raw and responses that were too personal or too controversial to be addressed head-on. As news of the Rising trickled over to England, with reports of the deaths of Pearse, MacDonagh, and others, Yeats was writing his introduction to Pound and Fenollosa's *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*. And so, Yeats's history of the Noh theatre invokes these new Irish ghosts:

These plays arose in an age of continual war and became a part of the education of soldiers. These soldiers, whose natures had as much of Walter Pater as of Achilles combined with Buddhist priests and women to elaborate life in a ceremony, the playing of football, the drinking of tea, and all great events of state, becoming a ritual (*CNPJ* xvii).

His introduction anticipates a sustained confluence of Irish history and Japanese tradition in his writing:

... it pleases me to think that I am working for my own country. Perhaps some day a play in the form I am adapting for European purposes shall awake once more, whether in Gaelic or in English, under the slope of Slieve-na-mon or Croagh Patrick ancient memories; for this form has no need of scenery that runs away with money nor of a theatre-building.<sup>31</sup> (*CNPJ* xix)

<sup>30</sup> *Certain Noble Plays of Japan: From the Manuscripts of Ernest Fenollosa, Chosen and Finished by Ezra Pound, with an Introduction by William Butler Yeats* (Churchtown: Dundrum, 1916), [51]. Hereafter *CNPJ*.

<sup>31</sup> The actual theatre building was very much on his mind, as made clear in a letter to his sister Lolly, at Cuala: 'I am writing for news of the Abbey & shall not go over unless it has been burned or badly damaged. There is nothing to be done

This anticipates *The Dreaming of the Bones* (1919), Yeats's play about the Easter Rising, in which *Nishikigi*—the first of Pound and Fenollosa's translations in *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*—is combined with the legend of Diarmuid and Dervorgilla and which is set neither at Slieve-na-mon nor Croagh Patrick, but almost exactly at their midpoint, near the tower Thoor Ballylee.<sup>32</sup>

*The Dreaming of the Bones* is a subtle critique of the Easter Rising in that Yeats refuses to follow the classical Noh structure, which dictates that the play ends in harmonious resolution. *Nishikigi* adheres to the classical form and in its second part has the monk pray to save the souls of the tragic couple, who then appear to him and to the audience in a dream, showing themselves as united in the next world. However, Yeats deprives his characters of this happiness in *The Dreaming of the Bones*, instead emphasizing the penance they must undergo and putting them into an earth-bound purgatory.<sup>33</sup>

but do one's work & write letters. That 'introduction' [to *CNJP*] by the by is somewhere in the post on its way to Dundrum' (*Life* 2 46). For another discussion of the colophon, see Chris Morash, 'Bewildered Romance', *Field Day Review* (2015), 128–29 (123). Yeats wrote to Olivia Shakespear, 'My sisters books are like an old family magazine. A few hundred people buy them all & expect a common theme. Only once did I put a book into the series that was not Irish—Ezras Noh plays—and I had to write a long introduction to anex Japan to Ireland'. (*CL InteLex* 5836, 9 March [1933]).

<sup>32</sup> Longenbach draws parallels between the ghosts in *The Dreaming of the Bones* and Pound's *Three Cantos*, and notes Pound's similar adaptation of *Nishikigi*, which he marries with the story of Tristan and Iseult; see *Stone Cottage, etc.*, 232–33. The Clare setting is implied: the 1917 draft of the play was implicitly set in County Wicklow. For a discussion of the importance of the specificity of place and historical moment, see Morash, 'Bewildered Romance', 128–29.

<sup>33</sup> For a close reading of the differences between *Nishikigi* and *The Dreaming of the Bones*, see Masaru Sekine, 'Yeats and Japan: *The Dreaming of the Bones*', *Irish University Review* 45. 1 (2015), 54–68; 56 and 59; in Leonard Nathan's study, he argues that 'The subject of the play is not the experience of any one of the characters, but the spiritual life of Ireland as a nation', see *The Tragic Drama of William Butler Yeats* (New York: Columbia, 1965), 210. In Morash's genetic analysis of *The Dreaming of the Bones*, he notes that the first draft of the play extant, from 1917 (the only draft to differ substantially from the published text), implies that the temporal setting for the play is in the aftermath of 1798. In the 1917 version, after the unfolding of the cloth that opens the action, a character who is later named as 'Mac Dermitt' enters the stage. Morash, drawing from Guy Beiner's work on folk history, notes that the famous McDermott of 1798 is not a hero but a traitor. He proposes that in this way, through the workings

Masaru Sekine summarizes, 'Yeats took the theme from the Noh play, but rejected the Buddhist religious elements, which comes as no surprise, given the date of writing'.<sup>34</sup>

What is surprising, perhaps, is that Yeats continued to reject certain Buddhist religious elements, even after his study of Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series*. In Peter Nicholls' essay on Ezra Pound and the Noh, he illustrates how 'the Japanese theatre led to a fundamental redirection of Pound's early poetics', particularly in relation to the structures of time as Pound creates them in *The Cantos*.<sup>35</sup> The poems in *The Winding Stair* demonstrate that ten years after *The Dreaming of the Bones* was first performed, the Noh continued to be a means for Yeats to codify his responses to Irish political change. Furthermore, these codes were not solely the provenance of Yeats's drama but are also key to his reinvention of his poetry at Rapallo. To put it most succinctly, if *A Vision* gave Yeats metaphors for his poetry, then Pound and the Noh gave him metaphors for his politics.

Images from Japanese culture feature strongly in *The Winding Stair*. In early plans for 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul', Yeats noted, '[?No] only the sword gives truth—'.<sup>36</sup> Early drafts were titled 'Silk, Sword, & Tower', and in the published poem, 'My Self' appears with 'The consecrated blade upon my knees'.<sup>37</sup> This 'Is Sato's ancient blade, still as it was, | Still razor-keen, still like a looking-glass | Unspotted

of folk memory, Yeats is perhaps attempting to tap into the unconscious mind and to imply questions about 1916—and its 'hero' Sean McDermott—that could not be expressed directly (Morash, 'Bewildered Romance', 126–27). This reading advances Chapman's note in his edition of the manuscript materials that the line 'terrible temptation' is repeated, in several variations, through early drafts, echoing the marvellous ambiguity of 'a terrible beauty' in 'Easter, 1916'; see W. B. Yeats, *The Dreaming of the Bones and Calvary: Manuscript Materials*, ed. by Wayne K. Chapman (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), xxxi.

<sup>34</sup> Sekine, 'Yeats and Japan', 59.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Nicholls, 'An Experiment with Time: Ezra Pound and the Japanese Noh', 2; it should be noted that Nicholls incorrectly gives the title of Yeats and Pound's collaboration as *Noh: or Accomplishment*, which was solely the work of Pound and Fenollosa.

<sup>36</sup> See NLI 13,590 (3) 1<sup>r</sup> in W. B. Yeats, *The Winding Stair (1929): Manuscript Materials*, ed. by David R. Clark (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 23. Hereafter Clark, *The Winding Stair (1929): Manuscript Materials*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 45 and 55.

by the centuries' (*VP* 477). It is the return of the sword from 'My Table' the third movement in 'Meditations in Time of Civil War' (from *The Tower*), where the sword represents the perfected work of art, made possible by one family's ancient line. In *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*, Yeats had used the Noh as a means of justifying his belief in the 'accomplishment' of an inherited tradition:

'Accomplishment' the word Noh means, and it is their accomplishment and that of a few cultured people who understand the literary and mythological allusions and the ancient lyrics quoted in speech or chorus, their discipline, a part of their breeding. The players themselves, unlike the despised players of the popular theatre, have passed on proudly from father to son an elaborate art, and even now a player will publish his family tree to prove his skill. (*CNPJ* xi)

The perfected work of art is not only enabled by the family's tradition but also by the family's relationship to the state. In 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul', Sato's sword has been kept 'razor-keen' by

That flowering, silken, old embroidery, torn  
From some court-lady's dress and round  
The wooden scabbard bound and wound,  
Can, tattered, still protect, faded adorn. (*VP* 477)

The silken cloth worn by women of the Japanese court can refer to just one garment, a kimono. Here, 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul' clarifies the poem that opens *The Winding Stair* and addresses one of the most difficult legacies for Yeats of the Rising and 'revolution': the 'Two girls in silk kimonos' of 'In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz'.

In his postscript to a letter to Maud Gonne written just before his illness would make work impossible, Yeats noted, 'I have just finished a poem in memory of Con Marckowicz & her sister Eva'. His purpose for writing to Gonne was not to discuss the poem but to justify to her his support for the Free State's Public Safety Act, which would give the government extraordinary powers over individual citizens. His defence was mitigated by his interpretation of Balzac:

he knew [...] that we may judge acts, but individuals never [...] The great political service that Balzac did me was that he made authoritative

government (government which can, at need, be remorseless (as in his 'Catherine Des Medicis') interesting in my eyes—that is what I mean by the 'strong line', a line drawn upon the fluctuating chaos of human nature—before I had read him only movements for liberty—movements lead by lyrical idealists—seemed to me interesting.<sup>38</sup>

In his notes to *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*, Yeats was forthcoming about some of the influences on that volume:

I was roused to write *Death and Blood and the Moon* by the assassination of [Minister for Justice, and architect of the Public Safety Bill] Kevin O'Higgins, the finest intellect in Irish public life, and, I think I may add, to some extent, my friend. (*VP* 831)

Yeats does not, however, discuss his friendship with the Gore-Booth sisters or his anger over their fates leading up to and after Easter 1916. Drafts of 'In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz' show how Yeats mediated his judgement through the poem's now iconic imagery.

In late July 1916, just a week before Roger Casement would be hanged, Yeats wrote to Eva Gore-Booth,

I thank you very much for your most interesting account of Casements purpose [...] Will you permit me to say how much I sorrow over the misfortune that has fallen upon your family? Your sister & yourself, too beautiful figures among the great trees of Lisadell, are among the dear memories of my youth.<sup>39</sup>

In an early draft of 'In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz', these trees are present:

The summer foliage disappears  
Under the October breath  
Contagion of the popular breath<sup>40</sup>

As Yeats's work on the poem progressed, the trees were replaced by a single blossom sheared 'from the summer's wreath'. This has

<sup>38</sup> *CL InteLex* 5035, 3 October [1927].

<sup>39</sup> *CL InteLex* 3008. Yeats to Eva Gore-Booth (23 July [1916]).

<sup>40</sup> NLI 13,590 (1), 2<sup>r</sup> in Clark, *The Winding Stair (1929): Manuscript Materials*, 5.

the effect of condensing the landscape into a singular image and of dissociating the sisters from the trees that often signify Ascendancy power, as in Yeats's poems about Gregory and Coole Park.<sup>41</sup> The connexion between the kimonos of 'In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz' and the cloth in 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul' is intensified if we look to earlier drafts of the latter, in which Yeats experiments with the word blossom:

The pretty blossoms of the bough  
 Picture the red and purple of her heart<sup>42</sup>  
 still that embroidered blossomy silken bit<sup>43</sup>  
 ... thread of scarlet & purple thread  
 Blossom  
 Fallen between hand & hand  
     The the  
     An ^ Emblem of ^ heats blood gainst the tower  
     That  
 The ^ emblem of ancestral night.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, blossom disappears and becomes 'Flowers from I know not what embroidery' and then 'That flowering, silken, old embroidery [...]'.<sup>45</sup>

Helen Vendler describes 'In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz' as Yeats's "'aristocratic" elegy'.<sup>46</sup> In his introduction to *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*, Yeats declared that with what he had learned from the Noh he 'invented a form of drama, distinguished, indirect and symbolic [...] an aristocratic form' (ii). He continues,

<sup>41</sup> See Anna Pilz and Andrew Tierney, 'Trees, Big House Culture, and the Irish Literary Revival', *New Hibernia Review* 19.2 (Summer 2015), 65–82.

<sup>42</sup> NLI 13,590(3) 4<sup>r</sup> in Clark, *The Winding Stair (1929): Manuscript Materials*, 26–27.

<sup>43</sup> NLI 13,590(3) 1v in Clark, *Ibid.*, 28–29.

<sup>44</sup> NLI 13, 590 (3), 5<sup>r</sup> in Clark, *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>45</sup> NLI 13,590(3), 6<sup>r</sup> in Clark, *Ibid.*, 36–37; 48–49; *VP* 477.

<sup>46</sup> Helen Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007), 222.

The men who created this convention [the Noh] were more like ourselves than were the Greeks and Romans, more like us even than are Shakespeare and Corneille. Their emotion was self-conscious and reminiscent, always associating itself with pictures and poems. They measured all that time had taken or would take away and found their delight in remembering celebrated lovers in the scenery pale passion loves. (*CNPJ xv*)

The ‘self-conscious and reminiscent’ emotion that Yeats believed characterised the Noh is exhibited in ‘In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz’ where the ‘picture’ *is* the poem:

Many a time I think to seek  
 One or the other out and speak  
 Of that old Georgian mansion, mix  
 Pictures of the mind, recall  
 That table and the talk of youth’ (*VP 475*).<sup>47</sup>

The first stanza of the poem takes the sisters out of historical time, renders their ghosts as pure images, and places them in a scene whereby it becomes possible to address them directly—and to extend a measure of forgiveness.<sup>48</sup>

Absolution comes at a price. In ‘A Dialogue of Self and Soul’, the poet emphasizes twice that he is ‘content to live it all again’: the process of re-living will bring ultimate blessedness (*VP 479*). However, the shadows of ‘In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz’ must undergo a purification by fire.<sup>49</sup> In Yeats’s notes to *The Dreaming of the Bones*, he follows his Judwalis in distinguishing between the ‘Shade’ (or shadow) and the ‘Spiritual Being’:

<sup>47</sup> ‘In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz’ evokes ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’, with ‘That table’ calling to mind ‘My Table’ on which lies Sato’s sword, ‘forged’ before Chaucer ‘had drawn breath’ *VP 421*.

<sup>48</sup> Jahan Ramazani writes, ‘Because his elegies can shift turbulently from one response, voice, or discourse to another, Yeats sometimes frames these vacillations with the kind of static picture we find at the first stanza’s beginning and end’, and he notes that ‘The first picture gives an impression of stillness because it excludes all verbs’; see Jahan Ramazani, *Yeats and the Poetry of Death: Elegy, Self-elegy, and the Sublime* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 71.

<sup>49</sup> NLI 13,590(1) 4<sup>r</sup> lines 38–39 read, ‘Some great bellows to a pyre. Some [<sup>2</sup>greatnobel] bellows to a pire’; Clark 7.



The Shade [...] dreams back through events in the order of their intensity, becoming happier as the more painful and, therefore, more intense wear themselves away, and the Spiritual Being' [...] lives back through events in the order of their occurrence, this living back being an exploration of their moral and intellectual origin [...] The Shade is said to fade out at last, but the Spiritual Being does not fade ...<sup>50</sup>

While the poet anticipates an eternal future as a 'Spiritual Being' in 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul', the Gore-Booth sisters, like the traitorous lovers in *The Dreaming of the Bones*, are tied to an intermediary state. Indeed, in one draft of 'In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz' the word ghost appears: 'Dear ghosts return & strike a match'.<sup>51</sup>

As the shadows are transformed, the poem is also changed. The first stanza uses enclosed, or embraced rhyme, containing the image, holding it out of time and framing it in the imagination. ('Lissadell' and 'gazelle' enclose 'south' and 'both'; 'shears' and 'years' enclose 'wreath' and 'death'; 'ignorant' and 'gaunt' enclose 'seek' and 'speak'.) The approximate rhymes of 'recall' and 'gazelle', 'youth' and 'both', at the end of the first stanza, disappoint an interpretation of the image as perfect and complete.<sup>52</sup> The first quatrain of the second movement follows the scheme of the first movement, but then, at a crucial moment—when the spark takes hold—the poem moves into perfect rhyme:

<sup>50</sup> *VPI* 777–78. This is reformulated in *AVB*: 'In the *Dreaming Back*, the *Spirit* is compelled to live over and over again the events that had most moved it; there can be nothing new, but the old events stand forth in a light which is dim or bright according to the intensity of the passion that accompanied them. They occur in the order of their intensity or luminosity, the more intense first, and the painful are commonly the more intense, and repeat themselves again and again. In the *Return*, upon the other hand, the *Spirit* must live through past events in the order of their occurrence, because it is compelled by the *Celestial Body* to trace every passionate event to its cause until are all related and understood, turned into knowledge, made a part of itself' (*CW14* 164). This section, 'The Soul in Judgment' expands significantly *AVA*'s 'What the Caliph Refused to Learn'.

<sup>51</sup> NLI MS 13,590(1), 4<sup>r</sup> in Clark 7.

<sup>52</sup> For a thoughtful essay on 'Yeats's Disappointments' see Francis O'Gorman in *International Yeats Studies*, 1.2 (May 2017), Article 3, <http://tigerprints.clemson.edu/iys/vol1/iss2/3>

The innocent and the beautiful  
 Have no enemy but time;  
 Arise and bid me strike a match  
 And strike another till time catch;  
 Should the conflagration climb,  
 Run till all the sages know.  
 We the great gazebo built,  
 They convicted us of guilt;  
 Bid me strike a match and blow. (*VP* 476)

In *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*, Yeats writes,

my ears are only comfortable when the singer sings as if mere speech had taken fire, when he appears to have passed into song almost imperceptibly.<sup>53</sup>

The carrying over of the enclosed, approximate rhyme-word ‘beautiful’ into the second movement enables this shift and holds back the pace of the poem until ‘match’ and ‘catch’ ignite the metre, letting the last five lines ‘climb’ and ‘run’ to their enigmatic conclusion.

Helen Vendler and Roy Foster have both emphasized that an early draft of the poem reads, ‘I the great gazebo built | They brought home to me the guilt’.<sup>54</sup> The revision is expansive, including the Gore-Booth sisters among the Ascendancy at large, retracting the personal attack, and changing the entire tone of the poem. Vendler comments on Yeats’s use of roman numerals in this poem and ‘Sailing to Byzantium’ as a means of changing location, the speaker’s ‘station’.<sup>55</sup> This occurs in the finished poem with the speaker’s ‘crossing over’ into the realm of the dead in the poem’s second part.<sup>56</sup> The change in the poem’s directional orientation is also an important part of the revision.

<sup>53</sup> *CNPJ* iii. Yeats wrote to Poppy Guthrie on 29 April [1932], ‘No—no—no I could not write about Plunkett. I might as well sing the mutilation table [...] Certain necessary & admirable men remain unsung while pretty women—& Con Gore-Booth & her sister Eva were once very pretty—are sung even when neither necessary nor admirable. If I tried to write about Plunkett I would write nothing but rhetoric. A good poem is an accident, begotten <in> through original sin’ *CL InteLex* 5658.

<sup>54</sup> Clark, *The Winding Stair (1929): Manuscript Materials*, 7; Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 230; *Life* 2 348–50.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

Whereas the early draft moves from the exterior ‘great gazebo’ to the interior ‘home’, the published version of the poem refrains from turning inward and moves even further out into the metaphysical question of collective guilt, in which the poet acknowledges his share. Jahan Ramazani has written about the ending, ‘the coda reassembles a coherent persona and voice. Reconstructed, the poet is now ready to embrace his own fundamental guilt’.<sup>57</sup> This is borne out in the self-forgiveness of ‘A Dialogue of Self and Soul’.<sup>58</sup>

The idea of reconstruction is important to understanding the role that the specific construction of the gazebo plays. It appears in the last stanza, and it is the only time that the word is used in Yeats’s poetry or drama. Vendler reads the gazebo as the “folly” of Anglo-Irish culture in an Ireland that was bound to expel their gazebo-architecture in favour of its Catholic and (in Yeats’s view) materialistic constructions’.<sup>59</sup> Gazebos were fashionable ornaments in Georgian gardens, but the structure originated in Asia, and it was brought into the English language by an eighteenth-century book on Chinese architecture.<sup>60</sup> In its present-day usage, gazebo refers almost exclusively to the building found in outdoor spaces, but its earliest meaning was ‘A turret or lantern on the roof of a house, usually for the purpose of commanding an extensive prospect; also, a similar erection in a garden or pleasure ground; a belvedere or lookout’.<sup>61</sup> It is a matter of debate whether Yeats’s usage embraces this belvedere aspect of the term, which, in twentieth century uses is clearly distinguished from a belvedere or other kind of pavilion, and from lantern, or lookout.

‘In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz’ provides a bridge between *The Tower* of 1928 and the new volume that the

<sup>57</sup> Ramazani, *Yeats and the Poetry of Death*, 74.

<sup>58</sup> Vendler reads the repetition of the image ‘Two girls in silk kimonos’ and the echo of ‘bid me strike a match’ as ‘generating a wreath, a circlet’; see *Our Secret Discipline*, 226. Yeats’s hints of circularity gesture to the cycles of rebirth and remaking dealt with in ‘A Dialogue of Self and Soul’.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>60</sup> The *OED* cites W. Halfpenny and J. Halfpenny’s *New Designs Chinese Bridges* (1752) as the first usage.

<sup>61</sup> *OED*, n. 1.

poem introduces.<sup>62</sup> In his notes to *The Winding Stair* (1929), Yeats attributes the image of the tower in 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul' and 'Blood and the Moon' to Thoor Ballylee. However, the Gore-Booth sisters, having rejected the Anglo-Irish tradition, cannot be accommodated in the image of a Norman tower. Nevertheless, Yeats connects them to an ancient lineage, albeit obliquely. The kimono and gazebo allow them to play out their drama in the afterlife as in the Noh theatre, even if the poet can only bear to take them as far as purgation, and, as in *The Dreaming of the Bones*, he withholds resolution.

While Yeats was writing the poems that would constitute *The Winding Stair*, Pound was also continuing his study of ancient Asian forms. In the autumn of 1927, he was at work on his rendering 'into the American language' of the *Ta Hio: the Great Learning*, a collection of Confucius's teachings and those of his disciple Tsang Tzu. Pound's biographer A. David Moody summarises, 'it all comes down to seven brief paragraphs which set out, not the abstract principles of good government, but rather the method or process necessary to bring about good government. The development of a certain kind of intelligence is the key'.<sup>63</sup> Pound translates the prefatory commentary of the *Ta Hio*,

The ancient princes who wished to develop and make apparent, in their states, the luminous principle of reason which we receive from the sky, set themselves first to govern well their kingdoms; those who wished to govern their kingdoms well, began by keeping their own families in order; those who wished good order in their families, began by correcting themselves; those who wished to correct themselves tried first to attain rectitude of spirit; those who desired this rectitude of spirit, tried first to make their intentions pure and sincere; those who desired to render their intentions

<sup>62</sup> In the notes to *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*, Yeats writes, 'In this book and elsewhere I have used towers, and one tower in particular, as symbols and have compared their winding stairs to the philosophical gyres, but it is hardly necessary to interpret what comes from the main track of thought and expression' VP 831.

<sup>63</sup> A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet—A Portrait of the Man and his Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007–2015), 2, *The Epic Years 1921–1939*, 74. Hereafter Moody, *Ezra Pound*.

pure and sincere, attempted first to perfect their moral intelligence; the making as perfect as possible, that is, the giving fullest scope to the moral intelligence (or the acquaintance with morals) consists in penetrating and getting to the bottom of the principles (motivations) of actions.<sup>64</sup>

During their seasons at Rapallo, Pound turned to the ever-increasing particularities of good government, and Yeats set out on a course of deeper and deeper spiritual pursuit—a pursuit that found form in his attempt to discern ‘the principles (motivations) of [human] actions’, in *A Vision* (1937). Just as they spent three winters at Stone Cottage with the Noh, Yeats and Pound found common ground at Rapallo through their mutual study of ancient Eastern philosophy and forms. Eastern aesthetics permeate deeply into Yeats’s poetry and *A Vision*, where he describes Rapallo as a place evocative of ‘some Chinese painting’ (*AVB* 3; *CW14* 3). The subtle similarities between Yeats’s *Commentary on a Parnellite* and Pound’s *Jefferson and/or Mussolini*, both published in 1935 at the end of their time together at Rapallo, illustrate the proximity of their politics. Crucially, these politics were articulated not only in Yeats and Pound’s visions of the ‘new Italy’ but also by their interpretation of Zen and Confucian philosophy. Suzuki’s *Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series* was instrumental to the development of Yeats’s right-wing views, since it conceives of the state as a spiritual entity and emphasises the necessity of the cataclysmic destruction of society, ideas also at the core of the Italian fascist

<sup>64</sup> Ezra Pound, *Ta Hio: the Great Learning* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1928), 8 (also available at <http://thecantosproject.ed.ac.uk/index.php/canto-xiii/xiii-sources/228-ta-hio-translated-by-ezra-pound-1928>). In Pound’s *Confucius: The Great Digest & Unwobbling Pivot* (New York: New Directions, 1951), Pound replaces ‘princes’ with ‘men of old’, eliminates the more mystical overtone of divine wisdom (‘receive[d] from the sky’) and introduces the verb ‘disciplined’: ‘The men of old wanting to clarify and diffuse throughout the empire that light which comes from looking straight into the heart and then acting, first set up good government in their own states; wanting good government in their states, they first established order in their own families; wanting order in the home, they first disciplined themselves; desiring self-discipline they rectified their own hearts; and wanting to rectify their hearts, they sought precise verbal definitions of their own inarticulate thoughts; wishing to attain precise verbal definitions, they set to extend their knowledge to the utmost. This completion of knowledge is rooted in sorting things into organic categories’ quoted in Moody, *Ezra Pound*, 2, 75.

regime, which Yeats was observing from abroad through reports of d'Annunzio and Mussolini's activities and, after February 1928, first-hand in Italy. The dangerous confraternity of such unlikely schools of thought is illustrated in Pound's gift to Yeats, in the winter of 1928, of his recently published *Ta Hio*, which Pound inscribed, 'To Wm. 'Apy noo year 1929 wif' opes of enlightenment EP'.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> YL 1633.



## W. B. Yeats and the Problem of Belief<sup>1</sup>

Catherine E. Paul

W. B. YEATS'S READERS HAVE LONG WONDERED whether he could possibly believe in what is strangest in his work. When George Russell (AE) first reviewed Yeats's essay introducing *A Vision*, he highlighted the

collaboration between the dreaming consciousness of his wife and his own, with possibly other entities not of this plane of being. The poet speaks of them as if he believed they were external to consciousness, but when we enter into the dream world there is a dramatic sundering of the ego, and while we dream we are persuaded of the existence of many people which, when we wake, we feel were only part of our own protean nature. I do not suggest that these philosophic entities who communicated to the poet and his wife the substance of *The Vision* may be simply some submerged part of the soul, because I am skeptical of the possibility. I merely say that the poet has not given me enough material to decide.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [cpaul@clermson.edu](mailto:cpaul@clermson.edu)? Quite apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

<sup>2</sup> G. W. Russell (AE), 'A Packet for Ezra Pound: AE Reviews W. B. Yeats's Latest Book', *The Living Age*, 337. 4347 (1 October 1929), 187; quoted in *CW14* xxxv.



AE's comments purport to suspend judgment, but by suggesting what he claims not to suggest, he gives voice to doubt about Yeats's claims for the origin of *A Vision*. AE was hardly alone: questions, concerns, doubts, and often dismissals appear in most contemporary writings about the Yeatses' long mediumistic experimentation and *A Vision*.<sup>3</sup>

This essay addresses not *whether* Yeats believed in what he describes, but rather *how* Yeats believed and what that belief enables. To consider this question, I focus primarily on several versions of the paragraph with which he closes his 'Introduction to *A Vision*', an essay that first appeared in print in *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (1929) and then in the revised version of *A Vision* (1937). In this paragraph, Yeats foregrounds the question of whether he believes in what he has written in *A Vision*, and his shifting answer and the metaphors through which he offers that answer reveal his changing sense of what it means to believe in phenomena that so many approach with scepticism. That Yeats revised this paragraph so many times and in such extensive manner shows how complex he finds the problem of belief to be.

'Believe' can encompass a range of meanings, but here I focus on two. First, it can mean to have confidence or faith, and specifically to have religious faith. This intransitive meaning expresses a state that *is* or *is not*, that either happens or does not. This kind of belief occurs only rarely in Yeats's writings on his engagement with the supernatural. 'To believe' can also have a transitive sense, meaning to give intellectual assent to something, or to give credence to something. Giving assent is a decision, a choice, a commitment, a willingness to go along with something and see what it reveals or enables.

These two kinds of belief—that which is a given versus that which is a choice—matter to Yeats's engagement with the supernatural. He opens his 1901 essay 'Magic' with an unusually definitive statement: 'I believe in the practice and philosophy of what we have agreed to call magic, in what I must call the evocation of spirits, though I do not know what they are, in the power of creating magical illusions,

<sup>3</sup> See *CW14* xxxv–xxxvi and xli–xlii.

in the visions of truth in the depths of the mind when the eyes are closed ...' (*E&I* 28). This statement has all the certainty of a credo. Yeats claims faith as an underlying assumption, clarifying that the exploration therein is not academic but invested. Granted, his credo is modified by moments of uncertainty and caution—'what we have agreed to call magic', and 'what I must call the evocation of spirits, though I do not know what they are'. Still: this opening sets the stage for an essay in which, readers are told, questions of belief or doubt will play no part, because faith *is*. The kind of belief expressed in 'Magic' is rare in Yeats's writings.

The kind of belief that involves consent, however, allowed Yeats to experiment with modes of exploration that many of his readers still find dubious. In his 'Introduction to *A Vision*', Yeats tells the story of his and George Yeats's long mediumistic experience, through automatic script and other methods, with the spirit beings who revealed the system of *A Vision*. Yeats closes this essay with a paragraph addressing the question of his belief in the elaborate system of *A Vision*—a system that he calls crucial to nearly all of his mature poetry. Imagining doubt allows Yeats to ponder different kinds of belief and their significance to his work. This passage was heavily revised at every draft state, and even between the publication of *A Packet for Ezra Pound*, attesting to its importance to Yeats's presentation of his strange system, and his complicated thinking about belief.

The earliest version I have found appears in the Rapallo B notebook:

Sometimes I have asked my self do I believe all this book, or only some part of it for tho I believe different parts with different degrees or do some parts of it sound certain & some parts probably, & I always find myself loth to answer. ~~What I write in future, will~~ This book has filled my imagination for so many years, that I can never imagine myself reading or any studying anything, without in some [way] relating it, or incorporating it with what is here, & yet I do not want to answer because what ever else it is may be it is a dream. A single thought has expressed in it self as if it were a work of art, whether man or Centaur, & I have tested each detail of its relation to the whole, each completed movement, by its reflection of the whole; & though[h] I am always conscious that there is a unity beyond that whole I

have found, a smokeless flame that I cannot reach, & the value of this single [implied 'thought' as above], & therefore of the whole, was in the daimon, which I can express but cannot judge.<sup>4</sup>

Whereas all later versions of this paragraph begin 'Some will ask if I believe ...', this version begins with Yeats's own self-questioning, demonstrating that the problem of belief is more fundamental than a simple response to reviewers or friends. His knowledge that the origin of his work is strange, lying in the realm of phenomena hard to explain and easy to doubt, has perhaps been present throughout the process of mediumistic experimentation of automatic scripts and sleeps with George Yeats. Already in this draft he confesses a difficulty answering the question of his belief in what AE would later call 'entities not of this plane of being'. As if anticipating that review, Yeats worries about his experience with his communicators that 'may be it is a dream', though he resists this explanation because this work has been so central to his thinking and writing. Yeats must keep open at least the possibility of this communication's reality in order to keep the poetry and prose rooted in it vital.

Yeats struggles with how to understand the relations and verity of parts and wholes, even considering this 'single thought' as 'a work of art, whether man or Centaur'. In evoking the centaur, he reminds us of his assertion in 'Four Years 1887–1891' that 'all art should be a Centaur finding in the popular lore its back and its strong legs' (*CW3* 165). In this way, he affirms his decades-long work's connection to popular belief and its affirmation of spirits. In his 'Notes to *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, by Lady Gregory' (w. 1914), Yeats includes the centaur in a lengthy discussion of 'The Faery People', whom he describes as 'without sin though midway between men and angels' (*CW5* 258). In that discussion, he describes the Abbot Anthony's encounter with a centaur, who gives Anthony directions to find the hermit St. Paul and also describes himself as 'a mortal, one of those inhabitants in the desert called fauns, satyrs, and incubi,

<sup>4</sup> W. B. Yeats, 'Introduction', Rapallo Notebook B, NLI Reference MS 13,579. I am grateful to Warwick Gould and John Kelly for assistance with this transcription, but any errors are my own.

by the Gentiles'. Yeats posits a direct link between these beings and 'the faery host' (*CW5* 261–62). The centauric image of Yeats's work underlying *A Vision* thus both is a mythic and unusual fusion of various parts, and it is rooted in popular lore's belief in the existence of beings 'midway between men and angels'—precisely the kind of beings that Yeats posits as the source of the system of *A Vision*.<sup>5</sup> These beings not only exist but can offer useful direction.

Yeats concludes this Rapallo B version with the conclusion that the value and form of the whole work 'lies in the daimon, which I can express but cannot judge'. Neil Mann writes that 'the dualism of human and *Daimon* is perhaps the most enigmatic and personal of all of the formulations, cutting across the divisions and categories of the geometry and representing the maverick element within the System'.<sup>6</sup> Present and evolving in such texts as *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1917), *A Vision* (1925), and *A Vision* (1937), Yeats's *Daimon* derives from classical and occult texts; in *A Vision* it functions as an anti-self and a greater self. In 'Introduction to *A Vision*' Yeats asserts that the 'philosophic voices' that spoke through George Yeats said that 'spirits do not tell a man what is true but create such conditions, such a[s] crisis of fate, that the man is compelled to listen to his *Daimon*', adding that 'the whole system is the creation of my wife's *Daimon* and of mine' (*CW14* 17). In *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, Yeats explains that 'the Daemon comes not as like to like but seeking its own opposite, for man and Daemon feed the hunger in one another's hearts', adding that man and *Daimon* 'are but knit together when the man has found a mask whose lineaments permit the *expression* [my italics] of all the man most lacks' (*CW5* 11). In *A Vision* (1937), Yeats writes that 'Memory is a series of *judgments* [my italics] and such judgments imply a reference to something that is not memory, that something is the *Daimon*, which contains within it, co-existing in its eternal moment, all the events of our life, all that we have known of other lives, or that can discover within itself of other *Daimons*' (*CW14* 141). The system is the creation of his and George Yeats's *Daimons*,

<sup>5</sup> See below, 'AFTERWORD'.

<sup>6</sup> Neil Mann, 'Dualism and the Origins of the *Daimon*', *The System of W. B. Yeats's A Vision*, <http://www.yeatstvision.com/Daimon.html>

as he emphasizes in the paragraph from Rapallo B. Stressing here the power of the *Daimon* to enable expression connects with his claim in the Rapallo B paragraph that in his writing ‘can express but cannot judge’ the *Daimon*. Memory, however, functions as judgment, and as such it has, according to the distinction above between expression and judgment, moved beyond the task that he has set for himself in *A Vision*. In this way, the belief he stipulates for his engagement with the spirits and the writing of his system, remains more in the realm of those spirits than in the memory work associated with human thought. Through centaur and *Daimon*, and even as begins with his own questioning, this first version of the paragraph affirms Yeats’s belief in the system, the work to discover it, and the art made from it as very much a part of the mystical realm from which they derived.

An early rejected typescript draft of the section reads:

Some will ask if I believe what I have written and I will not know how to answer because we all mean different things by that word ‘belief’. Who will understand me if I say that I must and should believe it because it is a myth? When we hear a sound argument we give assent, withdraw it and give it again as the argument shifts, but a myth has something sensuous and concrete about it like a house or a person that stirs belief because it stirs affection. I will never think any thoughts but these, or some modification or extension of these; when I write in prose or in verse they will be somewhere present though not, it may be, in the words; they will affect my judgment of friends and of events, and yet it is all a myth.<sup>7</sup>

At stake in this passage is not only the meaning of ‘belief’, which Yeats takes up explicitly, but also that of ‘myth’. He says he must and should believe it because it is a myth, but he frames that point as a question, ‘Who will understand me if I say ...’, immediately suggesting that even as we read we might misunderstand. He juxtaposes myth with argument, to which we give and withdraw assent. Myth, on the contrary, engages us on some other level than the intellect. We are brought back to the metaphor of the centaur

<sup>7</sup> W. B. Yeats, Draft of *A Vision* with various fragments, n.d., NLI Reference MS 36,272/5/1; reproduced in Catherine E. Paul, ‘Compiling *A Packet for Ezra Pound*’, *Paideuma*, 38 (2011), 46.

in the first version, and its powerful link to the beings described in Lady Gregory's *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*. These mythic beings occupy an important place in popular lore, and art rooted in that lore draws its strength in part from them and from the beliefs of those who hold that lore. Myth also arouses affection as familiar and perhaps beloved things do. As we might a house or a dear person, we dwell in a myth, with it. This domestic and intimate relationship, tangible and emotional in its *realness*, is not one about which to deliberate, but one to inhabit. Yeats shifts away from definitions to claim the centrality of these thoughts, but then, surprisingly, closes with 'yet it is all a myth'. He seems to move from 'myth' as a powerful traditional story or religious belief to 'myth' as a common but untrue story or belief, something perhaps told as an amusement. Even so, he suggests that *A Vision* relies not on its accuracy or verifiability, but on the powerful feelings it elicits, its ability to persist—and on his ability to dwell in them. I suspect that his frankness about these powerful feelings explains at least in part his rejection of this version.

Another draft is leafed into a typescript draft of what would become Book III of *A Vision*. This draft introduces some chronological confusion, as the typescript seems to build quite closely on the previous draft, but handwritten strike-throughs and additions may have been added at a later date, perhaps after the publication of *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (1929) with its very different version of the paragraph. In this version, the main text is typescript and strike-throughs and additions (marked here in italics) are made in Yeats's handwriting. The paragraph begins as the previous version did, continuing from where the previous version ended:

... and yet it is all a myth. There are matters that we must decide upon, if we are to liberate our energies and [we] *would* turn all our life into creation, though we have no sufficient facts and life is too short to judge the few that we have; *this is something that we must affirm against the peril of life and we encourage ourselves, we look back through history with the certainty that whatever man has most boldly affirmed the like has often come nearest to the truth as in the past those whose decision has been unhesitating seem nearest to the truth.* Has not Vico advised that we should distrust all philosophies that did *do* not begin in myth? The great tradition of philosophy, all that rigorous speculation that descends from Plato to Hegel sets before us *Lotze*

*affirms* the certainty or probability—for Kant only offers us probability—that he who has best imagined justice has best imagined reality, and in a work of imagination the ~~maker of myth~~ poet may ~~outwe~~ and the symbolist may *sometimes* outweigh the logician.<sup>8</sup>

Yeats describes allowing oneself to believe, despite the risks. This is a continuing decision, crucial to the vitality of creation. Self-encouragement over fear. Imagination over logic. Symbolism over philosophy. Affirmation over hesitation. And a vital decision, too, ‘something that we must affirm against the peril of life’. These are high stakes, even if he later crosses that intense statement out. Yeats situates his examination of myth, imagination, and justice in philosophical tradition, demonstrating a link between this pondering and his larger artistic mission to offer meaningful structure to reality.

In revising the passage, Yeats replaces ‘maker of myth’ with ‘poet’, affirming a direct link between the two—the poet is both a believer and a maker of myth. We are reminded that myth offers explanation regardless of verifiability, that myth is powerful story, and that we can believe stories to be true, regardless of whether they really happened. In that large, central crossed-out section, Yeats even suggests that it is the act of affirmation, of belief, that makes truth, though he then backs off that slightly, shifting from bold affirmation to unhesitating decision as the maker of truth. In this way he further plays with those different senses of belief—belief that happens by choice (the bold affirmation) and belief that simply *is* (the unhesitating or instantaneous decision).

Here is the paragraph as printed in the Cuala edition of *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (1929):

Some will ask if I believe all that this book contains, and I will not know how to answer. Does the word belief, used as they will use it, belong to our age, can I think of the world as there and I here judging it? I will never think any thoughts but these, or some modification or extension of these; when I write prose or verse they must be somewhere present though not it may be in the

<sup>8</sup> W. B. Yeats, ‘Book Four’, Typescript with MS alterations, NLI Reference MS 36,272/25/2. Yeats seems to have gone back to this version, for written at the top of the page, “A Packet for E P”—insert on page 32 instead of 15’.

words; they must affect my judgment of friends and of events; but then there are many symbolisms and none exactly resembles mine. What Leopardi in Ezra Pound's translation calls that 'concord' wherein 'the arcane spirit of the whole mankind turns hardy pilot'—how much better it would be without that word 'hardy' which slackens speed and adds nothing—persuades me that he has best imagined reality who has best imagined justice.<sup>9</sup>

Where in the draft versions of this passage Yeats pondered competing definitions of belief, now he wonders if that word 'belief' can exist in modern times, and whether he and his interlocutors even live in the same moment. Who am I to judge the world, he wonders, as if believing in something (or not) were an immensely arrogant act. He continues to consider the relationships among imagination, reality, and justice, but now he has eliminated the list of philosophers in favor of a return to poets—in this case his friend Ezra Pound and Pound's translation of works of the Romantic Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi. Yeats shares Leopardi's insistence on an 'arcane spirit'—a hidden spirit, with overtones of magic and esoteric knowledge. Yeats cannot resist criticizing Pound's translation of the Italian poet, but like Leopardi, Yeats grants belief to this 'arcane spirit', asking it to guide him as the centaur might. Most important to his belief are the actions it affords—the contents of this book underpin his thinking, writing, and judgment. 'Judgment' here returns us to the Rapallo B version of this paragraph and Yeats's reluctance to judge the *Daimon*. His embrace here of judgment demonstrates a movement from the spiritual realm of the *Daimon* to the more ordinary human world of memory, friends, and events. The justice imagined becomes the imagined reality becomes the written word, the poem and its translation, perhaps even the myth, all nevertheless beholden to this 'arcane spirit' and its will.

As published in *A Vision* (1937), the passage is different still, representing a significant shift in Yeats's description and disclosure of his idea of belief:

<sup>9</sup> W. B. Yeats, *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (Dundrum: Cuala Press, 1929), 32–33; reproduced CW14 325.



Some will ask whether I believe in the actual existence of my circuits of sun and moon. Those that include, now all recorded time in one circuit, now what Blake called 'the pulsation of an artery', are plainly symbolical, but what of those that fixed, like a butterfly upon a pin, to our central date, the first day of our Era, divide actual history into periods of equal length? To such a question I can but answer that if sometimes, overwhelmed by miracle as all men must be when in the midst of it, I have taken such periods literally, my reason has soon recovered; and now that the system stands out clearly in my imagination I regard them as stylistic arrangements of experience comparable to the cubes in the drawing of Wyndham Lewis and to the ovoids in the sculpture of Brancusi. They have helped me to hold in a single thought reality and justice. (*CW14* 19)

Here 'miracle' is something that can temporarily overwhelm but not fundamentally hoodwink the poet. Yeats suggests that his structuring of history based on important divisions is just that—a structure. It is not a reality of history or time itself, but something laid over it to try to understand it. Some of his 'circuits of sun and moon' he almost discounts as 'plainly symbolical', and even those that he retains as 'fixed' (he does not say 'real') he acknowledges as appealing to something not outside of reason but unreasonable—something from which he must recover. His geometric circuits are, he suggests, no different from the geometric forms of Lewis and Brancusi. They are forms, a part of the art, but not a mystical source of it. In short, he seems to be suggesting that there is not any kind of real belief here—just the structuring forms of art. What happened?

To answer this question we must turn to important precedents in Yeats's other writings. In *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (1914), Yeats includes many stories about his growing interest in things mystical, magical, and spiritualist, and here, too, he grapples with the difficulties of making supernatural tales convincing. For instance, he describes his uncle George Pollexfen's servant Mary Battle, who 'had the second sight'. Yeats introduces her abilities in conjunction with the limitations of her education: 'She could neither read nor write and her mind, which answered [Pollexfen's] gloom with its merriment, was rammed with every sort of old history and strange belief' (*CW3* 84). What she lacks in formal education, she makes up for in immersion in folk history and belief. This 'old history'

and 'strange belief' offer an alternative to literacy, and in a sense, to scientific or empirical inquiry.

In the same text, Yeats describes his reaction to seeing spontaneous and mysterious fires along the side of the road between Sligo and Rosses Point as 'doubting, and yet hardly doubting in my heart' what he saw. He continues: 'I began occasionally telling people that one should believe whatever had been believed in all countries and periods, and only reject any part of it after much evidence, instead of starting all over afresh and only believing what one could prove' (*CW3* 89). By shifting the burden of proof to the denial of these possibilities rather than to affirmation, he offers an alternative to scientific verifiability rooted in belief in the supernatural. And he acknowledges the power and possibility that comes from belief as a counter-argument to the pervasive fear of being tricked by 'old women in Soho, ministering their witchcraft to servant girls at a shilling a piece' (*Per Amica*, *CW5* 11). Almost as quickly, though, he undermines this argument, adding, 'But I was always ready to deny or turn into a joke what was for all that my secret fanaticism. When I read Darwin and Huxley and believed as they did, I had wanted, because an established authority was upon my side, to argue with everybody' (*CW3* 89). Are these statements of belief themselves dubious, or are the jokes a way to shield these beliefs from public derision? Or is each position taken merely an exploration in its own right, a willingness to play with positions and see what they allow?

As Yeats relates episodes of supernatural experience and mystical experimentation, he consistently wonders how such things as he has seen are possible. His writings about experiments conjoin with his philosophical readings, and he works through questions about the source of dreams, the possibility of a world soul to which all persons are connected, and the relationships between vision and understanding. And every so often he steps back from story-telling to reflect on his own discourse. For instance, in in the 'Hodos Chameliontos' section of *The Trembling of the Veil*, Yeats comments:

I had not taken up these subjects willfully, nor through love of strangeness, nor love of excitement, nor because I found myself in some experimental circle, but because unaccountable things had happened even in my childhood,

and because of an ungovernable craving. When supernatural events begin, a man first doubts his own testimony, but when they repeat themselves again and again, he doubts all human testimony. At least he knows his own bias, and may perhaps allow for it, but how trust historian and psychologist that have for some three hundred years ignored in writing of the history of the world, or of the human mind, so momentous a part of human experience? What else had they ignored and distorted? (*CW3* 211)

Following his own advice about doubting the doubting until adequate confirmation has been achieved, Yeats turns his doubt onto those who *do not* address the supernatural, suggesting that their ignoring cannot but reveal larger gaps. Modernity, represented here by the methods of history and psychology, he implies, has blinded us to important aspects of human experience. He suggests that the problem lies with modernity itself, not with those who possess the second sight, or have strange visions, or communicate with spirits. His 'ungovernable craving' for a deeper truth, for knowledge largely ignored, allows him an approach outside of acceptable discourses. And he thereby has access not only to those things that disbelievers 'ignored' but also what they 'distorted'. Their insistence on modernistic verification, their disbelief, become a source of untruth.

The way that Yeats believes enables methods likely to be rejected by those beginning from doubt or scepticism. Open to every means of seeing an unseen world and communicating with the centauric beings neither human nor angel, Yeats constantly changed his methods. He describes in *The Trembling of the Veil* that in the mid-1890s he had planned 'a mystical Order' that 'might establish mysteries like those of Eleusis and Samothrace' (*CW3* 204). He imagined that this Order's rituals 'were not be made deliberately, like a poem, but all got by that method Mathers had explained to me'—a symbolic system whereby 'the visible world would completely vanish, and that world summoned by the symbol take its place' (*CW3* 205, 162). Similarly, early in his first 'Sleep and Dream Notebook', dating from early 1920, and a part of the documentation of his and George Yeats's communication with spirits, Yeats heads a section 'New Method', explaining:

George speaks while asleep.

Sees herself dead. Sees many sleepers as if floating in air. All in dark except for a little light round flowers left by living. They by help of this light smell the flowers. They only hear & see, when living think of them, as dead. They are dreaming. (*YVP3* 9)

Here we see a deep investment in preserving the specifics of working method, opening up the possibility of replication, and acknowledging the need for and capabilities of unaccepted methods. In this way, spiritualism—often denigrated as the domain of those old women in Soho profiting from easily deceived ‘clients’—can generate different but still important (perhaps more important) knowledge. But first, a person has to be open to these new methods.

Most remarkable, of course, is the long endeavour of automatic writing shared by Yeats and George Yeats, the 3600-page thirty-month project of communication with spirit guides that underlies *A Vision*. These papers testify to the Yeatses’ insistence on belief, and they demand of readers a similar willingness to venture beyond traditional modes of reading and experience. In fact, according to draft of Yeats’s ‘Introduction to *A Vision*’ in Rapallo notebook B, the automatic writing experiment began with a ruse:

~~She [George Yeats] told me afterwards that she intended to amuse me by some invented message had meant to make up messages, & having amused me for an afternoon say what she had done. She went out of her way did invent a few lines, some names & some imaginary address when her hand was, as it were, grasped by another & this came in an almost illegible in disjointed sentence in disjointed sentences in almost illegible handwriting certain startling sentences disjointed sentences ....~~<sup>10</sup>

This moment that began with George Yeats planning to trick Yeats changes into the moment at which control was taken from her. A different person from George Yeats might have been so alarmed to have her hand grasped that she might drop her pen, resist. But her

<sup>10</sup> W. B. Yeats, ‘Introduction’, Rapallo Notebook B, leaf [83], NLI Reference MS 13,579; reproduced *CW14* xxxiv.

decision to surrender to whatever other grasped her hand enabled the exploration that followed. George Yeats's initial plan was interrupted by sentences that are not exactly disjointed, not exactly startling, and almost illegible, almost beyond the horizon of what can be communicated. That this forceful interruption—redirecting, repurposing—is enacted by sentences is itself interesting: the script is embodied, a conjunction of intention and product, something George Yeats produces even as it controls her. And so, too, did Yeats assent, to George Yeats, to the sentences, to the script and whatever or whoever dwelled behind it. Their decision to believe and their willingness to surrender enabled experiences, understanding, and writing otherwise impossible.

The Yeateses may initially have begun automatic writing with plans and expectations, but what they learned became the basis of a new collaborative work that would transform their relationship and Yeats's writings. They let the script take the lead, and they followed, as Yeats says one must, regardless of risk. As Yeats notes in *A Vision*, 'Those who taught me this system did so, not for my sake, but their own', adding in a footnote, 'My interpretations do not concern them' (*CW14* 170). The spirits had their own purposes, but by agreeing to follow, Yeats could come to write a very different and rich kind of poetry.

Let us now return to that passage about belief as it appears in *A Vision*. Given everything that belief has enabled, why would Yeats step back from belief, or even from a plea that his interlocutors recast what they mean by belief? This passage from *A Vision* seems to consent to doubt, saying that even what Yeats had previously identified as a powerful acceptance of being 'overwhelmed by miracle' was actually a bout from which he needed to recover. Was revealing the 'arcane spirit of the world'—as he does in so much of *A Vision*, *The Trembling of the Veil*, and his many essays like 'Magic'—an all too open revelation of something he now, late in life, believed should remain hidden?

With this paragraph, Yeats almost undermines the revelation of the spirit guides, calling it a literary construct of his imagination—a stylistic arrangement of forms into a work of art, which, like paintings

and sculpture could bring aesthetic pleasure. Or amusement. But let us not forget that in an earlier form, this paragraph used as its driving object not reality and justice, not drawing and sculpture, not a regaining of reason, but myth—that body of story that may or may not be factually accurate but which nevertheless contains truth. We must remember that Yeats wrote in one of those early drafts, ‘that he who has best imagined justice has best imagined reality, and in a work of imagination the ~~maker of myth~~ poet and the symbolist may *sometimes* outweigh the logician’. The power of art—and myth—to balance reality and justice is already important to him there, but he there insists that myth also reveals realms beyond the ordinary matters too, such as the existence of faery beings and supernatural entities doubted by empirical studies of reality. Where he now focuses on reality and justice—the idea that art provides order enabling a justice that disorganized reality may not reveal—he had previously moved from there to the power of the maker of myth, the poet and symbolist, to ‘sometimes outweigh the logician’.

What is hidden in the paragraph in *A Vision*—what remains arcane to all but the most initiated reader of his essay—is the way that Yeats, with his parable of belief and doubt, is concocting his own myth, and his own ritual into which a reader must be inducted—his own mystery ‘like those of Eleusis and Samothrace’. Through his series of veils, ending with the most veiled statement of all, in which he almost seems to render his own story an amusing fake, he has transformed *A Vision* and all it signifies back into that powerful and mysterious kind of myth, unwilling to reveal all its secrets even as it purports to do so. He has placed *A Vision* very much in conversation with the stories told in *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*. He has forced us to recognize that ‘plainly symbolical’ ‘circuits of sun and moon’ function as a powerful story, a conduit to the realm of myth. Indeed, this confluence should not surprise us, given the importance of prefatory stories in both this and the earlier version of *A Vision*, as well as his publication of his own fiction in a volume entitled *Mythologies*. He tells the story of the origins of *A Vision*, but he excises the admission that it began with an amusement yielding to a surrendering of control. Revelation must come from Yeats’s mythic

creation in his circuits of sun and moon. This does not eliminate the power of that story, and an ideal reader of *A Vision* must be willing to return into the materials undergirding *A Vision*, into the belief space that allowed the automatic script, into the realms of the supernatural that Yeats believed we are all too prone to ignore and dismiss. While we have long recognized that *A Vision* is an occult text, we must now acknowledge its 'Introduction' as similarly so.

Trying to determine whether Yeats believed in his spirit guides, whether or not George Yeats was inventing them or some of their messages—these questions become irrelevant. And to suggest that a poet who uses communications from spirits, belief in supernatural phenomena, and very real possibility of a connection between this ordinary realm and places more magical—to suggest as Geoffrey Grigson did in his review of *A Vision* that despite whatever else this poet gained from his supernatural instructors, 'quack remains quack'—is to miss the value and significance that belief affords.<sup>11</sup> Richard Ellmann calls Yeats's willingness an 'affirmative capability', emphasizing that Yeats demanded 'an art of affirmations, by which he meant positive statements which were the active expression of a man, distinguished from beliefs or ideas which were outside structures to which the man submitted himself'. Ellmann notes that 'Yeats considered it the poet's duty to invade the province of the intellect as well as of the emotions'.<sup>12</sup> We must push this idea harder, however, for we are discussing not poetry but prose that claims to be a straight-forward description of reality and belief in it, outside of the imaginative realm of verse. In studying Yeats's long exploration of the realms of magic, mythical beings, and communication with spirits, we, too, if we are to read *A Vision* well, must take very seriously the province of the supernatural—a province with which modern scholarship, like empirical science, is deeply uncomfortable.

<sup>11</sup> G[eoffrey] E. G[rigson], 'They Chase Had a Beast in View', *New Verse* 29 (March 1938), 20; quoted in *CW14* xliii.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Ellmann, 'The Art of Yeats: Affirmative Capability', *The Kenyon Review* 15. 3 (Summer 1953), 378–85.

An insistence on affirmation is easier when discussing belief in the context of philosophy or religion than it is in the realness of occult practice and supernatural beings. To engage with *A Vision* and read the automatic script, however, we must nevertheless persist into these uncomfortable realms. We must approach ‘myth’ as Yeats did, as powerful means of engaging the intellect, imagination and spirit. We must allow ourselves to believe, as he did, even if we are not interested in pursuing his methods of exploration, in order to embrace a world more complex than modernity typically allows.



#### AFTERWORD: THE CENTAUR AND THE DAIMON

The Centaur and the Daimon were long associated in Yeats’s mind. The connexion is not immediately apparent, but this extended note is intended to offer some evidence. Essential reading includes the serial visions collectively known as ‘The Vision of the Archer’ in ‘The Stirring of the Bones’ and its attendant notes by Dr. Vacher Burch: see *Au* 372 *et seq.* & 576–79; *CW3* 279–82; 484–88; and *Mem* 100–1; also see the extended analysis in ‘The Vision of the Archer’ appendix to *CL2* 658–63. The ‘Centaur’ vision in this episode took place on 12 August 1896 at Tillyra Castle. At the time of the Archer Vision at Tillyra, Yeats would have had access to one of Edward Martyn’s books: E. Curtius, F. Adler et al. (eds), *Die Funde von Olympia Ausgabe in einem Bande herausgegeben von dem Direktorium der Ausgrabunge zu Olympia* (Berlin, 1882), Plate XV of which shows Deidameia and the centaur Eurytion from the West Pediment at Olympia in a photograph by Verlag Von Ernst Waspruth, Berlin. See *YA4* Plates 1–2. I have seen the book with the remnant of Martyn’s library at the Discalced Carmelites house at St. Teresa’s, Clarendon St., Dublin 2. As Deirdre Toomey has pointed out, the image of Deidameia as ‘... fit spoil for a centaur | Drunk with the unmixed wine’ (*VP* 355) stayed with Yeats (see *YA4* 34–35 and 51, n. 13), and



perhaps we may conjecture that it was this image which brought on the Vision, with all its associations of frustrated love.<sup>13</sup>

By mid-1920, Yeats had drafted 'Suggested by a Picture of a Black Centaur' first published in *Seven Poems and a Fragment* (Dundrum: Cuala, 1922), and later republished in *The Tower* (1928) as 'On a Picture of a Black Centaur by Edmund Dulac' (see *VP* 442). Dulac's painting, 'the Good Chiron taught his Pupils how to Play upon the Harp', an illustration to Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918) had been the source (see *YA18* Plate 16). On 7 October 1920 Yeats wrote to Dulac that 'about two months ago I wrote the poem on the Black Centaur & forgot that I had ever written it & it is still untyped' (*CL InteLex* 3793). Revising the poem in Glenmalure whilst staying with Maud Gonne at the end of July, Yeats, had intense discussions about his revisions c. 31 July 1920 with Cecil Salkeld. Salkeld recalled them much later for Joseph Hone:

Madame Gonne MacBride smiled at me and said: 'Willie is buzzing like a bumblebee ... that means he is writing something ...' To my great surprise, Yeats, who appeared shortly, obviously preoccupied and absent-minded, asked me if I would walk up the glen with him. We walked, treading our way among boulders and small stones along the river bank for nearly half an hour in silence. By that I mean no word was spoken; but, all the while, Yeats kept up a persistent murmur—under his breath, as it were. Suddenly, he pulled up short at a big stone and said: 'Do you realise that eternity is not a long time but a *short* time ...?' I just said, I didn't quite understand.

'Eternity', Yeats said, 'Eternity is in the glitter on the beetle's wing ... it is something infinitely short ...' I said that I could well conceive 'Infinity' being excessively small as well as being excessively large. 'Yes', he said, apparently irrelevantly, 'I was thinking of those Ephesian toppers ...'

He pulled out of his pocket a very small piece of paper on which he had written 8 lines which had been perhaps ten times corrected. It was almost impossible for me to read a line of it. I saw only one phrase which I knew was obsessing him at that time—for Yeats was at all times a man dominated—sometimes for weeks on end—by a single phrase: this one was

<sup>13</sup> We need not follow for our present purposes the cabalistic explanation of the centaur's part in the Vision as provided by Dr Wynn Westcott: It is enough that the Centaur is an 'elemental spirit' (*CW3* 281) of the path Samekh upon Tree of Life.

‘Mummy wheat’—a phrase destined to appear in a much later poem—a phrase he never forgot.

That night I sat up late, long after the others had gone to bed, and finished a water-colour picture of a weird centaur at the edge of a dark wood: in the foreground, in the shade of the wood, lay the seven Ephesian ‘topers’ in a drunken stupor, while far behind on a sunny distant desert plain elephants and the glory of a great army passed away into the distance. Next day I showed the picture to Yeats. He looked at it so critically that I suddenly remembered that he had been an Art Student. He peered at me over the top of his glasses. ‘Who is your teacher?’ he asked. ‘Has he told you about values?’ ‘What are values?’ I asked. Yeats laughed his deep ferocious chuckle: ‘Do you really tell me you don’t know what “values” are?’ I said ‘No’, and waited for instruction. ‘Well, I’m certainly not going to tell you! Perhaps that is the beginning of a new Art ... “Values” were the bane of my youth’.

*When I walked out with him that day he made no reference to the poem, but talked continuously of the conception of the ‘Daimon’ which was particularly interesting him at the time: he also told me the history of his play *The Player Queen*, saying (perhaps with a faint reminiscence of Goethe’s *Faust* in his head) that he had spent 20 years on the play.*

Later that night, W. B. came down to supper with a perfectly clear countenance; it was plain the poem was finished. He did not speak throughout the meal, yet I felt he would say something before the night was through. When the ladies had withdrawn, he produced a pigskin-covered brandy flask and a small beautifully written manuscript: ‘Your picture made the thing clear’, he said. ‘I am going to dedicate the poem to you. I shall call it “The Black Centaur”’. ... It was then for the first time I heard those miraculous lines, one of which is:

Stretch out your limbs and sleep a long Saturnian sleep.

I was impressed and gratified. But when printed in 1928, in *The Tower*, the poem was altered; it was corrected and it was entitled: ‘On a Picture of a Black Centaur by Edmund Dulac’.<sup>14</sup>

Despite Salkeld’s implicit claim that his own (now lost) watercolour had inspired the poem, it is clear that it was done as his response to their conversations about the draft already based upon Dulac’s work.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See Joseph Hone, *W. B. Yeats, 1865–1939* (London: Macmillan, 1943 [1965]), 326–28, emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> On Salkeld’s ‘Leda and the Swan’ see above 169, n. 99.

What remains compelling in this exchange is what we might call the ‘suppressed association’ of Centaur and Daimon: Yeats, writing his poem about the Centaur, can speak only of the Daimon. The Centaur remains associated with the Daimon in Yeats’s reading and thought. He had found the story of St. Anthony and the Centaur not in his usual source for lore about the Saint, the first version of Flaubert’s *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, which he owned in the English translation of Rene Francis (1910; YL 680). Instead, he had been reading *Demonalitate, et Incubis, et Succubis etc.*, of the Franciscan theologian, Ludovico Maria Sinistrari de Ameno (1622–1701), first published in a Latin/French edition as *De La Demonalite*. Yeats found it quickly translated into English as *Demoniality; or, Incubi and Succubi. A treatise, wherein is shown that there are in existence on earth rational creatures besides man, endowed like him with a body and a soul, ... and capable of receiving salvation or damnation*, and he borrowed it from Ezra Pound.<sup>16</sup>

Sinistrari set out to prove that Demons—incubi, succubi, homunculi—did exist, and were ‘rational animals, capable of beatitude and damnation’ (173). For his ‘third principal proof’ of his ‘conclusion regarding the existence of these animals, in other words, respecting the corporeity of Incubi’, he turns to St. Hieronymus’s *Life of St Paul, the First Hermit*. In Section 77, In Section 77, 160 and ff.,<sup>17</sup> the narrative of St Hieronymus proceeds to tell the story of St Anthony’s journey to the abode of St Paul of the Desert, wherein the Centaur acts as a sign-post, before

flee[ing] with the utmost speed into a wood. The Holy Abbot kept on his way, and, in a dale, met a little man, almost a dwarf, with crooked hands, horned brow, and his lower extremities ending with goat’s feet. At the sight of him, St Anthony stood still, and fearing the arts of the Devil,

<sup>16</sup> *Demoniality; or, Incubi and Succubi. A treatise, wherein is shown that there are in existence on earth rational creatures besides man, endowed like him with a body and a soul, ... and capable of receiving salvation or damnation*. ... Published from the original Latin manuscript ... and translated into French by I. Liseux. Now first translated into English with the Latin text. With a preface by I. Liseux. Latin and English (Paris: Isidore Liseux, 1879). On Pound and Yeats’s use of this book, see James Longenbach, ‘The Secret Society of Modernism: Pound, Yeats, Olivia Shakespeare, and the Abbé de Montfaucon de Villars’, *YA4* 108–9, and 119, n. 10.

<sup>17</sup> William H. O’Donnell’s superlative notes to *CW5* 258–61 should also be consulted on this source, esp. nn. 11–14 (446–47).

comforted himself with the sign of the Cross. But, far from running away, or even seeming frightened at it, the little fellow respectfully approached the old man, and tendered him, as a peace offering, dates for his journey. The blessed St Anthony having then inquired who he was: '*I am a mortal*', replied he, '*and one of the Inhabitants of the Wilderness, whom Gentility, under its varied delusions, worships under the names of Fauns, Satyrs and Incubi; I am on a mission from my flock: we request thee to pray for us unto the common God, whom we know to have come for the salvation of the world, and whose praises are sounded all over the earth*'. Rejoicing at the glory of Christ, St Anthony, turning his face towards Alexandria, and striking the ground with his staff, cried out: '*Woe unto thee, thou harlot City, who worshippes animals as Gods!*'<sup>18</sup>

To Sinistrari, Demons are 'some kind of animal', 'no Devil[s]', are 'subject to death' and 'knew that the common God had suffered in human flesh'. As 'a rational animal capable of the knowledge of God through revelation' and endowed with a rational, and consequently immortal, soul' (165, 167, 169) a Demon is

capable of beatitude and damnation ... on the way, *in via*, that is, capable of merit and demerit; for if he had been at the goal, *in termino*, he would have been either blessed or damned. Now, he could be neither the one nor the other; for, St Anthony's prayers, to which he had commended himself, could have been of no assistance to him, if finally damned, and, if blessed, he stood in no need of them' (169–71).

In stating '*I am on a mission from my flock*', the Demon seems to Sinistrari not to be an 'exceptional and solitary monster' but to lead a 'social life' (171), and the Gentiles, in naming such creatures '*Fauns, Satyrs and Incubi*' are '*blinded by error*' (173).

Yeats had turned to Sinistrari when investigating Irish Faery belief, and speculating on the reading of Irish theologians accommodating their beliefs to that more ancient system. He had quoted from and paraphrased Sinistrari's passage in his 1914 Notes to Lady Gregory's *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* (1920), closely following Sinistrari's arguments as Sinistrari proceeds to 'investigate the circumstances' of St Hieronymus's account, and yet leaving himself free to speculate upon the changes brought to it by Irish Faery belief.

<sup>18</sup> Ludovico Maria Sinistrari de Ameno, *Demoniality; or, Incubi and Succubi. Etc.*. Transl. into English with the Latin text (Paris: Isidore Liseux, 1879), 161–63.

This tale so artfully arranged as it seems to set the pious by the ears may have been the original of a tale one hears in Ireland today. I heard or read that tale somewhere before I was twenty, for it is the subject of one of my first poems [‘The Priest and the Fairy’, *VP* 728–31]. But the priest in the Irish tale, as I remember it, tells the little man that there is no salvation for such as he and it ends with the wailing of the faery host. Sometimes too, one reads in Irish stories of hoof-footed creatures, and it may well be that the Irish theologians who read of St Anthony in Sinistrari’s authority, St Hieronymus, *thought centaur and homunculus were of like sort with the shades haunting their own raths and barrows*. Father Sinistrari draws the moral that those inhabitants of the desert called ‘fauns and satyrs and incubi by the Gentiles’ had souls that could be shrived, but Irish theologians in a country full of poems very upsetting to youth about the women of the Sidhe who could pass, it may be even monastic walls, may have turned the doubtful tale the other way. Sometimes we are told following the traditions of the eleventh-century poems that the Sidhe are ‘the ancient inhabitants of the country’ but more often still they are fallen angels who, because they were too bad for heaven and not bad enough for hell, have been sent into the sea and into the waste places. More probably still the question was never settled, sometimes Christ was represented as throwing them into hell till someone said he would empty the whole paradise, and thereupon his hand slackened and some fell in this place and some in that other, as though providence itself were undecided.<sup>19</sup>

Sinistrari does not speculate whether the Centaur which so mysteriously gallops away just before the ‘little man’ appears, is indeed the Demon in a shape-changed form. In ‘Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places’ (1914), the essay which had grown from his studies of the Daemon or Daimon, Yeats reminds us that

... we never long escape the phantasmagoria nor can long forget that we are among the shape-changers. Sometimes our own minds shape that mysterious substance, which may be life itself, according to desire or constrained by memory, and the dead no longer remembering their own names become the characters in the drama we ourselves have invented. (*CW5* 63; *Ex* 55)

Warwick Gould

<sup>19</sup> *CW5* 262, reference and emphasis added.

## Charles Williams and W. B. Yeats<sup>1</sup>

Grevel Lindop

AS TWO PROMINENT SYSTEM-BUILDING POETS, and the most significant poets to emerge from the esoteric tradition inaugurated by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Charles Williams and William Butler Yeats naturally invite comparison. Both wrote supernatural fiction and *avant-garde* drama alongside their poetry; both, in their later work, celebrated a symbolic Byzantium. They were alike too in being preoccupied by myth, to the extent of seeing themselves and their acquaintances as immersed in mythical patterns which they proceeded to weave into their poems. Twenty-one years younger than Yeats and dying six years after him, Williams (1886–1945) was avowedly an intense admirer of the older man's work; but the progress of their relationship was not simply a matter of the lesser poet's being drawn into the orbit of the greater. For though Williams would enjoy his period of greatest influence as poet, critic, theologian and guru during the Second World War, he carried with him from a much earlier date the considerable weight of the Oxford University

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [GCGLindop@aol.com](mailto:GCGLindop@aol.com)? Quite apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

Press, in whose London branch he was a respected commissioning editor. His effect on Yeats's career was small but genuine; though many details of their personal relationship remain tantalisingly elusive. The present discussion falls naturally into two parts. The first will examine the known and documented contact, personal and textual, between the poets; the second, more speculatively, will look at some parallels and similarities.

## I

We do not know when Charles Williams first became aware of Yeats's work. The son of an impoverished commercial clerk and part-time author turned shopkeeper, Williams was educated at St Albans Grammar School and then briefly, on a scholarship, at University College London. Family poverty forced him to leave UCL in 1904 soon after matriculating; but from 1908 a job as assistant proof reader at the London branch of the Oxford University Press opened to him a career which led to senior editorial responsibilities, including (at least by 1919) an important hand in piloting the famous 'World's Classics' series.

Williams began writing poetry whilst still at school, and a passing interest in 'Celtic' matters is indicated by an early though undatable verse fragment surviving in manuscript; though whether, if at all, inspired by reading Yeats is anyone's guess. The fragment reads in its entirety:

Who passes? Ho, the fight-worn, song-praised lords,  
The heroes of our ancient legendry,  
The royal riders of our land and sea;  
Ho, way for Fingal and the Fenian kings!<sup>2</sup>

An early notebook survives, also currently undatable, into which Williams has copied 'The Fiddler of Dooney' together with poems by Chesterton, Patmore, Meynell, 'AE' (George Russell), Rossetti, and others.

<sup>2</sup> Marion E. Wade Research Center, Wheaton College, Charles Williams MS 172.

However difficult to date, Williams's enthusiasm for Yeats was certainly intense. In 1928, writing his critical survey *Poetry at Present*, he would recall having 'seen Mr. Yeats at the old Coronet Theatre in Notting Hill, and joined in the tumultuous shouts that greeted him'.<sup>3</sup> At first sight this would seem to have been on 14 November 1906, when Yeats was in the theatre to see Ernest Rhys's *Gwenevere* (*ChronY*71). However, while the verse 'End Piece' to the chapter (for oddly, in *Poetry at Present* Williams ends his account of each poet with a poem of his own) recalls the hero-worship and confirms the year—Williams was twenty in 1906—it implies that the play was *The Countess Cathleen*:

O the crowded theatre, and the cries  
 shaking the dark air, if so loud a cue  
 might bid you speak! the tumult still runs through  
 my memory and my dreams, and still my eyes  
 behold you solitary, when the show  
 was done, sweet music making an end thereof,  
 shutting the sorrow and pageant of Cathleen:  
 was it a marvel I adored you so,  
 being twenty, a poetaster, never in love,  
 and you the only poet I had seen? (*PatP* 69)

This suggests that in memory Williams is conflating a first glimpse of Yeats at the 1906 performance of Rhys's play with memories of the poet's receiving an ovation during the London run of *The Countess Cathleen* at the Royal Court Theatre on 11–13 July 1912.

When *The Silver Stair*, Williams's first book of verse, appeared in 1912, subsidised by his mentors Alice and Wilfrid Meynell, its title page carried lines from *The Shadowy Waters*: 'It is love that I am seeking for, | But of a beautiful, unheard-of kind | That is not in the world' (*VP* 228). Williams's use of the lines was by no means casual: on 15 May 1912 he told Alice Meynell that he had 'written to Mr. Yeats's publisher' asking permission to quote the lines.<sup>4</sup> (And when

<sup>3</sup> Charles Williams, *Poetry at Present* (hereafter *PatP*) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), 57.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Williams to Alice Meynell, 15 May 1912. Meynell papers, Humphrey's Homestead, Greatham, Pulborough, West Sussex, UK.



in 1921 Alice Meynell considered travelling to Rome, Williams would compose two Dantesque sonnets 'To Urania, going to Rome', the first of which envisages her, not in the Holy City, but in Heaven, where, on being asked 'Who now among the English wears the bay?' he imagines her answering, 'Hardy and Yeats and Bridges; of the young, | Graves, Blunden, Abercrombie most renowned'.<sup>5</sup>

Direct contact, albeit minimal, occurred in 1915, when Williams was given responsibility for clearing permissions for *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse*. Unknown to the grandees of Oxford University Press, the editors, A. H. E. Lee and D. H. S. Nicholson, were both active members of Stella Matutina, the more magically-oriented of the two organisations which had emerged from the breaking up of the Golden Dawn in 1900; and the living poets assembled in their anthology, which extended from the fourteenth century to current times, included, besides Yeats himself, a significant number of initiates of the Golden Dawn and its offshoots, among them Aleister Crowley, Evelyn Underhill and A. E. Waite. Yeats's friends Edwin Ellis and George Russell also featured. The Oxford University Press archives hold a sheet containing a list of names, addresses and other details, annotated in Williams's hand (including 'W. B. Y., 18 Woburn Bldgs. W.C.'; 'Eva Gore-Booth 33 Fitzroy Sq. W.' and 'Aleister Crowley Works 1905 Society for the Propagation of Religious Truth').<sup>6</sup> The Yeats poems requested were 'The Rose of Battle' and 'To the Secret Rose'. Permission was obtained; Yeats's reply has not survived.

However, clearing copyrights for *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse* had momentous consequences for Williams (who was then 29 years old). It brought him into contact with A. E. Waite, whose *Mysteries of Magic* and *Hidden Church of the Holy Grail* he had already read as part of his research for an Arthurian poem. Williams sent Waite a copy of *The Silver Stair*, and was soon invited to join The Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, Waite's mystical Christian order (another strand descended indirectly from the original Golden

<sup>5</sup> Charles Williams to Wilfrid Meynell, 12 February 1923, Meynell papers.

<sup>6</sup> Oxford University Press Archive, OP 3457/PB022911.

Dawn). At the Autumnal Equinox of 1917 he was initiated into the Fellowship as a Neophyte, and he remained a diligent member of the Fellowship, taking one grade after another, until 1927, when he ceased, for unknown reasons, to participate. He never resigned from the order, and remained in occasional contact with Waite until 1931.<sup>7</sup> He never told anyone outside the order that he had been a member.

This was not the only consequence of his involvement with the *Book of English Mystical Verse*. As we have seen, the editors, Arthur Hugh Evelyn Lee and Daniel Howard Sinclair Nicholson, both belonged to Stella Matutina. Lee was vicar of St Stephen's church, St John's Wood from 1916 to 1926, and thereafter of St Martin's, Kensal Rise. Details about Nicholson are scanty, but he seems to have had a private income derived from some family firm. Soon after the anthology's appearance, and for some twenty years thereafter, Williams began to attend fortnightly meetings (after evensong on Sunday evenings) of a small group of men at Lee's vicarage. We have no details of what went on, but one participant recalled 'memorable hours spent in his study' and how Lee's 'love of contemplation and meditation carried him into a realm ... little understood by his casual acquaintances' (CWTI 64). Since Williams later displayed a range of occult knowledge certainly not taught in Waite's order; possessed a magical sword (which Waite's order explicitly forbade); and, according to Anne Ridler, 'always spoke of himself as having belonged to the Golden Dawn' (as did D. H. S. Nicholson, whom Anne Ridler also knew well);<sup>8</sup> the probability is that Lee's Sunday evening group was a branch of Stella Matutina, and that—whether minimally or with full panoply—they initiated Charles Williams. He later recalled attending Lee's gatherings for 'more than twenty years' leading up to 1939, which suggests that his first invitation came not long after the appearance of *Mystical Verse* in 1917.

The fact that Williams belonged, certainly to Waite's Fellowship and probably to Stella Matutina, naturally raises the persistent

<sup>7</sup> Grevel Lindop, *Charles Williams: The Third Inking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 55–63, 144–45. Hereafter CWTI.

<sup>8</sup> Anne Ridler, 'Introduction' to Charles Williams, *The Image of the City and Other Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), xxiv; CWTI 65–6.

question of whether Williams and Yeats ever met in a ritual context. This has been a fruitful field for fantasy. Williams's first biographer, Alice Mary Hadfield, informs us that 'How often the two poets met after a gathering of the Order [of the Golden Dawn], we cannot know, but they certainly met' and that '[Williams's] meeting with Yeats must have been enormously exciting, though not necessarily influential'.<sup>9</sup> These assertions—which continue to spread confusion—are made without any evidence at all, except for a photograph, taken in the open air, and with no identifiable background and no known provenance, purporting to show the two men together. However, whilst the photograph clearly shows Charles Williams, the man with him is certainly not Yeats and remains at present unidentified.<sup>10</sup> Yeats had, of course, no contact at all with Waite's Fellowship of the Rosy Cross; and A. H. E. Lee's Stella Matutina group, if such it was, seems to have met only at his vicarage. The sole link with Yeats is an indirect one, though easy enough to document. Lee's papers seem to have been destroyed at, or soon after, his death in 1941, with the sole exception of one notebook, now in the Yorke Collection of the Warburg Institute Library.<sup>11</sup> Besides notes on kabbala, astrology and other matters, it contains notes on Golden Dawn 'Flying Roll' VII (on alchemy). On the notebook's cover is a label bearing a request from Lee to his executors, dated May 1912, 'in case of my death or incapacity, to return it, unread, to Dr Carnegie Dixon, 7 Upper Harley St, London NW1'. Carnegie Dickson [*sic*] (a chest specialist as well as a member of, successively, the Golden Dawn and Stella Matutina) was the physician consulted by Yeats in October 1929 (*Life* 2 393), and who suggested that Yeats's illness (eventually diagnosed as brucellosis) was a recurrence of childhood tuberculosis.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Alice Mary Hadfield, *Charles Williams: An Exploration of his Life and Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 31.

<sup>10</sup> The picture follows p. 52 in Hadfield's biography. Warwick Gould and John Kelly have independently confirmed that the man shown with Williams bears no resemblance to Yeats.

<sup>11</sup> Warburg Institute Library, Yorke Collection NS32.

<sup>12</sup> An odd coincidence, as it happens: Charles Williams suffered in childhood from undiagnosed tuberculosis, whose after-effects many years later precipitated his death.

So Williams knew Lee, who knew Dickson, who knew Yeats. This is as close as we can come to linking Williams and Yeats in an esoteric context.

Meanwhile, occasional jottings in the diaries of Williams's friend John Pellow, civil servant and minor poet, indicate a continuing interest in Yeats's work. On 28 April 1923, Pellow was 'Glad to know that [Williams] finds Ellis & Yeats "elucidations" [of Blake, in their edition of *The Works of William Blake, Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical*] more obscure than the prophet himself. I certainly did so'.<sup>13</sup> On 21 November 1923, when Williams was in the midst of his first course of evening lectures, Pellow noted that Williams 'stayed till about 10.30, talking on many things—about the subjects of his Poplar lectures—Geo Moore, Gissing Yeats & c.'<sup>14</sup>

For Williams's actual view of Yeats we have to wait until 1930, when his critical survey *Poetry At Present* was published by Oxford at the Clarendon Press. The poetic 'Present' of Williams's title was perhaps a slightly faded one, though the book did contain a somewhat tentative essay on Eliot. Other figures discussed, in a chapter each, included Hardy, Housman, Kipling, W. H. Davies, de la Mare, Chesterton, Masfield, the Sitwells, Graves and Blunden. Hardy had died whilst the book was in preparation; others had been familiar names since the Great War, if not earlier. The chapter on Yeats is among the best. Largely an advocacy of what Williams calls 'the second Mr. Yeats, of him who began to write somewhere between 1904 and 1912', it gently reproves 'those who are satisfied with the anthological repetition of *Innisfree*, of which Mr. Yeats must be as tired as Alice Meynell was of the *Letter from a Girl to her own Old Age*', praising rather the 'insolence and passion and wit' of the later style as against 'the slight languor' of the earlier. The voice of the later Yeats, Williams affirms 'might very well (*mutatis mutandis*) be the voice of Landor or of Donne'—neatly referencing 'To a Young Beauty', where Yeats hopes 'to dine at journey's end | With Landor and with Donne' (*VP* 336). The three poets have in common, says

<sup>13</sup> Bodleian MS Facs. c. 134.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Williams, 'a restless mind, an insolent heart, a high and inquiring soul', but, a little surprisingly, Williams finds these qualities 'perhaps most obvious in his prose—especially in that learned and profound work which is called *A Vision: An Explanation of Life, founded upon the writings of Giraldus and upon certain doctrines attributed to Kusta ben Laka [sic]*'; though he concedes that they are also 'obvious enough in his verse' (*PatP* 57–8).

Strangely, however, given its publication in 1930, the chapter makes no mention of any poem collected later than 1921, the date of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, from which one poem, 'Easter 1916', is quoted in part. Most striking is its failure to discuss *The Tower*. The likely reason for this is that *Poetry at Present* had largely been written before January 1928, when Thomas Hardy died. Williams's Preface states that the book 'was made first by taking only those poets who were alive when it was begun—Thomas Hardy has since died' (*PatP* vii). However, there seems no reason why Hardy should not have been removed if the book had merely been 'begun' at the time of his death; and the Oxford University Press archives show Williams being pressed to submit his text in March 1928, and about to go to press in November 1929. Meanwhile, on 27 July 1928 the Delegates of the Clarendon Press had already discussed a new proposal logged as 'Mr C. Williams—English Poetic Drama'.<sup>15</sup> *The Tower* was published in February 1928, the month following Hardy's death. In view of Williams's usual method of working, which was to finish one book rapidly and move at once to another, it is likely that he had regarded *Poetry at Present* as finished since the spring of 1928, had now embarked on a new project, and was reluctant to rewrite (though the proposed book on drama came to nothing). His only gesture towards updating the chapter on Yeats was to add '*The Tower, 1928*' to the list of titles in the headnote.

Strikingly, rather than praise Yeats for modernising his style, Williams sees him as reviving the best qualities of Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry. Citing the line 'Was there another Troy for

<sup>15</sup> Oxford University Press archive, Milford Letters, Vol. 129, p. 410: Humphrey Milford to Secretary at Oxford, 14 March 1928; also, Register of the Orders of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, July 1924–July 1928, p. 232.

her to burn?' (*VP* 257), he comments, 'We have lost that particular great style since the Elizabethans and their immediate successors, except in Mr. Yeats's verse'. (*PatP* 59). Williams also displays clearly a fellow-adept's appreciation of Yeats's esoteric references, arguing that whereas the Elizabethans could rely on 'a still half-fabulous world' to supply them with 'inventions, myths, and dreams, for us all strangeness, all adventure, and in a growing sense all space, must be found within'. And if the poet's inner world is presented effectively, that is enough: 'Elements or elementals, both are credible then'.

Mr. Yeats, exploring the nature of the world, has come down heavily on the side of the elementals, and of all else that may be implied by a theory of the universe which has a place for such things. He speaks of them as simply as of 'Davies, Mangann [*sic*], Ferguson', and in the same poem. (*PatP* 60–1)

Quoting lines 1–4 and 17–24 of 'To Ireland in the Coming Times', ending with 'For the elemental beings go | About my table to and fro' (*VP* 137–8), he comments,

No couplet in literature has more emotional sense of what it says, or causes us more easily to accept it. The incantation seems to work without and not merely within; it is a poem, but it is also a charm—it seems magical not only as invocation of the Muse but as evocation of other powers. It is not without regret that one realizes that magic is not so easily communicated to the casual reader. But magic and the possibilities of magic are continually present to the thought of Mr. Yeats's verse, whether as subject or as allusion. (*PatP* 61–2)

Trying to define the 'poetic value' of 'magic and faery [*sic*], and those other old alchemical wisdoms in which Mr. Yeats has found interest', Williams suggests that it lies in

the continual suggestion of other possibilities than the normal mind is conscious of. Since this verse does not give us ... instruction how to work spells and practise the true alchemy and discover faerie kingdoms, we are not concerned with it as practical doctrine; it is but the effect of these continual apostrophes, invocations, and visions, to which we look. And so looking we must not omit one other vision which haunts this longing and desirous verse—the vision of a final attainment more perfect than faerie, the dream of the Rose, the Red Rose of beatitude and peace. (*PatP* 63)

In subsuming ‘magic and faery’ under the heading of ‘the true alchemy’, Williams reveals his inheritance of the Golden Dawn tradition, for which all spiritual practices were supposed ultimately to contribute to a spiritual self-perfection identified with the goal of the alchemists. And identifying this in turn with the ‘Red Rose of beatitude and peace’, he reveals himself as specifically an acolyte of Waite’s Rosicrucianism, in which the Rose represented the mystical goal of union with the divine. On publication, Williams sent copies of *Poetry at Present* to several of the poets discussed therein. Whether one was sent to Yeats is not recorded, but it seems likely. Possibly Williams hoped that his obviously knowledgeable discussion of esoteric elements in the poetry, and his praise of *A Vision*, would attract Yeats’s attention and even elicit a response. There is no sign that this happened.

A little over three years later, however, the two poets finally met. This came about because in October 1933 the literary journalist Montgomery Belgion offered to arrange an invitation to tea with Lady Ottoline Morrell at her house in Gower Street, so that Williams could meet Eliot. The visit was a success, and Williams became a welcome guest at Lady Ottoline’s London salons. Inviting him on December 12 (probably of the same year) she made it clear that she was relying on Williams—himself a memorable conversationalist—to put Yeats on his mettle:

I am so very glad you can come on Thursday, as Yeats can come. WBY was here yesterday, & I have never heard him more eloquent. It was like soaring through mansions on High! I had a few young men ... and they sat like starlings—open mouthed—but dumb! *Please* do when you come—draw him out. He is interesting on the topic of genius. Whether it is the glorifying and impersonality of the *inner* man only, or whether it has to do with observation of the outer world as well.

He thinks Shakespeare was *not* an Observer. (I think he was—everything!) Then another theory is antitheses (opposites)—in Life not Unity. I give you these tips so you [*illegible*] for him to talk!<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ottoline Morrell to Charles Williams, ‘12 December’; Marion E. Wade Research Center, Wheaton College, Charles Williams Papers, 383.

Though no record of their conversation has survived, they certainly did meet: when Yeats was mooted as a possible editor for the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, Williams endorsed the idea, telling Milford on 2 October 1934, '[Yeats] is 69, but when I met him last year he was vivid and entertaining'.<sup>17</sup> Three weeks later, on 25 October, both poets signed Lady Ottoline's visitors' book at 10 Gower Street,<sup>18</sup> and they may well have met there on other occasions, since there is no reason to assume that the visitors' book is comprehensive.

To understand how Yeats came to edit the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, we must turn briefly to the internal workings of Oxford University Press. On 2 October 1934, Williams, who had responsibility for the anthology, submitted to his superiors a memorandum, headed *L. A.: O. B. Modern Verse* ('L. A.' was Lascelles Abercrombie):

I saw L. A. yesterday. He was in considerable distress over the book, both personal and moral. It has begun to dawn on him (i) that none of his personal acquaintances are going to love him afterwards, (ii) and more bitterly, that he hasn't really the time to exercise a proper judicious choice, and that his reputation may suffer (he said, as regards both i and ii that it was 'going to take him a long time to live down'), and (iii) that he's hardly going to find time to do it at all. I pointed out the financial advantages, and alluded to our difficulty. But I was so convinced that we should gain little advantage from having him put his name, and so dubious whether his name will—now—help very much, that I consented—subject to higher approval—to relieve him of the lists and see if we can manage another way.<sup>19</sup>

Abercrombie had been working desultorily on the anthology for several years, latterly with the assistance of Anne Bradby (afterwards Ridler): hence the 'lists' of possible contents, of which he was now to be relieved. (The fundamental problem, whether or not Williams knew this, was that Abercrombie was in the advanced stages of

<sup>17</sup> Charles Williams to Humphrey Milford, 2 October 1934. Apart from the Delegates' Minutes and Humphrey Milford's outgoing letter books, all papers relating to the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* are in a single file in the Oxford University Press archive, OP702/BB/ED 004932, henceforth referenced as 'OUP *ibid.*'

<sup>18</sup> BL Ms Add 1040E: Visitors' Book at 10 Gower Street.

<sup>19</sup> OUP *ibid.*



diabetes.) Williams suggested two possible solutions. His preferred one was to pay Anne Bradby (as it happened, his own current *protégée*) a small fee to finish the book; alternatively, to entrust the editorship, and the provisional lists, to Dylan Thomas ('his own verse is physiologically modern'). Kenneth Sisam, the Secretary (and thus equivalent to managing director) of the Press at Oxford, liked neither of these plans, responding: '[A] name well known to the reviewers and suggesting readability seems to me to be essential'.<sup>20</sup> Replying on 11 October, Williams (having consulted Geoffrey Cumberlege, vice-president of the Press's New York branch) responded:

Names then.

Names are of two classes—(i) the greater (ii) the lesser. Of the greater, Cumberlege plumped for *Yeats*, and there is no doubt he would awe all sides. He is 69, but when I met him last year he was vivid and entertaining. He would have to be offered much more money down. I suppose (£250 or £300?), but he has a 'modern' manner, is admired by the moderns, and his name will last when he is dead. I doubt if he'd take him [*sic*] on, but I could write.<sup>21</sup>

He also mentioned Eliot ('too occupied'), De la Mare, and Aldous Huxley, as well as some 'Lesser names' including Herbert Read and Lord David Cecil. But Yeats was clearly the front runner. Milford gave the verdict four days later, assigning his preference to '*Yeats* of course—with a good bribe (if you can avoid a royalty)'.<sup>22</sup>

By 8 November, the Press was negotiating with Yeats's agent, A. P. Watt, who (Milford reported) 'said Yeats was keen to include Americans. [Cumberlege] approves, so long as Yeats will really represent them properly (And they have, we think, more and better of the Modernist lot than England)'.<sup>23</sup> Sisam agreed: 'If Yeats is willing to put in the Americans, that will help out a thin volume, and help also the American sales. ... But I expect there will be plenty of trouble when the actual selection of Americans is made: they are so very sensitive, and so is Yeats'. On the financial front, 'I gather your

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Sisam to Humphrey Milford, undated, OUP *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Charles Williams to Kenneth Sisam and Humphrey Milford, 11 October 1934, OUP *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Humphrey Milford to R. W. Chapman, 15 October 1934, OUP *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Humphrey Milford to Kenneth Sisam, 8 November 1934, OUP *ibid.*

suggested terms are to be £500 allowed for copyrights (anything saved out of it Yeats can pocket) and £250 advance on the standard Oxford book royalty. He cannot expect us to pay for the copyrights and to draw a royalty on it'. Sisam added: 'I think you ought to stipulate for an introductory essay. These are not a feature of Q's books, but an introductory essay by Yeats would be a selling point'.<sup>24</sup> ('Q' was Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, editor of *The Oxford Book of English Verse* and *Prose*.)

As an afterthought, Sisam advised Milford on 10 November, 'I think you should, in your first letter, tell Yeats that Oxford Books of Verse are relatively cheap books intended for a wide and not a fit and few audience'. He warned:

You are dealing with an editor who has himself passed from the popular to the very select audience. At Amen House I think you are all inclined to the highbrow attitude in poetry, so he will get no leaven of commonplace from the contact. Therefore, better tell him at the outset that a popular book which ordinary people can enjoy is intended: that, even if 'The Fiddler of Dooney' is inferior to his latest bits of hard and high thinking, you (at least in your capacity of publisher) expect him to fiddle. After all, Yeats has immediately reminded you through a literary agent that even the most spiritual poets need money. He could hardly be offended if you, in your capacity as publisher, don't take a loftier line.<sup>25</sup>

The contract was signed in early March 1935. Williams retained in-house responsibility for the book. Yeats communicated with him both directly and through Hansard Watt at the A. P. Watt literary agency. On 11 September Watt wrote quoting a letter from Yeats:

I have been working on the Anthology for the last three or four months. I went to London three weeks ago and read or smelt 45 books of poetry in the British Museum as I could not get them anywhere else. I have now completed about 400 of the 500 pages I am aiming at. I shall have finished the collection by the end of the month. I shall want a couple of weeks after that to look it over, put things in and take things out. One of my difficulties at the moment is that three books I want badly are out of print; if I can't borrow them, or get them from a second-hand bookseller I shall have to

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth Sisam to Humphrey Milford, 9 November 1934, OUP *ibid*.

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth Sisam to Humphrey Milford, 10 November 1934, OUP *ibid*.

pay another visit to the British Museum. I wonder if Mr. Charles Williams could help me, as they are on the list of books suggested to me by his firm:—

Isaac Rosenberg      Poems 1922

Coppard Collected Poems

Roberts      These Our Matins

Does the Oxford University Press want to publish for Christmas or for next Spring?<sup>26</sup>

But soon doubts about the selection were being aired at the Press, and raised with Yeats. On 24 October, He wrote to Williams:

You speak of my omissions of certain Americans; H. D. Robert Frost, and Benet. ... I am acting on the advice of T. S. Eliot who said 'don't attempt to make your selection of American poets representative, you can't have the necessary knowledge and will be unjust; put in the three or four that you know and like'—or some such words. I am taking his advice and am explaining so in my introduction. ... I am putting in all the people well-known on this side of the water through residence or accident, with perhaps one exception, that exception is H. D. I have known her for many years, known her and admired her, and it was a real distress to me in looking at her work after ten or fifteen years to find it empty, mere style. Aldington also is a friend of mine, but I have always known that if I did an Anthology I would have to reject his work, just as I have had to reject everything except one poem by Squire, a friend to whom I owe certain obligations. When you get my introduction you will find why I reject Wilfred Owen and certain other war poets. I had John Davidson in but withdrew him on finding I had too much matter; I may have to restore him. I was his contemporary and we never put him on a level with Dowson and Johnson. Hulme I have left out precisely because he was the mere leader of a movement.

Now about Doughty; it will amuse you to hear that A. E. Housman refused me leave to quote even from his LAST POEMS (which he generally allows) because of my supposed enthusiasm (or that of your publishing house) for Hopkins (with Doughty as runner-up). I have had to turn infidel and deride both as if they were relics of the True Cross, and I am not quite infidel where Hopkins is concerned; Doughty I cannot abide except in prose.

There is nothing in Flint, an old acquaintance of mine, except gilded stucco.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> H. Watt to Charles Williams, 11 September 1935, OUP *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> WBW to Charles Williams, 24 October 1935, OUP *ibid.*

Yeats added the ominous words 'I hear that Faber and Faber are bringing out an anthology'. Indeed they were; though thus far that was a cloud no bigger than a man's hand.

Besides obtaining various books which Yeats requested, Williams in at least one instance tried to influence the selection. On 12 November 1935 he sent Yeats, through Watt,

two or three poems by Mr Robert Nichols, which I knew he would very much like considered. Since Mr Yeats is putting in something of his, and since I had a respect for some of his work, I have allowed myself unofficially to send them on to you. You will understand that neither Mr Nichols nor any of us here are doing more than allow them to slide under Mr Yeats' eye. But I gather that he thinks them better than those actually chosen, and a poet has perhaps some claim to have his own opinion consulted.<sup>28</sup>

And in a note (headed 'PRIVATE') he told Nichols what he had done:

Extremely unofficially and by a roundabout method your poems called A SPANISH TRIPTYCH came into my hands, and more unofficially than ever, I feel I ought to murmur to you that I have caused them to be dispatched where they should come under Mr Yeats' eye. You will understand that for obvious reasons other poets ought not to know of this, and of course no one can say anything to Mr Yeats. But I could not resist telling you.<sup>29</sup>

Yeats failed to take the hint: he included nine poems by Nichols, but not 'Spanish Triptych'.

On 19 November, Yeats wrote to Williams announcing his departure for Majorca, and promising 'the contents of the anthology', which would be sent by George Yeats. The Introduction, he explained, 'is written but may not be typed in time—I have to dictate my illegible script—I may have to finish my dictating to a friend in Majorca'.

He also raised a difficulty:

I enclose a poem which please return. I did not put it in the anthology as I thought it would exclude the book from school libraries & for all I know you are counting on that public. I brought the poem to England and read it out

<sup>28</sup> Charles Williams to H. Watt, 12 November 1935, OUP *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Charles Williams to Robert Nichols, 12 November 1935, OUP *ibid.*

to Dulac, Turner, Mrs Sackville West, Dorothy Wellesley and others (cut as in the copy I send). All said it was a masterpiece and out [*sic*] to go in. I have decided to throw the responsibility on you—on one side the school libraries, on the other universal curiosity about the Primrose Path. Please say if the poem should be left out or not. I [*illegible*] another translation of the poem but not so good.<sup>30</sup>

The poem, by Oliver St John Gogarty, was (to judge from Williams's reply) a translation of Villon's 'Les Regrets de la belle heaulmière'. He shared Yeats's doubts:

After a very great deal of careful consideration Mr Milford himself and those of us who have read the poem, are inclined on the whole to think you were right in your first decision. It is no doubt a nuisance that a publisher has to consider so many groups among the public, but that is beyond praying for, and if this Anthology was barred from the places where young people gathered together it might seriously limit both its use and its sales (after all they have Swinburne's translation of the *Fair Armouress*, though I do not say that is so good). Regretfully therefore we return you the poem, accepting, with a conviction that you will blame us, the responsibility which you throw on us.<sup>31</sup>

Yeats accepted the verdict gracefully ('I think you are quite right, and the author thinks so too. I thought after reading it to London friends that perhaps I no longer understood the public & that therefore I had better consult you').<sup>32</sup> Gogarty himself had no reason to complain. With seventeen poems, he had more than any other poet in the anthology—a matter which in due course drew unfavourable notice.

On 27 April 1936 George Yeats wrote to Watt from Majorca, promising that Michael Yeats would deliver the manuscript of the book to Watt's office three days later ('It is impossible to registered [*sic*] parcels from this island and so it is safer to send it with him'.) Two matters remained unresolved.

<sup>30</sup> WBY to Charles Williams, 19 November 1935, OUP *ibid*.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Williams to WBY, 26 November 1935, OUP *ibid*. Though Gogarty's translation failed to get past the Press and into the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, it clearly made an impression on Yeats himself, and may be worth considering as a possible influence on 'Crazy Jane talks with the Bishop' (*VP* 513).

<sup>32</sup> WBY to Charles Williams, 27 November 1935, OUP *ibid*.

First, Macmillan asked Mr Yeats to cut down to one fourth the two poems he had originally chosen from Ralph Hodgson. He does not feel able to do this yet, and as waiting to feel well enough might delay the anthology still longer I wonder if you could communicate with [Oxford University Press] and ask them to allow him to include the whole of *THE BULL* and leave out *THE SONG OF HONOUR*.

secondly, 'Mr Yeats has decided not to include any poems of Elizabeth Daryush as she won't give permission for his first choice, and he does not want to put any of those she sent him from her latest work in their place'.<sup>33</sup>

On 1 May 1936 Williams was able to tell Sisam,

The MS arrived from Watt yesterday. It goes to you today by registered post; including the Introduction, but not including any acknowledgements. I have written to Watt asking about this list.

You will remark that Mr Gogarty is better than I feared. The whole book varies most amazingly from the most imbecilic simple poems of Masfield and Drinkwater to Mr Empson. You cannot however, say that it has not a great deal of very popular stuff in it.<sup>34</sup>

The book went to press on 8 May, with publication scheduled for November 1936.<sup>35</sup> Not altogether suppressing his doubts about the quality of the selection—indeed, apparently anticipating problems with its reception—Williams set to work on drafting a puff; at any rate, it has the hallmarks of his style:

This anthology is probably the most important anthology of the year—certainly the most important if the name of its compiler is considered. Mr. Yeats is the one poet who is admired by old and young, by the traditionalists and by the revolutionaries. He has a greater acquaintance with the principles and techniques of verse than any other living poet and his own achievement puts him among the all but greatest poets of our literature. Readers of the book may disagree with him over certain poems but his judgement is bound to be treated with respect and concern.

The book begins at the death of Tennyson and ends last year. It therefore includes the poetic outbreak of the Nineties, which was rarely (except for

<sup>33</sup> George Yeats to H. Watt, 27 April 1936, OUP *ibid*.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Williams to Kenneth Sisam, 1 May 1936, OUP *ibid*.

<sup>35</sup> "General" Book sent to Press', Clarendon Press in-house pro forma, OUP *ibid*.

Mr. Yeats himself) more than an exclamation of 'I will be naughty' against the Victorian 'You shall be good'; the solemnities of the Edwardians and the odd provincialism of the Georgians. And finally the new movements which have gone on with increasing violence and success since then. It would be impossible to give a list of the poets included. The book contains nearly 400 poems selected from the work of over a hundred British and Irish authors. Hardy and Hopkins lie towards the beginning and Mr. Auden, Mr. Spender, Mr. Madge and Mr. Barker conclude it.

In addition there is a 38 page Introduction by Mr. Yeats himself surveying the history of poetry during his life, with personal comments upon himself, upon poets and upon poetry. It is a critical essay of high importance, full of allusions to the whole of the past of English literature and sudden interesting comparisons with the present.<sup>36</sup>

Williams also signed a letter (possibly drafted by Cumberlege) disputing the Press's decision to send printed sheets from Britain for the American edition, rather than printing again in the United States, as this might be read by the book trade as indicating lack of confidence in the product. It also risked legal complexities, since books not actually printed in the US were subject to different copyright conditions.

I am sorry you are still against setting up the book in America. Apart from the question of copyright which is very complicated and quite unsettled, ... it is important for the prestige of our New York House that it should print and copyright the best of the parent's works. It will be much easier to sell the book if we back it to the extent of printing it than if we sell imported sheets. The natural reaction to printed sheets is that the publisher does not think well enough of it to set it up.<sup>37</sup>

The protest was successful: on 7 December 1936 Sisam wrote to Yeats confirming that 'It has been separately set up in the United States, so that the copyright is secured there'.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> OUP *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Typist's code indicates Cumberledge, but signed 'CW', to Sisam, 4 June 1936. OUP *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Kenneth Sisam to WBY, 7 December 1936, OUP *ibid.*

Difficulties, however, did not end with the publication of the anthology. Strangely in view of modern practice, Oxford University Press had entrusted Yeats himself with the task of clearing permissions to reprint copyright work, and had allowed him £500 to pay the necessary fees. Yeats, unpractised in the purely administrative side of publishing, had in some cases approached publishers, and in others contacted the poets directly. The result was a certain amount of confusion, with some publishers claiming that their copyrights had not been cleared. Sidgwick and Jackson made themselves a particular nuisance, apparently enjoying the chance to goad the larger, more respected publisher, even to the extent of sending a typed permission form, heavily marked in red crayon 'Example', to show Oxford University Press how to do things properly. An errata slip had to be added to the first edition, making the necessary acknowledgments.

The anthology was moderately successful in the short term, reprinting after its first month and then annually from 1937 to 1939; more rarely thereafter. But it never became the standard work that had been hoped for. That rôle was seized by the other anthology Yeats had heard rumoured—*The Faber Book of Modern Verse*, edited by Michael Roberts, a young schoolmaster-poet who was fresh from introducing the Auden group to the public in his 1933 anthology, *New Country*. His *Book of Modern Verse*, appearing in 1936, stood in direct competition with the *Oxford Book*, and offered a selection which was not merely chronologically 'modern' but distinctly Modernist. For much of the remaining twentieth century, it served English readers as their standard introduction to modern poetry. Eliot had chosen his editor well; one wonders whether his advice to Yeats about choosing American poets had been just a trifle disingenuous.

The *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* showed neither Yeats nor Oxford University Press at their best. And despite co-operating effectively at their different facets of the editorial process, there is no indication that Williams and Yeats ever met face to face during the book's creation.

Their paths would cross just once more, though again only on paper, when Williams inaugurated a long relationship with the



weekly *Time and Tide* by reviewing the second (1937) edition of *A Vision*.<sup>39</sup> His article, of almost a thousand words, is enthusiastic, opening with a sentence which is both a just assessment of its subject and a quintessential example of Williams's critical prose: 'Mr. Yeats's style imposes attention on his readers; no other living writer arouses so easily a sense of reverie moving into accurate power'. Listing some changes from the 1926 edition, Williams admits that he '[has] not yet been able to compare the two volumes'; the discussion in *Poetry at Present* must therefore have been based on a borrowed copy. He summarises without comment Yeats's attribution of the book's materials to 'invisible instructors' and 'speech in sleep', hindered at times by 'Frustrators'. More striking is Williams's statement that 'The symbolism of the *Vision* is geometrical, as all such imagery must be'. Williams is notable amongst poets for his love of geometry. Well-versed in the Kabbalistic 'Tree of Life', and in the use of such magical glyphs as the 'banishing pentagram', he also cherished a desire to explore geometrical imagery in both poetry and theology. He wrote, but did not publish, two 'Euclidian' love poems for Anne Ridler. The first begins:

The logic of Euclidian love  
 what diagrams of action prove,  
 sketching their demonstrations right  
 on the unmathematic night  
 of ignorance and indolence;<sup>40</sup>

and he told her,

I've been rather attracted ... by the idea of a series of poems using mathematical diction; & by chance I tried this one out. If I had leisure I would do some more—one on planes; & one on the Angle (a very subtle & important one); and one on asymptotes; & so on ... But O hell (as Shakespeare said), how can I find all the leisure the divine Muse needs?<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> 'Staring at Miracle', *Time and Tide*, 4 December 1937, 1674–76. Reprinted in Charles Williams, *The Caelian Moment and Other Essays*, ed. by Stephen Barber (Carterton: Greystones Press, 2017), 99–103.

<sup>40</sup> 'Euclid I. I', Bodleian, uncatalogued papers bequeathed by Anne Ridler.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Williams to Anne Ridler, 17 August 1933; Bodleian, uncatalogued papers bequeathed by Anne Ridler. The first ellipsis in this quotation is mine; the

Williams's integration of love and geometry has obvious affinities with (and may indeed have been encouraged by) such passages as lines 181–6 of *The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid*, which Williams would of course have seen in the first edition of *A Vision*:

the signs and shapes;  
 All those abstractions that you fancied were  
 From the great treatise of Parmenides;  
 All, all those gyres and cubes and midnight things  
 Are but a new expression of her body  
 Drunk with the bitter sweetness of her youth. (*VP* 469)

In theology too, geometry was likely to present itself to Williams as an inviting metaphor. To cite only two examples, in an undated letter (probably of 1942) he tells his friend and typist Margaret Douglas, 'The Kingdom is always set at an angle to the world; you in one, I in one; we are indeed the angles'.<sup>42</sup> And his best-known theological work, *The Descent of the Dove*, opens with an almost aggressively geometrical exposition:

The beginning of Christendom is, strictly, at a point out of time. A metaphysical trigonometry finds it among the spiritual Secrets, at the meeting of two heavenward lines, one drawn from Bethany along the ascent of Messias, the other from Jerusalem against the Descent of the Paraclete. That measurement, the measurement of eternity in operation, of the bright cloud and the rushing wind, is, in effect, theology.<sup>43</sup>

He was inclined to think of the entire human and divine order as a 'diagram'—always, for Williams, a positive word. In 1941 he would urge Margaret Douglas,

Be always at ease—or, at least, at peace, which is not entirely the same thing perhaps. But we retain always some dream of the Diagram; and I shall dream of it in my bath-chair. And though dreaming of it is little in itself,

second is Williams's.

<sup>42</sup> Charles Williams to Margaret Douglas, undated (1942?), Marion E. Wade Research Center, Charles Williams Papers.

<sup>43</sup> Charles Williams, *The Descent of the Dove: A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church* (London: The Religious Book Club, 1939), 1.

it may assist in our waking & active thoughts. And activity of thought is always valuable.<sup>44</sup>

It was natural, therefore, that he should describe *A Vision* as 'a philosophical diagram of the nature of man and of the universe as known to man', and towards the end of his review, draw attention (as '[n]ot the least fascinating part of the book,') to 'the 34 pages in which Mr. Yeats makes a pattern of Europe from 2000 B.C. to the present day, in a style which is dream, and in the dream diagram, and at that a diagram of greatness and terror'. For Williams, with his magical background, there was no necessary contradiction between a dream and a diagram.

Williams's praise was not entirely disinterested; for by December 1937, when the review appeared, he had a collection of Arthurian poems ready for publication (they would appear as *Taliessin Through Logres* from Oxford University Press in December 1938) and in discussing Yeats's book, he took the opportunity to drop some deliberately cryptic hints regarding the poetic mythology he would himself develop in that collection:

Mr. Yeats alludes to the diagrams in Law's *Boehme* 'where one lifts a flap of paper to discover both the human entrails and the starry heavens'. In another myth something of the same idea related the spiritual heavens and the womb of the mother of Galahad, and that last porphyry is like the porphyry room in Byzantium where the Emperors were born.<sup>45</sup>

In the kabbalistic Arthurian myth of Williams's poems, the 'porphyry stair' and the 'porphyry chamber' at its head (the 'purple room' in which legitimate offspring of the Byzantine emperor were required to be born) are associated with Galahad, achiever of the Grail, as well as with the somatic energies of the human body and the spiritual powers pervading the sephirotic tree of the Kabbala.<sup>46</sup> No reader of *Time and Tide* could have been expected to make anything of this,

<sup>44</sup> Charles Williams to Margaret Douglas, 18 July 1941; Marion E. Wade Center, Charles Williams Papers. 012.

<sup>45</sup> 'Staring at Miracle', *Time and Tide*, 4 December 1937, 1674–76.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, 'Taliessin in the School of the Poets', line 42; 'The Coming of Galahad', line 25; 'Taliessin at Lancelot's Mass', line 48, in Charles Williams,

but Williams cannot resist the opportunity of proleptically linking his own forthcoming work to Yeats's.

Marginally more accessible is a neat self-quotation planted at the end of the review's penultimate paragraph:

In a period when our cleverest men may write wisdom but do not habitually write English, [Yeats's] style is itself a refreshment. The sentence which refers to the Byzantium saints 'staring at miracle' is an example; another is that at which by chance I opened the book: 'Love is created and preserved by intellectual analysis'. The intellect is so often nowadays regarded as merely destructive, or if constructive, then only in convenient and sterile things, that the phrase is near to being immediately rejected. But in fact it encourages the mind and more than the mind. Given the will, then the greater the analysis the greater the love, as has elsewhere been said: 'Love is the chief art of knowledge and knowledge is the chief art of love'.

The writer who had 'elsewhere ... said' this was, of course, Williams himself, in *He Came Down from Heaven*: 'The new earth and the new heaven come like the two modes of knowledge, knowledge being the chief art of love, as love is the chief art of knowledge'.<sup>47</sup> In these passages we can see Williams engaged in a characteristic threefold manoeuvre: charming and flattering those who know his work; teasing those outside this (not very large) inner circle; and placing himself, as myth-maker and thinker, where he no doubt believed he belonged, alongside Yeats. Indeed, he may, by sheer serendipity, have done this in a still more profound manner, for as his sole example of how Yeats presents 'The Twenty-Eight Incarnations', Williams chooses to set out in full the heading of 'Phase Seventeen':

*Will*—The Daimonic Man.

*Mask* (from Phase 3). True—Simplification through intensity. False—Dispersal.

*Creative Mind* (from Phase 13). True—Creative imagination through antithetical emotion. False—Enforced self-realization.

*Body of Fate* (from Phase 27)—Loss.

*Taliessin Through Logres* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 28, 70, 91. Hereafter referenced as *TTL*.

<sup>47</sup> Charles Williams, *He Came Down from Heaven* (London: Heinemann, 1938), 138.

Examples: Dante, Shelley, Landor.<sup>48</sup>

Yeats, though Williams presumably could not know this, privately placed himself in Phase Seventeen, and one wonders whether Williams chose to quote this single example because he placed himself there too. The presence of Dante, a lifelong preoccupation and exemplar for Williams, might alone have been enough to precipitate this, but Williams could besides have recognised much of himself and his life in Yeats's account of the Phase, above all in the pronouncement that at Phase Seventeen

The being, through the intellect, selects some object of desire for a representation of the *Mask as Image*, some woman perhaps, and the *Body of Fate* snatches away the object. (*Vision* 142)

There could hardly have been a better summary of his decades-long but unconsummated love for his second 'muse', Phyllis Jones, librarian at Oxford University Press's London headquarters.

Be that as it may, what Williams identifies as 'the most thrilling sentence in the book' proves to be Yeats's quotation from Heraclitus: 'dying each other's life, living each other's death'. The words (they actually occur twice in *Vision B*: on pages 68 and 271) appeared a perfect epitome of Williams's doctrine of 'co-inherence', which emphasised that all human beings are (as St Paul put it) 'one body in Christ, and every one members one of another':<sup>49</sup> interdependent, that is, and living by and through each other—to the extent that it was, he believed, possible for one individual to take on directly, by mutual agreement, the mental or physical suffering of another. 'If indeed the world is founded on an interchange so profound that we have not begun to glimpse it', Williams comments, 'such sentences for a moment illuminate the abyss'. And he concludes his review,

If so, it is the principle of some such exchange that must be sought before all national and international evils can be righted. 'A civilization', Mr. Yeats

<sup>48</sup> Charles Williams, 'Staring at Miracle'; cf. *CW14* 105; *A Vision* (London: Macmillan, 1962 [repr. 1974]), 140–41. Williams does not accurately reproduce Yeats's italics; and he omits 'Enforced' before 'Loss'.

<sup>49</sup> Romans 12:5.

says, 'is a struggle to keep self-control'. Only by discovery of the principle of exchanged life can we keep our self-control by losing it, and without losing it we cannot keep it.

Happily, these few points where Williams seems to make *A Vision* a pretext for spreading his own ideas did not displease Yeats. In a letter to Edith Shackleton Heald, he responded warmly and thoughtfully to the review:

I was particularly glad to get Charles Williams review of '*A Vision*'. It was generous of him for he is a poet I left out of the Anthology & was my first correspondent at *The Oxford University* & greatly shocked at my leaving out certain poets. I imagine it was this that made the firm choose somebody else to continue the correspondence. He is the only reviewer who has seen what he calls 'the greatness & terror of the diagram'. (*CL InteLex* 7134)

Yeats seems to have been mistaken in thinking that Williams was deliberately superseded as his correspondent at the Press. But, however that may be, the two poets (so far as we know) had no further contact, either personal or textual, during Yeats's lifetime. The quotation from Heraclitus, however, continued to echo through Williams's subsequent work. There was time for him to insert it into two poems in the 1938 volume *Taliessin through Logres*,<sup>50</sup> first of all in 'Bors to Elayne: On the King's Coins', a poem on economics:

What saith Heraclitus?—and what is the City's breath?—  
*dying each other's life, living each other's death.*  
 Money is a medium of exchange. (TTL 45)

—with Williams adding in an endnote, 'The quotation from Heraclitus was taken from Mr. Yeats's book, *A Vision*' (TTL 95). Later in the same volume it appears, slightly reworked, in 'The Last

<sup>50</sup> Though Stephen Barber, to whom this discussion of the Heraclitean aphorism is heavily indebted, suggests that Williams included the quotation in drafts of these poems before the appearance of *Vision B*, perhaps as early as 1934/5, and that he knew its source—which *Vision A* does not give—from its appearance in the closing words of *The Resurrection*: 'Your words are clear at last, O Heraclitus. God and man die each other's life, live each other's death'. This is certainly possible. See Stephen Barber, 'Heraclitus on the Way of Exchange', *Charles Williams Society Newsletter* 112 (Autumn 2004), 1–6.

Voyage', where Blanchefleur (who in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* 'died from a letting of blood to heal a sick lady') is described as lying on her bier, 'drained there of blood by the thighed wound, | she died another's death, another lived her life'.<sup>51</sup>

It turns up again, still epitomising the practice of co-inherence, in 'The Founding of the Company', in Williams's last collection (and second book of Arthurian poems), *The Region of the Summer Stars* (1944):

The Company's second mode bore farther  
the labour and fruition; it exchanged the proper self  
and wherever need was drew breath daily  
in another's place, according to the grace of the Spirit  
dying each other's life, living each other's death'.<sup>52</sup>

## II

We may now turn to the necessarily less clear-cut topic of parallels and similarities between the poets. Dominating these, though by no means wholly defining them, is the membership of both men in organisations of Golden Dawn heritage (including Williams's close association with, if not actual membership of, Stella Matutina). How different the two poets could be even in areas related to the esoteric is well demonstrated by their attitudes to astrology and spiritualism, two of Yeats's principal preoccupations. A. H. E. Lee arranged for Williams's natal horoscope to be drawn up in around 1925; Williams showed little interest in it, and his few brief recorded comments indicate a good-humoured scepticism (CWTI 95, 356–7). As for spiritualism, which as an Anglo-Catholic Christian Williams might have been expected to deprecate, there does not seem to be a single mention of it anywhere in his writings.

<sup>51</sup> 'The Last Voyage', 73–74.

<sup>52</sup> Charles Williams, 'The Founding of the Company', lines 60–4, *The Region of the Summer Stars* (London: Editions Poetry London, 1944), hereafter RSS, p. 38.

Nor does his supernatural fiction have much in common with that of Yeats. Williams's seven novels are thrillers set in contemporary England, presenting spiritual themes in a low-mimetic, semi-realistic mode poised somewhere between the fiction of Dorothy L. Sayers and of Sax Rohmer.

On the other hand, Williams shared with Yeats a detailed knowledge of the Tarot, which was a subject of study in Waite's Fellowship of the Rosy Cross. Williams's own Tarot deck has survived in a private collection, though lacking some of its suit cards; and he wrote perhaps the best and certainly the most complex novel ever written about the Tarot, *The Greater Trumps*, for publication by Gollancz in 1932. Exactly how he approached the Tarot, and how far he used it for divination or other purposes, is unfortunately unknown, because oddly, though a prolific writer in most other areas of his life, Williams seems to have kept no magical diary or record of esoteric activity; though it is possible that some such record was destroyed at his death, when his magical robes and other regalia were disposed of. Our only knowledge of his esoteric activities comes from occasional brief mentions in his letters, or from records kept by others, notably A. E. Waite.

Given their extensive magical training and experience, it is not very surprising that both poets felt called upon to establish esoteric orders. In Yeats's case, this took the form of the much-planned but ultimately abortive Celtic Order, a kind of Golden Dawn transposed into a language of Celtic symbolism (*Life 1* 186–87). In that of Williams, it was the Companions of the Co-inherence, a loose organisation established just before the outbreak of the Second World War to practice 'substitution' between its members and for the world at large. Bound together by a practice of mutual remembrance, and by observation of 'four feasts: the Feast of the Annunciation, the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, the Feasts of the Transfiguration and the Commemoration of All Souls' (CWTI 292), its members also undertook specific tasks, psychically healing fellow-Companions or others, and taking on (sometimes at Williams's rather autocratic direction) the physical or mental suffering of others. The Order



also made its appearance in Williams's poems as 'the Company' (or 'Household') 'of Taliessin'.<sup>53</sup> To some extent it outlived Williams, and vestiges of it may still exist.

Like Yeats, Williams had more than a passing interest in Blake. As we have seen, he was prepared to spend time on (and be puzzled by) the Ellis and Yeats edition; but his interest went further. In 1922, reluctantly helping to edit a school anthology, *Poems of Home and Overseas*, he insisted on including Blake, telling John Pellow, with some embarrassment, '[the anthology] would have been much worse without me. Mrs Hemans and Shakespeare without the Blake'.<sup>54</sup> In 1923 Williams included Blake in a lecture tackling the question of what 'a man ... bankrupt in faith' would 'find of comfort & strengthening in the main tradition of English poetry';<sup>55</sup> in 1930 he lectured on Blake at Downe House, the well-known girls' boarding school;<sup>56</sup> and in 1938 gave a year-long course of lectures at London's City Literary Institute on 'The Christian Idea in Literature', which included Luther and Calvin, Loyola and Montaigne, Fox, Pascal, Law, Blake, Kierkegaard, Patmore, Karl Barth, and Eliot's *Family Reunion*, as well as the Grail, Malory, Tennyson, Swinburne and Morris, and 'the Arthurian Myth'. This remarkable syllabus demonstrates not only Williams's eclecticism and the importance he attached to Blake (and indeed Patmore) but also the fact that—rather as Yeats had resolved that 'whatever the great poets had affirmed in their finest moments was the nearest we could come to an authoritative religion' (*CW3* 97)—Williams was quite happy to ignore generic distinctions between poetry and theology, besides drawing myth—including myth of pre-Christian origin—into his discourse on equal terms.

An undated set of his lecture notes on Blake survives, beginning

Blake—he comes on us like a revelation. Only as we get older, & then reluctantly, that we admit he is not a final revelation; that other things have

<sup>53</sup> See, e.g., 'The Founding of the Company' (RSS 36–41).

<sup>54</sup> Charles Williams to John Pellow, 18 January 1922, Wade Center, Charles Williams Papers. 054.

<sup>55</sup> John Pellow's Diary, 21 November 1923, Bodleian MS Facs. c. 134.

<sup>56</sup> Alice Mary Hadfield, *Charles Williams: An Exploration of his Life and Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 89.

to be brought in. And even then we are haunted by a fear—*was* he right after all? Have we lost something more than Blake & our youth? some freshness, some capacity of ardour and love we shall never find again? At least I myself can never read any article commenting adversely on him but, though my intellect may agree, my emotions are stirred to anger. ... The P[rophetic] B[ooks] continually repeat a few ideas—the fall and restoration of some superhuman figure. Maybe Urizen locked in ice of his own reason, or Milton coming down to put off his selfhood, or Albion falling from congregation of eternity, or Palamabron quarrelling with Rintrah (I think it was). There is always this schism; an attempt to express on the cosmic side what was so obvious on the microcosmic.<sup>57</sup>

Clearly Williams knew Blake's longer poems well; and a footnote in *The Forgiveness of Sins* shows him using the massive, scholarly Sloss and Wallis edition of the *Prophetic Books*.<sup>58</sup> Blake's use of geographical symbolism, especially in the person of 'Jerusalem The Emanation of the Giant Albion', was an important influence behind the geographical-cosmological symbolism of the poems in *Taliessin through Logres* (whose frontispiece shows a nude woman superimposed upon a map of Europe and the Middle East) and *The Region of the Summer Stars*. He expected future readers to detect Blake's influence on his own work, grumpily telling his Oxford student Anne Renwick, in a verse letter,

If anyone says ... on a day  
in the future that I was inspired by the *Prophetic Books*,  
turn on them one of your darker looks  
... everyone has a damnable skill  
in Influences—& Eliot & Hopkins & Blake  
are going to be mine, in those pages where a cornrake  
discusses the corn. I forgive them.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> 'Lecture Notes on Blake', Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College, Charles Williams MS 190.

<sup>58</sup> Charles Williams, *He Came Down from Heaven and The Forgiveness of Sins* (London: Faber & Faber, 1950), 180, referring to D. J. Sloss and J. P. R. Wallis, *Prophetic Writings of William Blake*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926).

<sup>59</sup> Charles Williams to Anne Renwick, undated, Bodleian MS. Eng. Lett. d. 452.

It was Blake's visionary sense of correspondences, of microcosm and macrocosm, that was most important to him. He hoped that Anne Renwick, who graduated from Oxford in 1941, would write a book on Blake, incorporating ideas they had discussed together, and even planned to plant a boost for it in *Time and Tide*, telling her that 'Sometime during October a review in *Time and Tide* will mention casually, in referring to Blake, that for "a knowledge of his mystical geography, as for his mystical anatomy, we must wait for the study by Miss Anne Renwick"'.<sup>60</sup> Her book was never written; but Williams's letters make it quite clear where his main interest in Blake lay, and show that it was closely congruent with that of Yeats.

To speak of 'system' in a poet's work is to imply that individual poems are more than a vehicle for specific insights; that the poems interconnect to build up a larger structure of thought. In Yeats's case, the process of building a unity of thought involved the interconnection of ideas and images from a range of fields, many of them esoteric. Charles Williams was not required to the same extent to 'hammer [his] thoughts into unity' because he saw himself as an orthodox Christian, drawing from a fund of traditional Christian ideas and images. However, in his mature poetry, the use of the Arthurian 'myth' (as he preferred to call it), together with his decision to locate the episodes of that myth in the Byzantine period and his central concern with his doctrine of co-inherence, led to the production of a body of poetry which certainly qualifies as having elements of a system. As we have seen, Williams emphasised episodes (such as Blachefleur's giving of blood) which seemed to him to demonstrate co-inherence. He also developed kabbalistic elements in the poems. 'The Death of Palomides' in *The Region of the Summer Stars*, his second and last volume of Arthurian poems, is a meditation on the meaning of Netzach or 'Victory', the fourth sephira (in ascending order) of the Sephirothic Tree; and he takes advantage of the literal meaning of Taliessin ('Bright Forehead'), the name of his central character and persona, to create identification with Kether, the highest

<sup>60</sup> Charles Williams to Anne Renwick, 30 September 1941, Bodleian MS. Eng. Lett. d. 452,

sephira, which is visualised as white and shining, and corresponding in the microcosm to the crown of the head. The Byzantine Empire is viewed as congruent with the human body; Williams's poem 'The Vision of the Empire' emphasises this, beginning 'The organic body sang together' and systematically exploring the correspondence between human body and geography which is graphically displayed in the specially-commissioned frontispiece to *Taliessin Through Logres*, where a nude female body is shown extended over the map of Europe and the Middle East. Williams explains in the Preface to *the Region of the Summer Stars* that

Logres is Britain regarded as a Province of the Empire with its centre at Byzantium. The time historically is after the conversion of the Empire to Christianity but during the expectation of the Return of Our Lord (The Parousia). The Emperor of the poem, however, is to be regarded rather as operative Providence. (RSS vii)

A full exposition of Williams's structure of poetic thought would be out of place here; but this brief sampling should be enough to indicate that, like Yeats, he was concerned to build a poetic unity from history, esoteric thought and spiritual aspiration.

The question naturally arises as to how far the central part assigned by Williams to Byzantium was a result of influence from the writings of Yeats. In his Arthurian commonplace Book (compiled, probably, between 1912 and 1916) Williams gives, as his main reason for moving Arthur 'forward and parallel to Charlemagne & his surroundings in France, A.D. 800', his wish to 'obtain the full effect of Islam, in Africa, in Spain'.<sup>61</sup> This obviously predates both *A Vision* and the 'Byzantium' poems. And indeed, at this stage Williams does not mention Byzantium by name. That would happen first (albeit following, initially, the Greek spelling of the city's name) in an unpublished poem, 'The Assumption of Caelia', which Williams may have written as early as December 1926. Here the bard Taliessin commemorates a princess who lived and died in 'Byzantion' (CWTI

<sup>61</sup> Bodleian MS. Eng. e. 2012

157). Williams himself was careful to imply (though not actually to assert) that he did not owe the setting of his poems to Yeats:

That I did choose Byzantium was due, perhaps, to a romantic love of the (then) strange, but it was a little due to the sense that the Byzantine Emperor was a much more complex poetic image than the Roman. Mr. Yeats had not then written his Byzantium poems; or if so, I had not read them.<sup>62</sup>

This is to overlook the possibility that Williams may already have seen Yeats's references to Byzantium in the 1925 *Vision A*, which he would praise in the 1930 *Poetry at Present*.<sup>63</sup> The question must remain open.

Like Yeats, Williams devoted a considerable portion of his time and energy to drama. His dramatic writing comprises a wide variety of modes, from quasi-liturgical recitation (*A Rite of the Passion*), by way of masque (*The Masque of the Manuscript* and its two sequels), pastiche Jacobean tragedy (*The Chaste Wanton*), and community pageant (*Judgement at Chelmsford*), to drawing-room realism (*The Devil and the Lady*) and half-hour radio drama (*The Three Temptations*). But his most successful and critically-acclaimed plays—*Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury* (the 1936 Canterbury Festival play) and *Seed of Adam* (also from 1936)—used a stylised, ritualistic approach incorporating dance and masks, achieving 'a kaleidoscopic compression of history'.<sup>64</sup> Williams and his producer, E. Martin Browne, were furious when the costume designer, against their instructions, produced realistic historical costumes; but they were delighted with the chorus figure, the Skeleton, who wore a black body-suit with white appliqué bones, and a black cloak 'lined throughout with the green of spring, which appeared again as ivy-leaves round the brow'.<sup>65</sup> *Seed of Adam*, a verse

<sup>62</sup> Ridler ed., *Image of the City*, 161.

<sup>63</sup> I owe this insight to Stephen Barber, and to his article 'Alternative history and symbolic geography in the Taliessin poems', forthcoming in Ronnie Littlejohn and Jonathan Thorndike (eds.), *Impossible Geography: Portals, Thresholds, and Boundaries in the Works of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Dorothy L. Sayers, Charles Williams, G. K. Chesterton, and George MacDonald*, forthcoming (2018), publisher to be announced.

<sup>64</sup> E. Martin Browne with Henzie Browne, *Two in One* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 104.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

nativity play, resembles a mummers' play, incorporating mime and dance: at its climax, Mary and a scimitar-bearing 'Negress' (who represents Hell but also becomes midwife to the birth of Christ) dance together at an increasing pace, 'the scimitar flashing round them in a white fire. The CHORUS sway to the movement'.<sup>66</sup> How much these plays, with their ritualistic action, their use of dance and masks, may owe to Yeats's theatrical experiments, and in particular to *Four Plays for Dancers*, is uncertain. The chapter on Yeats in *Poetry at Present* lists in its headnote [*The Hour Glass and Other Plays; The King's Threshold; Deirdre; The Green Helmet; and Plays for an Irish Theatre*], but Williams's approach to the theatre probably owed at least as much to his temperamental love of ritual, and to the austere requirements of plays written for performance in churches and village halls by a small touring theatre groups with little access to elaborate scenery or costumes.

Turning in conclusion to the inner life of the poets, it seems worthy of note that both had an active interest in the notion that sexual energy could be harnessed to poetic creativity. Yeats felt that he had discovered this, painfully, in his relationship with Maud Gonne, and expressed it powerfully and tactfully in his poem 'Words', and in the related reflection in *Memoirs*: 'How much of the best I have done and still do is but the attempt to explain myself to her?' (*Mem* 142). Later this became focused into an interest in 'Tantric philosophy', as in his essay on 'The Mandukya Upanishad', where he writes of 'the Tantric philosophy, where a man and woman, when in sexual union, transfigure each other's images into the masculine and feminine characters of God, but the man must not finish, vitality must not pass beyond his body, beyond his being'. (*CW5* 163). Yeats possessed several of Sir John Woodroffe's books on tantra (it is not clear quite how many, or of these how much he actually read);<sup>67</sup> and as W. David Soud suggests, 'Tantric practice may have seemed to Yeats the metaphysical analogue of the Steinach operation he underwent

<sup>66</sup> Charles Williams, *Collected Plays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 168.

<sup>67</sup> The somewhat conflicting evidence is summarised in W. David Soud, *Divine Cartographers: God, History and Poiesis in W. B. Yeats, David Jones, and T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 60 n.

physically in 1934 [and] it is not out of the question that he partly intended the Steinach procedure to enable him to pursue Tantric practices'.<sup>68</sup>

In the case of Williams, the matter is somewhat clearer. One of his chief mentors, the Stella Matutina initiate Arthur Hugh Evelyn Lee, had a definite interest in the 'transmutation' of sexual energy, and made detailed notes on the subject in his occult notebook now preserved in the Warburg Institute Library.<sup>69</sup> Williams's close friend D. H. S. Nicholson, in his novel *The Marriage Craft*, depicts a thinly-disguised Williams discussing the 'great serpent' Kundalini, and 'the hope of transmutation' with a group including a fictional version of Lee, who asserts that if sexual energy could be transformed and redirected, 'it would be something greater than electricity ... greater, probably, even than the release of atomic energy'.<sup>70</sup> Like Yeats, Williams was no stranger to sexual frustration. A nine-year engagement to his wife Florence, and later an anguished and unconsummated love affair with Phyllis Jones, Librarian at Oxford University Press's London headquarters, Amen House, had each resulted in an outpouring of poems (albeit of questionable quality). Williams came to believe that the kind of gently sadomasochistic games in which he had engaged with Phyllis (chiefly a matter of mild flagellation) were essential to his creativity, and during the composition of his Arthurian cycle he occasionally called upon female disciples to help, even on occasion summoning a devotee from London to his wartime office in Oxford to provide the necessary stimulus. A letter to one such disciple, Joan Wallis, makes the matter clear. 'Like it or not, approve it or not', he tells her, 'it is likely that, if you were to give yourself to me for an afternoon with your princely care to be satisfying, I should work

<sup>68</sup> Soud, *op. cit.*, 67–8. Susan Johnston Graf's more specific suggestion is perhaps also worthy of consideration: 'He may have thought that the [Steinach] vasectomy procedure performed the same function as the withholding of ejaculation in tantra, that the vital energy of procreation would be channeled into imaginative, literary, and visionary work'. Susan Johnston Graf, *W. B. Yeats: Twentieth-Century Magus* (York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 2000), pp. 203–4.

<sup>69</sup> Yorke Collection, NS 32.

<sup>70</sup> D. H. S. Nicholson, *The Marriage-Craft* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1924), 207; CWTI 112–13.

much better'.<sup>71</sup> There was no question of sexual consummation. As Joan Wallis herself recalled in an interview years later, 'it had a sexual element, but the restrained sexual element seemed to be a means of releasing the energy he needed to find the means to write' (CWTI 334).

It may not be entirely frivolous to end this survey with an observation prompted by four lines from 'All Things Can Tempt Me':

When I was young  
I had not given a penny for a song  
Did not the poet sing it with such airs  
That one believed he had a sword upstairs[.] (*VP* 267)

Oddly enough, in his later years each poet did indeed have a sword upstairs. In Yeats's case it was Sato's Samurai sword, wrapped in its embroidered silk and cherished at Thoor Ballylee. In Williams's, it was a basket-hilted sword, probably inherited from Stella Matutina friends, kept in his office cupboard in Oxford and used (perhaps) for magical ritual and (certainly) for occasional gentle flagellation of female disciples (CWTI 334). The coincidence is perhaps not meaningless. For both poets, the sword symbolised aristocratic leanings, an appreciation of the heroic past, and a love of ritual. It may serve as an emblem for a certain kinship between the poets, and for the truth that viewed in this context each seems, perhaps, a little less anomalous, a little more of his time.

<sup>71</sup> Charles Williams to Joan Wallis, 11 December 1940; Marion E. Wade Research Center, Wheaton College, Charles Williams Papers, 85; CWTI 334.



## APPENDIX 1

Charles Williams's review of *A Vision*'Staring at Miracle'<sup>72</sup>*A Vision*. W. B. Yeats (Macmillan. 15s.)

Mr. Yeats's style imposes attention on his readers; no other living writer arouses so easily a sense of reverie moving into accurate power. But to express that attention properly would need more time than any review can take; and more than usually one must feel here the absurdity of trying to define patterns in other words than their own.

The book consists largely of 'a revised and amplified version' of an edition published in 1926. A bibliographical note on all the contents would have been convenient. Those who know or possess the previous volume may still be glad, for Mr. Yeats has altered the exterior arrangements of his *Vision*, and what he calls the 'unnatural story of an Arabian traveller' is still peculiar to that edition. Certain poems are also reprinted to combine into a new volume. I have not yet been able to compare the two volumes, and must not, therefore, discuss the differences further.

The *Vision* itself is presented as a philosophical diagram of the nature of man and of the universe as known to man. It is said to have been communicated by invisible instructors, beginning with sentences delivered to Mrs. Yeats in automatic writing from 1917 to 1919. The method of communication was changed to speech in sleep during 1919. 'Exposition in sleep came to an end in 1920, and I began an exhaustive study of some fifty copy-books of automatic script, and of a much smaller number of books recording what had come in sleep'. There had been interference at times which the communicating intelligences called Frustration or the Frustrators. Of the nature of this communication Mr. Yeats says that one intelligence said in the first month that 'spirits do not tell a man what is true, but create such conditions, such a crisis of fate, that the man is compelled to listen to his Daimon'. Mere spirits are 'a reflection and a distortion'; reality

<sup>72</sup> *Time and Tide*, 4 December 1937, 1674, 1676, also available at <http://www.yeatsvision.com/G801.html>

is found by the Daimon in the Ghostly Self and 'the blessed spirits must be sought within the self which is common to all'.

The symbolism of the Vision is geometrical, as all such imagery must be. In a sudden reminiscence Mr. Yeats alludes to the diagrams in Law's Boehme 'where one lifts a flap of paper to discover both the human entrails and the starry heavens'. In another myth something of the same idea related the spiritual heavens and the womb of the mother of Galahad, and that last porphyry is like the porphyry room in Byzantium where the Emperors were born. Here, however, it is a matter of cones or vortices, states of being struggling against each other, the 'antithetical tincture' and the 'primary tincture'. 'Within these cones move what are called the Four Faculties: Will and Mask, Creative Mind and Body of Fate'.

The movement of the Faculties covers 'every possible movement of thought and of life', and these movements are marked by numbers corresponding to the phases of the moon. Mr. Yeats examines 'the twenty-eight incarnations' one by one, describing the kind of humanity observable in each and occasionally naming a few examples. Thus Phase Seventeen is distinguished as follows:

Will—The Daimonic Man

Mask (from Phase 3). True—Simplification through intensity. False—Dispersal.

Creative Mind (from Phase 13). True—Creative imagination through antithetical emotion. False—Enforced self-realization.

Body of Fate (from Phase 27)—Loss.

Examples: Dante, Shelley, Landor.

Beside and beyond the Faculties are the Principles, Husk, Passionate Body, Spirit, and Celestial Body. 'The wheel or cone of the Faculties may be considered to complete its movement between birth and death, that of the Principles to include the period between lives as well'. But even the full individual existence is only a part of the grand diagram; history also is measured by the mathematics. Not the least fascinating part of the book is made of the 34 pages in which Mr. Yeats makes a pattern of Europe from 2000 B.C. to the present day, in a style which is dream, and in the dream diagram, and at that a diagram of greatness and terror.

In a period when our cleverest men may write wisdom but do not habitually write English, the style is itself a refreshment. The sentence which refers to the Byzantium saints 'staring at miracle' is an example; another is that at which by chance I opened the book: 'Love is created and preserved by intellectual analysis'. The intellect is so often nowadays regarded as merely destructive, or if constructive, then only in convenient and sterile things, that the phrase is near to being immediately rejected. But in fact it encourages the mind and more than the mind. Given the will, then the greater the analysis the greater the love, as has elsewhere been said: 'Love is the chief art of knowledge and knowledge is the chief art of love'.

Yet perhaps, to some minds in a different stage of thought, the most thrilling sentence in the book is the one which Mr. Yeats quotes from Heraclitus. It is quoted in relation to the opposing cones: 'dying each other's life, living each other's death'. If indeed the world is founded on an interchange so profound that we have not begun to glimpse it, such sentences for a moment illuminate the abyss. If so, it is the principle of some such exchange that must be sought before all national and international evils can be righted. 'A civilization', Mr. Yeats says, 'is a struggle to keep self-control'. Only by discovery of the principle of exchanged life can we keep our self-control by losing it, and without losing it we cannot keep it.

CHARLES WILLIAMS

## Shakespeare in *Purgatory*: 'A Scene of Tragic Intensity'<sup>1</sup>

Stanley van der Ziel

### I

WHEN W. B. YEATS CAME TO WRITE *Purgatory*, the last of his plays to be staged during his lifetime, at the Abbey Theatre Festival on 10 August 1938, he drew on a lifetime of seeing and thinking about the work of other dramatists, both Irish and European. Traces of many earlier works can be found in the play. Michael McAteer has argued, for example, that *Purgatory* was indebted in several respects to the Expressionist theatre of Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata*.<sup>2</sup> To scholars of Irish drama, meanwhile, it must be evident that the *mis-en-scene* of *Purgatory*—outlined in the economical first stage direction: *A ruined house and a bare tree in the background*' (VPI 1041)—not only foreshadows that of *Waiting for Godot*, as has often been pointed

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [stanleyvanderziel@gmail.com](mailto:stanleyvanderziel@gmail.com)? Apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

<sup>2</sup> Michael McAteer, *Yeats and European Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 176–79.

out,<sup>3</sup> but that it is in turn indebted to the dramaturgical example of *The Well of the Saints*, Synge's farcical treatment of the themes of blindness and redemption:

*Roadside with big stones, etc. on the right; low loose wall at back with gap near centre; at left, ruined doorway of church with bushes beside it. MARTIN DOUL and MARY DOUL grope in on left and pass over to stones on right, where they sit.*

MARY DOUL: What place are we now, Martin DouL?

MARTIN DOUL: Passing the gap.<sup>4</sup>

The *Well's* opening stage direction certainly provides an obvious model both for the scant vegetation, and for the 'symbolical' (*VPI* 1041) toppling masonry of the ruined house in *Purgatory*. In addition to that, the opening dialogue of Synge's wandering tramps foreshadows the geographical inquiries of the Boy in the opening lines of Yeats's play, who wants to know whether his old man has 'come this path before' (*VPI* 1041).

Yeats's dramatic imagination is frequently haunted by the presence of Synge, the younger dramatist whose death in 1909 had left Yeats badly shaken because with Synge, he felt, had died the immediate promise of a truly great national Irish stage. The poetic language of Yeats's plays, whether they are written in prose or in verse, owes much to the idiomatic Irish stage language created by Synge, that heightened version of the language he had heard spoken by the natives in Wicklow and Aran (*JMSCW* iv, 53). The verse of *Purgatory* is no exception. With its echoes of specific lines from *The Well of the Saints* and *The Playboy of the Western World* (to which this essay shall return later), and with what John Pilling remarks is an inversion of the patricide plot of *The Playboy* (although the source could just as easily be *Oedipus Rex*), the presence of Synge can be felt to run as deeply here as it ever had before.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See for example an early study, Katharine J. Worth, 'Yeats and the French Drama', *Modern Drama* 8.4 (Winter 1965), 382–91 (esp. p. 390), and Anthony Roche's recent *The Irish Dramatic Revival 1899–1939* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 157–60.

<sup>4</sup> J. M. Synge, *Collected Works*, 4 vols, gen. ed. Robin Skelton (London: Oxford University Press, 1962–1968), iii, 71. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *JMSCW*.

<sup>5</sup> John Pilling, *Samuel Beckett* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), 157.

There is, however, another playwright whose presence can be felt throughout *Purgatory*, and that is William Shakespeare—the ‘chap’ who could sometimes, as Buck Mulligan joked in the Scylla and Charybdis episode of *Ulysses*, ‘write [] like Synge’.<sup>6</sup> The ghost of Shakespeare haunts *Purgatory* throughout. This essay will show some of the ways in which *Purgatory* draws on the example of Shakespeare by identifying particular Shakespearean references, resonances and echoes in the language of the play—some of which are, as it turns out, entangled in Yeats’s imagination with the language of Synge. Starting from these textual echoes, we shall see how Shakespeare did not just present Yeats with a poetic corpus that could be plundered for his own devices, but how *Purgatory* also develops a number of appropriate Shakespearean themes and ideas in a truly ‘intertextual’ exercise—one in which echoes and allusions are not merely a form of literary ornament but bring with them some of the meaning of the original text as part of a veritable ‘network of textual relations’.<sup>7</sup>

It is evident from the text and the staging of *Purgatory* that Yeats found many ways of deepening or reflecting his convictions about the nature of private suffering and damnation, and of social and familial disintegration and discord, in his reading of Shakespeare’s plays. Plays like *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus* and others could be recruited by the mature Yeats to act as mirrors reflecting not only his private ‘conviction about this world and the next’,<sup>8</sup> but also some of the stark truths about the social and political realities of post-Independence Ireland in which he lived. The immediate contemporary relevance of *Purgatory* has often been understood in the context of *On the Boiler*, the Cuala Press pamphlet in which the play was first published and in which, as Yeats wrote in a 1938 letter to Maud Gonne McBride,

<sup>6</sup> James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. by Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Garland, 1984), 9.510–11.

<sup>7</sup> See Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1 and *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley, 15 August 1938, *CL InteLex* 7290. It is perhaps indicative that a journal entry from October 1909 recording his response to seeing one of Shakespeare’s plays—‘I feel in *Hamlet*, as always in Shakespeare, that I am in the presence of a soul lingering on the storm-beaten threshold of sanctity’ (*Mem* 233)—should pre-empt by some thirty years the quasi-religious terms of this well-known later explanation of the significance of *Purgatory* as a play about ‘this world and the next’.

'For the first time I am saying what I beleive [sic] about Irish & European politics' (*CL IntelLex* 7273). And while this is certainly a useful way of approaching the play, I would like to propose here how the contemporary social and political concerns that the play shares with the pamphlet are given further depth by the Shakespearean intertexts that are evoked throughout. In fact, Yeats explicitly invites a Shakespearean framework for the work and thought of this late phase of his career in another letter from the same year. Writing to Olivia Shakespear shortly after he finished *Purgatory* and the essays in *On the Boiler*, he diagnosed with self-conscious irony how the 'short play in verse & [the] queer pessimistic pamphlet' he had just completed would be received: 'It looks to me as if I may spend my remaining life ... in a fierce Timon like propaganda' (*CL IntelLex* 7239).

## II

Yeats's relationship with Shakespeare's plays was both intimate and long-standing even by the time he began publishing his first verses. In *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* he recalls how he had been struck by the vividness of the language of the 'canopy' exchange from Act 4, scene 5 of *Coriolanus* which his father had often read to him as a young adolescent in his studio in York Street (*Au* 65). It is clear from references throughout his letters and his non-fictional prose, as well as from the occasional allusions to Shakespeare's tragic heroes in some of his poems, that Yeats had thought deeply about Shakespeare from early on in his career. The range of his critical and creative responses to the greatest English dramatic poet were many and varied during the span of his writing life. We can only speculate as to which aspects of his book on *William Shakespeare* the poet John Masefield may have been alluding when he wrote, in a letter (now apparently lost) dated 27 July 1911 which accompanied the presentation copy he sent to Yeats, that 'if there is anything good in it, it was probably suggested by you ...'.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in YL 169, item no. 1261. The National Library of Ireland's 'Guide for Readers' to the Yeats Collection lists Masefield's letter among items 'listed in the

It is certain that Yeats was interested in aspects of stage-craft and stage-design, as well as—in the early part of his career, at least—in the analogies that might be drawn between the conflicts of personality at the heart of plays like *Richard II* and *Hamlet* and the contrast between prosaic, practical English versus poetic, romantic Irish ways of seeing and thinking. All of these are subjects in his 1901 essay ‘At Stratford-on-Avon’.<sup>10</sup> But Yeats’s attitude to Shakespeare was constantly shifting, in directions, after the 1900s, increasingly further removed from his and his contemporaries’ turn-of-the-century interest in ‘appropriating’ Shakespeare as a tool in the project of national revival.<sup>11</sup> By the final decade of his life, writing in the face of his own mortality and amid the gathering storm clouds of political turmoil in Ireland and Europe, his chief interest was in the ability of Shakespearean tragedy to resist pathos and to instead distil ‘joy’ from tragic scenarios. This concern of the elderly Yeats in the 1930s with ‘tragic joy’ is most famously articulated in the 1936 poem ‘Lapis Lazuli’, but it was reprised by Yeats contemporaneously with his writing of *Purgatory* in the prose section of *On the Boiler*, where he wrote that ‘No tragedy is legitimate unless it leads some great character to his final joy’ (*Ex* 448).

One interest that remained constant throughout Yeats’s lifetime was that with Shakespeare’s language—including ways in which that language might be recovered by contemporary dramatic poets. The conventions of Shakespearean verse as it was spoken on the stage

O’Shea *Catalog* but not received with the Yeats Library’, [http://www.nli.ie/pdfs/mss\\_lists/Yeats\\_Librarylistforpublic.pdf](http://www.nli.ie/pdfs/mss_lists/Yeats_Librarylistforpublic.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> *E&I* 96–110. That early essay remains influential—so much so, in fact, that much recent scholarship on Yeats’s Shakespeare has concentrated on applying its contents to Yeats’s own dramatic outputs of the early 1900s, notably the first instalment of his own historical ‘cycle’ of Cuchulain plays, *On Baile’s Strand*. See for example Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Cape, 1995), 268–85; Neil Corcoran, *Shakespeare and the Modern Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 27–40; and Denis Donoghue, ‘Yeats’s Shakespeare’, *Irish Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 113–36.

<sup>11</sup> On Yeats in the context of early twentieth-century cultural-nationalist ‘appropriations’ of Shakespeare, see for example Adam Putz, *The Celtic Revival in Shakespeare’s Wake: Appropriation and Cultural Politics in Ireland 1867–1922* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).



were important in Yeats's conception of the Irish Literary Revival. In 'An Introduction for My Plays' (written a year before *Purgatory* in 1937), Yeats not only proudly reminds his readers 'that Ireland had preserved longer than England the rhythmical utterance of the Shakespearean stage';<sup>12</sup> he also suggests that there should be a non-realistic style of dramatic speaking for the Irish stage that would do justice to the language of Synge as the equal of Shakespeare by 'permit[ting] that stilling and slowing which turns the imagination in upon itself'. For does not a 'tragic sentence' from *The Well of the Saints* like 'a starved ass braying in the yard', he asked, 'require convention as much as a blank-verse line?' (*E&I* 528–29; cf. JMSCW iii, 113). This was not a new thought. Yeats had read Buck Mulligan's irreverent joke about Shakespeare as an anachronistic imitator of Synge in *Ulysses* fifteen years earlier.<sup>13</sup> Synge himself, too, in his Preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*, had made explicit the analogy between the rich language and folk-imagination of the Irish peasantry at the turn of the twentieth century and that encountered by Elizabethan dramatists at home and in the streets and public places (JMSCW iv, 53). Synge's dramatic language accordingly drew simultaneously on the imagery-rich linguistic vein of the Irish folk-imagination and on his reading of the great Irish, English and European playwrights of the past. It appears that this was a lesson which Yeats found more difficult to put into practice in his dramatic output than in his lyric poems—for as R. F. Foster has remarked, it took a long time before Yeats's dramatic language 'finally achieved the mysterious simplicity of his finest poems' in *Purgatory* (*Life* 2 620). There, more than in any of his earlier plays, the language and rhythms, while they remain unmistakably Irish in their diction and idiom, move beyond emulating the peasant idioms of Synge and towards a rediscovery of

<sup>12</sup> Variations on that thought had been part of Yeats's arsenal from early on in his career. It was probably first articulated in the first of his three London lectures on the theatre in March 1910 (*YT* 21).

<sup>13</sup> It is well known that Yeats was an admirer of *Ulysses* when it was first published. See for example *Life* 2, esp. 260–61.

the original Shakespearean vitality that had made Synge's language so rich in the first place.<sup>14</sup>

Not, of course, that the verse of *Purgatory* is an imitation of Shakespeare's blank verse. Yeats definitively foreswore that metrical form in the prose section of *On the Boiler* when he wrote that 'I gave certain years to writing plays in Shakespearean blank verse about Irish kings for whom nobody cared a farthing' (*Ex* 418). Instead, as T. S. Eliot noted, in *Purgatory*, at the end of his career as dramatist, Yeats perfected his own form of dramatic verse in short lines of flexible metre and thus, like Shakespeare before him, created 'A really dramatic verse [that] can be employed ... to say the most matter-of-fact things'.<sup>15</sup> In a way, then, *Purgatory* embodies Yeats's ambivalence towards Shakespeare's legacy. The *structure* of *Purgatory* may be that of a perfectly formed Classical, rather than a Shakespearean tragedy—after all, Yeats, as fellow-playwright, regarded the latter's dramatic 'luxuriance' (*Ex* 80) and 'heterogeneous[ness]' (*CVA* 204) with varying degrees of suspicion throughout his career, a view that culminated in his deathbed verdict to Dorothy Wellesley that 'Shakespeare is only a mass of magnificent fragments' (*LDW* 194) compared to the unity of Greek drama.<sup>16</sup> The *language* of *Purgatory*, on the other hand, is heavily informed by Yeats's lifelong reading, watching and perhaps above all listening to Shakespeare's plays.

<sup>14</sup> Synge borrowed readily from Shakespeare, and married the latter's poetic-dramatic language to the linguistic realities of the Ireland of his time. Thus Maurya's cry of anguish after losing the last of her sons at the end of his perfectly formed Greek tragedy, *Riders to the Sea*—'They're all gone now' (*JMSCW* iii, 23)—echoes not Sophocles, but King Lear's reaction to the death of Cordelia: 'I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever' (*V.iii.270*). Similarly, as Declan Kiberd has pointed out, the same character's inability to return her son Bartley's blessing earlier in the play both reflects her indigenous pagan sensibility and echoes an arresting dramatic moment in *Macbeth*. See Kiberd, *Synge and the Irish Language*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 163.

<sup>15</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Poetry and Drama* (London: Faber & Faber, 1951), 19–20.

<sup>16</sup> See also Rupin W. Desai, *Yeats's Shakespeare* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 212–13, 222. Desai's chapter on *Purgatory* is the only other sustained reading of the play's Shakespearean progeny to date.

## III

The novelist John McGahern remarked that it had always fascinated him ‘that every line of *Purgatory* is filled with the drama of opposites’.<sup>17</sup> While that statement is clearly somewhat of an exaggeration, there is yet some truth to it. The reliance on the capacity of pairs of words charged with equal but inverse meanings to hold a line of verse together like the constituent parts of an atom is a stylistic habit also much favoured by Shakespeare, much of whose most memorable dramatic verse in the tragedies exists in precisely such a tension of opposites. McGahern was probably thinking specifically of the Boy’s short monologue that opens the play, in which the ‘drama of opposites’ is most pronounced:

Half-door, hall door,  
Hither and thither day and night,  
Hill or hollow, shouldering this pack,  
Hearing you talk. (*VP*/ 1041)

In structure and content, these lines may well recall not only Yeats’s own lines from stanza three of ‘The Song of Wandering Aengus’ (‘Though I am old with wandering | Through hollow lands and hilly lands ...’ [*VP* 150]), also but the Fairy’s speech to Puck near the beginning of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*:

Over hill, over dale,  
Thorough bush, thorough briar,  
Over park, over pale,  
Thorough flood, thorough fire,  
I do wander everywhere ... (II.i.2–6)<sup>18</sup>

The jaunty rhythm and the faint presence of that dreamily comic intertext certainly do not suggest the tragic scene that is about

<sup>17</sup> John McGahern, Introduction to the 1999 edition of *John Butler Yeats: Letters to His Son W. B. Yeats and Others 1869–1922*, repr. in McGahern, *Love of the World: Essays*, ed. by Stanley van der Ziel (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), 243.

<sup>18</sup> All references to Shakespeare’s plays are to *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, gen. eds Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), unless otherwise indicated.

to unfold. But perhaps as a way of opening the play, the ‘strong driving force’ (*CL InteLex* 6490) of Yeats’s trochees is ultimately more comparable to the witches’ exchange in the opening scene of *Macbeth*, which relies on equivocatory pairs of opposites using the same metre.<sup>19</sup> What is more, the presence of that same play may be felt in the Boy’s response to the Old Man’s story about his mother’s marriage to a socially and, as the play suggests, racially inferior man. The Boy’s attitude is more ambivalent than that of his father. For while the Old Man concludes with confident snobbery that ‘Her mother never spoke to her again, | And she did right’ (*VPI* 1043), the Boy is open to the social, moral and ethical shades of nuance to which a young girl’s actions that took place fifty years ago may be open. Since he is not burdened by the class-prejudice that warps the Old Man’s moral senses, the Boy can equivocate like the dramatis personae of *Macbeth*, and echo that play’s refrain of ‘Fair is foul, and foul is fair’ (I.i.11) in formulating the question that bespeaks his own moral levity: ‘What’s right and wrong? | My grand-dad got the girl and the money’ (*VPI* 1043).

The opening couplet of the Old Man’s second speech contains another such ‘drama of opposites’. What is more, the semantic opposition that exists between its respective lines is reinforced by a contrast in the Shakespearean dramatic genres from which they originate—a generic shift that mirrors the descent of Anglo-Ireland from Georgian idyll into the nineteenth- and twentieth-century tragedies of impoverishment, political disenfranchisement and miscegenation which are among *Purgatory*’s overt subjects. The Old Man’s initial observation that ‘The moonlight falls upon the path’ (*VPI* 1041) intimates a misleading feeling of pastoral security by echoing the opening line of Lorenzo’s description of the conditions that accompany Portia’s return to Belmont at the end of one of the comedies (‘How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!’ [*The Merchant of Venice* V.i.54]). But that mood is quickly changed in the next line, where the ‘symbolical’ ‘shadow of a cloud upon the house’

<sup>19</sup> For a useful account of Shakespeare’s use of ‘equivocation’ in the language of *Macbeth*, see Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare’s Language* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), 201–16.

of which he speaks with grave authority (*VPI* 1041) invokes Richard, Duke of Gloucester's symbolical premonition of his tragic fall in the famous opening soliloquy of *Richard III*, with its reference to the metaphorical 'clouds that lour'd upon our House', foreshadowing its demise (I.i.3).

From his very first words onward, the Old Man is concerned with the importance of the house, the ruined shell of which dominates the backdrop of the stage. For Yeats, in *Purgatory* and elsewhere, houses can never be separated from the families who live in them. They are always synonymous—in part, at least—with the dynasties who built them and with the wider cultural traditions of which those families are part. The tragic disintegration of a noble house, with its many ecological, architectural, domestic, familial, dynastic, social and political connotations, is a ubiquitous Shakespearean theme that may have found its way into the imagery of *Purgatory* via any number of Shakespeare's plays.<sup>20</sup> One Shakespearean tragedy in particular, though, perhaps suggests itself more than any other. For while the cloud that casts a 'symbolical' shadow over the Old Man's ancestral home may have drifted into *Purgatory* straight out of *Richard III*, ruination and storm clouds are also of course a constant presence in the language and imagery of *King Lear*. And it is to *King Lear*, the sublime tragedy about the 'symbolical' ruination of the noble houses of Lear and Gloucester, that *Purgatory* returns more frequently than to any other of Shakespeare's plays—even if one plot element which would seem most obviously *Lear*-like may be more directly indebted to other Shakespearean antecedents. Because if the Old Man's description of his son as 'A bastard that a pedlar got | Upon a tinker's daughter in a ditch' (*VPI* 1044) contains a literary allusion, then it is not to the 'good sport' that went into the making of the bastard Edmund in *King Lear* (I.i.22), but rather to the base beds in which some of his other, less illustrious Shakespearean forebears had been conceived. Yeats's iambic description of bastardry among the beggar-classes in *Purgatory* may be reminiscent of such lines as the aspersions

<sup>20</sup> Desai, for example, reads the invocations of both the 'ruined house' and the 'bare tree' in *Purgatory*'s opening lines as allusions to certain speeches in acts 4 and 5, respectively, of *Timon of Athens*. See Desai, *Yeats's Shakespeare*, 213–14.

cast on the parentage of Apemantus by Timon of Athens: 'thy father (that poor rag) | ..., who in spite put stuff | To some she-beggar and compounded thee | Poor rogue hereditary' (IV.iii.274–77), or perhaps more faintly of Autolycus' less than flattering description of himself as a libidinous wandering tradesman in *The Winter's Tale*: 'he ... married a tinker's wife within a mile where my land and living lies; and, having flown over many knavish professions, he settled only in rogue' (IV.iii.95–98). That late romance, in particular, seems like a highly appropriate intertext. Like *Purgatory*, *The Winter's Tale* is centrally concerned with the quality of one's birth, and with the remorse that must follow any rash and violent attempt at rectifying family honour or restoring a legitimate bloodline.

Verbal and other cues to *King Lear* were present in *Purgatory* from its first inception. More than one critic has remarked, for example, on the 'Lear-like snatches of song' here and elsewhere in Yeats.<sup>21</sup> More specifically allusive to the language and imagery of *King Lear* is a passage in the first verse draft in which Yeats inserted, and then struck out, a Lear-like reference to the (no doubt 'symbolical') deteriorating eyesight of the Old Man, who prefaces the confession that he murdered his father in the burning house with a conspiratorial question:

Is there nobody in ear shot  
My eyes begin to age  
Your eyes are young<sup>22</sup>

Blindness is a theme Yeats also found in *Oedipus Rex* (a play that preoccupied him all his life, and which is referenced on a number of occasions in the prose argument of *On the Boiler*), but the reference to ageing rather than blind eyes more properly recalls Shakespeare's tragedy. Specifically, the crossed-out line echoes the ailing king's

<sup>21</sup> A. S. Knowland, *W. B. Yeats: Dramatist of Vision* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1983), 89. See also Helen Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 72, 133; and Corcoran, *Shakespeare and the Modern Poet*, 41–42.

<sup>22</sup> Manuscript of the First Verse Draft (MS 8772#2), in Sandra F. Siegel ed., *Purgatory: Manuscript Materials Including the Author's Final Text*, by W. B. Yeats (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 80–81.

address to Kent in Act 5: 'I am old now | And these same crosses spoil me. ... Who are you? | Mine eyes are not o'the best' (*King Lear* V.iii.275–77).

The presence of *King Lear* can be discerned not only in the *language* of *Purgatory*, but also in Yeats's conception of the 'symbolical' bare setting for the play. The minimal set-design envisaged by Yeats for this symbolic drama may not only be reminiscent of *The Well of the Saints*, or even of the traditional stylized backdrop of Japanese Noh theatre, but equally of *Lear* on the heath. The mirroring of *Purgatory*'s moral and psychological desolation in its 'symbolical[ly]' barren and hostile setting is in itself reminiscent of *King Lear*, but Yeats may have had one production in particular in mind. When he conceived of the 'symbolical' setting of *Purgatory*, Yeats may have been thinking *specifically* of a memorable production that he had witnessed at the Abbey Theatre on 29 October 1930, when Denis Johnston directed a production of *King Lear*<sup>23</sup> which, as one modern scholar summarises it,

was informed by Johnston's awareness of new European theatre practises ... the sets were not presented in a realistic style; instead each scene featured one strong emblem that conveyed the setting representat-ionally. Hence, ... an exterior scene [was represented] by a desolate landscape occupied only by a tree with three branches.<sup>24</sup>

In his journal entry for 30 October 1930, Yeats was outspoken about his 'unfavourable impression' and 'dislike' for that production, which he considered a failure in terms of both audibility and visibility (*Mem* 275–77). Yet it is not unlikely that the image of Dorothy Travers Smith's set designs for the Abbey's *King Lear* (see Plates 38–39) had become part of Yeats's visual imagination, and that it was retrieved

<sup>23</sup> Johnston's *King Lear* was first performed at the Abbey as early as November 1928, but since Yeats was in Rapallo at that time he only saw its revival two years later (see *Mem* 275; *CL IntelLex* 5398). For production details of plays performed at the Abbey I rely on the Abbey archives' online resource: <http://www.abbeytheatre.ie/archives/>

<sup>24</sup> Patrick Loneragan, "Old fools are babes again": Shakespeare at the Abbey Theatre', programme note for *King Lear*, dir. Selina Cartmell (Abbey Theatre, Dublin, 6 February–23 March 2013), 10.

**ABBAY THEATRE**  
DUBLIN

Proprietors THE NATIONAL THEATRE SOCIETY, Ltd.  
Directors W. G. YEATS, H. GREGORY,  
W. G. WYBURN, H. H. PERRIN,  
WALTER STARMIE, LENNIX ROBINSON  
Producer W. G. WYBURN  
Assistant Producer and Stage Manager ARTHUR SHIELDS  
Secretary J. H. PERRIN

All seats in Theatre with exception of Back Pit may be booked.  
Seats Reserved but not paid for, will not be kept later than 7.45 p.m.

Monday, October 27th, 1930, and following nights at 8  
Matinee Saturday at 2.30

**KING LEAR**  
By WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Characters:

<p>LEAR (King of Britain) KING OF FRANCE DUKE OF BURGUNDY DUKE OF CORNWALL DUKE OF ALBANY EARL OF KENT EARL OF GLOUCESTER EDGAR (son to Gloucester) FOOL OSWALD (Steward to Goneril) DOCTOR CAPTAIN OLD MAN HERALD SERVANT GONERIL REGAN CORDELIA</p>	<p>F. J. McCormick T. Moran V. B. Wynburne Fred Johnson Denis O'Dea Paul Farrell J. Stephenson L. Elyan Arthur Shields Michael J. Dolan John Barton T. Moran J. Winter U. Wright M. J. Clarke M. Finn Eileen Crowe Gertrude Quinn Sheilah Richards</p>
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} daughters to Lear

PART I.—Lear's Palace,  
Gloucester's Castle,  
Albany's Palace.

PART I. *entd.*—Gloucester's Castle,  
Courtyard of Gloucester's Castle.  
The Heath.  
Gloucester's Castle.  
Before a hotel.  
A chamber in a farmhouse.

INTERVAL OF TEN MINUTES

PART II.—Gloucester's Castle,  
The Heath.  
Albany's Palace.  
A Tent in the French Camp,  
Gloucester's Castle,  
Fields near Dover.  
A Tent in the French Camp.  
The British Camp near Dover.  
A field between the two camps.  
The British Camp near Dover.

Scenery and Costumes designed by D. TRAVERS-SMITH.  
Play produced by E. W. TOCHER.

---

The Orchestra, under the Direction of Dr. J. F. LARCHET, will perform the following selections:

Overture	"Euryanthe"
Fantasia	"Weather"

Weber  
(1796-1826)  
Massenet  
(1840-1912)

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**ANNOUNCEMENT**

Tuesday, 4th November, 1930, and following nights at 8  
Matinee Saturday, at 2.30 p.m.

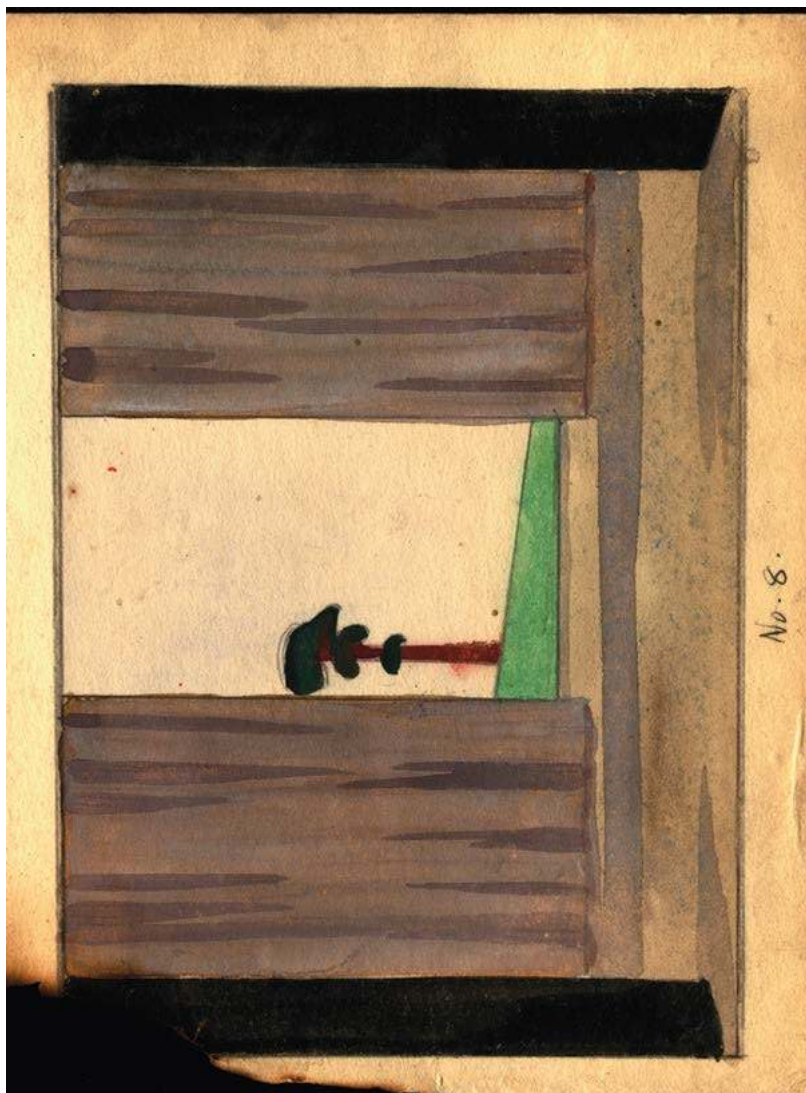
**PROFESSOR TIM**  
A Comedy in Three Acts, by GEORGE SHIELDS

The Abbey Theatre Company are broadcasting "The Counting of Mary Doyle" from the Basilist Studios of the B.B.C., on Monday, 4th November.

**NOTICE**—Ladies sitting in the stalls are requested to remove their Hats

Plate 37. Abbey Theatre Programme for *King Lear*, 27 October 1930 and following nights. Yeats saw the first half on 27th and the second on 29th: see *Mem* 275. 'E. W. Tocher' is a professional pseudonym used by Denis Johnston, the Director. Image courtesy James Hardiman Library, NUI, Galway.







No. 4

Plates 38-39. Set designs for *King Lear*, by Dorothy Travers Smith.  
Images courtesy James Hardiman Library, NUI, Galway.

from his store house of ‘permanent or impermanent images’ (*VP* 602) when he came to write *Purgatory* at the end of the decade. Yeats, after all, was an advocate of ‘stylized scenery’, and what he objected to in the stage-design of Johnston’s *Lear* were the aspects of lighting that were too complicated and ‘arty’ (*Mem* 275–77). Elements of symbolic simplicity such as the single tree used to represent a desolate physical and psychological landscape are not mentioned in Yeats’s journal, presumably because they were beyond critique. *King Lear* was a play that invariably brought out the director in Yeats, and the same production of *King Lear* provoked a letter to Lady Gregory in which he outlined his vision of a more satisfactory way of staging Shakespeare’s tragedy. Yeats’s ideal *Lear* would be stripped of all unnecessary adornments: it would be played ‘in full light throughout—leaving the words to suggest the storm’ (29 October 1930, *CL InteLex* 5398). His desire on that occasion in 1930 for seeing a minimal *Lear* both looks *back* to the less cumbersome stage machinery of early-Jacobean open-air performances, and *forward* to Yeats’s later efforts to realise on the Abbey stage the ‘rather bald’ effect he intended for *Purgatory*.<sup>25</sup> In this respect, Yeats’s responses in letters and journals to Johnston’s *Lear* read like a dress-rehearsal for the Yeatses’ arguments with Hugh Hunt, who directed the premiere of *Purgatory* at the Abbey in August 1938.<sup>26</sup>

To read the setting of *Purgatory* as a response to *King Lear* may also make sense of another detail that is less easily explained than the large symbols of bare tree and ruined house. In his well-known but now largely superseded reading of the play as a historical allegory of the history of modern Ireland, Donald T. Torchiana views both tree and house as rather blatant symbols of the fall of Parnell and the ruin of Anglo-Irish civilization.<sup>27</sup> The Boy’s description of the floorless,

<sup>25</sup> ‘rather bald’ was George Yeats’s description, in a letter to the director, of the type of staging Yeats wanted—‘To the best of my belief’—for *Purgatory*. George Yeats, letter to Hugh Hunt, 26 July 1938, *CL InteLex* 7281.

<sup>26</sup> See the various letters from 1938 between W. B. Yeats, George Yeats and Hugh Hunt. See also *Life* 2 627.

<sup>27</sup> See Donald T. Torchiana’s discussion of the allegorical timeline of *Purgatory* in his *W. B. Yeats and Georgian Ireland*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 358–61.

windowless and roofless shell of a once-great house is followed by his noticing of 'a bit of an egg-shell thrown | Out of a jackdaw's nest' (*VPI* 1042). In addition to being simply an extension of the image of the burned-out shell of a house (as John Unterecker suggests), or an 'image of life as an empty shell' (as Ellmann sums up the general tenor of *Purgatory* and other late works),<sup>28</sup> the Boy's discovery of an egg-shell on the ground may also be read as an intertextual reminder of the Fool's egg-shell speech in Act 1, scene 4 of *King Lear*, in which the foolish king is berated for breaking his crown in half and throwing both halves away as if they were two empty egg-shells, leaving his witless head as empty as the two empty 'crowns' that are left behind when the edible part within has been consumed (*King Lear* I.iv.148–56). The next two lines of the Boy's speech deepen the connection with that classic image of witlessness from the English tragic stage. First he tells the Old Man that 'Your wits are out again', before expressing his exasperation at the Old Man's seemingly crazy explanation of the workings of purgatory: 'I have had enough! | Talk to the jackdaws, if talk you must' (*VPI* 1042, 1043). Both of those lines may recall descriptions of diminished mental faculties in Shakespeare's tragedies. Jacqueline Genet has read the Old Man's admission later in the play that he may indeed be mad—'my wits are out' (*VPI* 1046), a line that echoes the Boy's earlier accusation—as an allusion to Lear's 'My wits begin to turn' (III.ii.67).<sup>29</sup> The association between the jackdaw and the senseless speech of a madman, meanwhile, points to an idea that can be found in a number of Shakespeare's plays. The connection that exists in the Boy's mind between madness and 'talk[ing] to the jackdaws' gestures towards Yeats's knowledge of such Shakespearean dialogue as Hamlet's insult of the yea-sayer Osrick—he calls him a 'chough', the older English name for a jackdaw, a bird known, as T. J. B. Spencer and others have noted, for being 'able to make a chatter resembling

<sup>28</sup> John Unterecker, 'The Shaping Force in Yeats's Plays', *Modern Drama* 7.3 (Autumn 1964), 345–56 (355); Richard Ellmann, *Four Dubliners* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), 50.

<sup>29</sup> Jacqueline Genet, 'Yeats's *Purgatory*: A Re-Assessment', *Irish University Review* 21.2 (Autumn/Winter 1991), 229–44 (243).

human speech<sup>30</sup>—or indeed the ‘canopy’ exchange in *Coriolanus* which the young Yeats had so enjoyed in his father’s rendition (*Au* 65). In that scene, the putdown that answers the Third Serving-man’s question whether the stranger, if he really lives with the birds in the sky, ‘dwell[s] with daws too’, also points to an established association between the jackdaw and foolishness: ‘No, I serve not thy master’, Coriolanus replies with quick wit (IV.v.46–47).

The purpose of the Fool’s egg-shell routine in *King Lear* is to remind the king of the nothingness that defines his new position in the world. The ‘nothing’ that is the subject of his egg-shell speech is also a recurring theme in *Purgatory*. Beckett’s later appropriation of *King Lear*’s obsession with ‘nothing’ in plays like *Endgame* and *Waiting for Godot* has been much remarked upon,<sup>31</sup> but Yeats, too, taking his cue from Shakespeare’s Fool, had already worked riddles and jokes about ‘nothing’ into many of his earlier plays and poems. One of the latter, ‘A Prayer for My Son’, from *The Tower* (1928), inverts Lear’s stern paternal warning to Cordelia that ‘nothing will come of nothing’ (I.i.90) by celebrating the infant’s capacity to ‘fashion everything | From nothing every day’ (*VP* 436). Yeats’s *Lear*-like preoccupation in the last phase of his career with the paradoxical idea of ‘nothing’ which is at once an absence and a presence is also evident from the text of an unpublished ‘little poem about nothing’ written roughly contemporaneously with *Purgatory* in the first half of 1938. The meaning of Yeats’s ‘little poem about nothing’ is more cryptic than any of the Fool’s riddles or Lear’s veiled threats on the

<sup>30</sup> *Hamlet*, ed. by T. J. B. Spencer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), V.ii.88, and p. 345n. Both the ‘good’ second Quarto and the Folio refer to a ‘chough’ (or ‘chowgh’ in F), which can be both a chattering jackdaw and a variant spelling for a ‘chuff’ (a simple rustic, especially one with more money than sense). Most modern editors allow this double meaning. In his Arden edition, however, Harold Jenkins omits the pun by changing the spelling to ‘chuff’ (meaning a rustic but not a species of bird) in an effort to disambiguate the meaning of this obscure speech.

<sup>31</sup> See for example David Wheatley, “‘Nothing will come of nothing’: Zero-sum Games in Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and Beckett’s *Endgame*”, *Shakespeare and the Irish Writer*, ed. by Janet Clare and Stephen O’Neill (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2010), 166–78.

same subject, but the rhetorical cue presented by those characters from *King Lear* seems an unmistakable presence behind these lines:

What is the explanation of it all?  
 What does it look like to a learned man?  
 Nothings in nothings whirled, or when he will.  
 From nowhere unto nowhere nothings run.<sup>32</sup>

As in *King Lear*, the precise nature of ‘nothing’ in Yeats’s ‘little poem’ is elusive. It can ‘whirl’ and ‘run’ like a something when required; yet it is also, as Deirdre Toomey writes, a ‘cosmic revelation of negation’, and even a bawdy pun on female genitalia (the “nothing” from which “everything” came) in the Elizabethan tradition.<sup>33</sup> What the late Yeats of this quatrain shares with the author of *King Lear* is his capacity to sustain both the serious and the playful registers (not to mention to smutty one) at once, in a poem that is more an *essay* in nothingness than an attempt at providing a comprehensive answer to a sticky philosophical problem.

The word ‘nothing’ also appears prominently in a number of Yeats’s plays. Obviously, ‘nothing’ is an important idea in the early play entitled *Where There Is Nothing* (1902; later reworked as *The Unicorn from the Stars*), but the idiosyncratic theological argument of that play—in which the hero Paul Ruttledge concludes that ‘where there is nothing, there is God’ (*VPI* 1140)—is not relevant to this discussion.<sup>34</sup> Nor does ‘nothing’ have the same connotations it does

<sup>32</sup> MS dated ‘Oxford. May 8. 1938’, quoted in Warwick Gould, “What is the explanation of it all?”: Yeats’s “little poem about nothing”, *YA* 5 212–13. N.B. that following analysis of the MS, Gould suggests that the concluding full stop in the third line may not have been ‘intended as a punctuation mark’.

<sup>33</sup> As in *Hamlet* III.ii.119. Deirdre Toomey, “What is the explanation of it all?” Nothing and Something’, *YA* 9 309–12 (311). Perhaps Ellmann was thinking of the same Elizabethan usage when he said that Yeats ‘could conceive of nothing as empty and also as pregnant’ (*Four Dubliners* 50). The bawdy sense of ‘nothing’ is of limited interest to a reading of *Purgatory*, whose nothings do not really lend themselves to that interpretation, and so it shall be pursued no further in this essay.

<sup>34</sup> Although the phraseology may be derived from a story by Tolstoy, the title *Where There Is Nothing* refers to a philosophical system that may be found, not in Nietzsche (as George Mills Harper believed), but in Dante. It proposed that God is located in the empty space (i.e. the ‘nothing’) beyond the ninth and final of the

in *Purgatory* in the play that immediately preceded it, *The Herne's Egg*. That play concludes with a low comic character distracting the audience's attention from what may have been a serious tragic closing tableau with a bad joke that hinges on the repetition of the word 'nothing':<sup>35</sup>

Corney. I have heard that a donkey carries its young  
Longer than any other beast,  
Thirteen months it must carry it.

[*He laughs.*]

All that trouble and nothing to show for it,  
Nothing but just another donkey. (*VPl* 1040)

In these final lines of the play, Corney is devoid of the decorum befitting his place in a tragedy with which *Lear's Fool*, for all his bawdy and nonsensical antics, is endowed. By contrast with the ribald conclusion of *The Herne's Egg*, in the 'scene of tragic intensity'<sup>36</sup> that is played out in *Purgatory* the word 'nothing' is, for all its nascent comic potential, charged with as great a depth of meaning and profundity of feeling as it is in *King Lear*.

Aspects of one other play at least seem more germane to this essay's discussion of the Shakespearean 'nothing' of *Purgatory*. The Wise Man in the 1914 verse version of *The Hour-Glass*, a play in which the word nothing is used more frequently than in any other of Yeats's plays, is conceived as a kind of Horatio-figure whose philosophy of heaven and earth is limited to prosaic, literal, tangible things, and who believes that 'There's nothing but what men can see when they are awake. Nothing, nothing' (*VPl* 595; cf. *Hamlet* I.v.174–75). This makes the Wise Man foolish, just as *Lear's Fool* is wise in his deeper philosophical understanding of the difficult concept of nothing. In

celestial spheres that make up the universe. See Gould and Toomey's explanatory notes in *Myth* 2005 329–30.

<sup>35</sup> For an interesting reading of the dramatic importance of the joke about nothing at the end of *The Herne's Egg*, see Richard Allen Cave, ed., *W. B. Yeats: Selected Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), 374n.

<sup>36</sup> This is how Yeats described his original vision for a one-act play that would become *Purgatory* in a letter to Edith Shackleton Heald, 15 March 1938, *CL InteLex* 7201.

contrast with *The Hour-Glass*'s Wise Man, the Fool Teigue in the same play wisely equates saying nothing and knowing everything (VPI 633).

In *Purgatory*, the motif of nothingness that is first obliquely introduced through the echo of *Lear*'s egg-shell speech is developed in the rest of the play. The word 'nothing' is used five times in *Purgatory*. It appears three times in the Old Man's final speech alone, twice in the first line and once again five lines from the end, so that the majority of that final speech is framed between 'nothing' and 'nothing' (VPI 1048–49). The play's first two uses are simple enough descriptions of the two characters' respective attitudes towards the reality of ghostly haunting. The Boy's sensible, literal-minded observation that 'There's nothing but an empty gap in the wall' (VPI 1045) aligns him with characters like *Hamlet*'s Horatio and the foolish Wise Man in *The Hour-Glass*. This attitude is contrasted with the Old Man's assertion of the paradoxical state of ghostliness: 'There's nothing leaning in the window | But the impression upon my mother's mind' (VPI 1048). Rupin W. Desai may be right when he discerns in the latter exchange the presence of the conversation between Hamlet, who sees the Ghost in the chambers of the Queen, and Gertrude, who can see 'nothing' of the ghostly visitation and believes her son has gone mad (*Hamlet* III.iv.131–41).<sup>37</sup> But the pair of nothings that opens the Old Man's final speech is perhaps even more strongly reminiscent of *King Lear* and its grapple with the many permutations of the meaning of 'nothing'. In that scene from *Hamlet*, as in Cordelia's opening gambit in *King Lear*, 'nothing' can be taken lightly, as part of little more than a word game played by a petulant child. In the remainder of *King Lear*, however, Shakespeare demonstrates both the complexity of the number zero and the desolation inherent in genuine nothingness. When the Old Man in *Purgatory* says about the ghost of his father in the window that 'That beast there would know nothing, being nothing' (VPI 1048), Yeats is echoing the verbal pattern of *Lear*'s put-down by the Fool, whose wit can only slightly diminish, but never completely eradicate his

<sup>37</sup> Desai, *Yeats's Shakespeare*, 216.



bleak message: ‘thou art an 0 without a figure; I am better than thou art now. I am a fool, thou art nothing’ (*King Lear* I.iv.183–85). In *Purgatory* as well as in *King Lear*, therefore, the function of ‘nothing’ hovers constantly somewhere between an absolute philosophical truth and a cheap pun. In both plays, as in Yeats’s ‘little poem about nothing’, the word ‘nothing’ does not so much denote an absence as a presence: Shakespeare’s Fool and Yeats’s Old Man alike know, as the tragical-comical mathematician in Samuel Beckett’s *Watt* puts it, that ‘the only way one can speak of nothing is to speak of it as though it were something’.<sup>38</sup> Nothing is not nothing (so to speak), but a *something* capable of ‘leaning in the window’, a positive identity that the Old Man’s father or the foolish king can assume.

The nothingness which the Old Man in *Purgatory* attributes to his groomsman-father is due to more than merely the prosaic fact that he is dead and therefore not really there; it is also his withering judgement of a social nonentity. The play’s prevailing sense of nothingness that initially takes hold of the spectator’s imagination via the echoes of *King Lear* also bleeds into Yeats’s feelings about the cultural scene in the early decades of the Irish Free State—the inward-looking, essentialist and culturally protectionist era often popularly known to students of Irish cultural history as De Valera’s Ireland. The fate of the house is the most obvious manifestation of this. On the most literal level, the vivid image of the burning of the country-house library containing

... old books and books made fine  
By eighteenth-century French binding, books  
Modern and ancient, books by the ton (*VPI* 1044)

reflects the historical reality of such burnings, which were widespread in the Irish revolutionary period of the early twentieth century. But the burning of the library is also ‘symbolical’ of a wider and much more dangerous act of barbarism perpetrated once the philistine Catholic middle classes who had once snubbed Hugh Lane’s art

<sup>38</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Watt* [1953], ed. by C. J. Ackery (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), 64.

collection got their grubby hands out of the tills of their shops and onto the levers of political power. The wilful destruction of the library that had formed a tangible link with the breadth of European culture is ‘symbolical’ of the isolationist, culturally protectionist attitudes of the new Ireland that sought to cut itself off from ‘corrupting’ external cultural influences through such measures as the introduction of a Censorship of Publications Act in 1929. The burning of the library symbolises the nothingness at the heart of a culture that expends much of its energy defining itself by the things it is *not*.

With its reference to upwardly mobile stable-grooms like the Old Man’s father ‘being nothing’, then, *Purgatory* may be seen to enlist *Hamlet* and *King Lear* in its author’s critique of the cultural and intellectual desolation of the Free State—of the culture of censorship, official book burnings and State-sponsored ignorance that is treated explicitly in section II of the ‘Preliminaries’ to *On the Boiler* (*Ex* 410–12). But *Purgatory* is not the brutal and unmitigated attack on the savagery of the new Ireland, nor the sentimental vindication of or yearning for the cultural values of the Protestant Ascendancy, for which it can so easily be taken by Yeats’s nationalist detractors. Here, as so often, Yeats is a master of self-contradiction—or a great Shakespearean equivocator. His condemnation of the inward-turned philistinism of the shopkeepers and Gaelic Leaguers who determined Ireland’s cultural policies in the 1920s and 1930s in that one passage of *Purgatory* is tempered with the competing assertion of that same class’s right to self-determination in another exchange a few pages later:

*Old Man.* ... You have been rummaging in the pack.

...

*Boy.* You never gave me my right share.

*Old Man.* And had I given it, young as you are,  
You would have spent it upon drink.

*Boy.* What if I did? I had a right  
To get it and spend it as I chose.

*Old Man.* Give me that bag and no more words.

*Boy.* I will not.

*Old Man.* I will break your fingers. (*VPI* 1047)

As a thinly disguised allegory of the clash between the old Ireland and the new, this acrimonious exchange between father and son has specific, local resonances in post-1922 Ireland;<sup>39</sup> but it also reflects more universal concerns about power and control that had always been a natural subject for drama. The urge of the young to govern their own destinies is also a major concern of Shakespeare, not only in many of the comedies, but also in *King Lear*. Thus when the Boy in *Purgatory* points out to the Old Man that ‘You killed my granddad, | Because you were young and he was old. | Now I am young and you are old’ (*VPI* 1047), his belief in the natural superiority of the young over the old replicates the sentiments of Regan’s speech to Lear on seizing control of his fate: ‘O, sir, you are old: | Nature in you stands on the very verge | Of her confine. You should be ruled and led | By some discretion that discerns your state | Better than you yourself’ (*King Lear* II.ii.338–42).

It seems, though, as if Yeats may have taken his immediate rhetorical cue from another of Shakespeare’s tragedies when he wrote this climactic exchange between father and son. With its constant threat of violence, the confrontation between the Old Man and the Boy recalls the argument between patrician and ‘mutinous citizens’ about the distribution of the means of sustenance in the opening scene of *Coriolanus*—a play described by Jan Kott as the first truly modern play about ‘the class struggle’.<sup>40</sup> The impatient, anti-democratic impulse of the eponymous hero of that, Shakespeare’s most political tragedy must certainly have struck a chord with the politically attuned Irish Yeats in the years and decades immediately following Irish independence. *Coriolanus* was one of only three

<sup>39</sup> The intergenerational quarrel about the management of funds plays out the postcolonial argument between Protestant patricians whose class had a vast hereditary experience of government, and representatives of the class newly elevated to political office after the revolution. The Boy articulates the way of acting and thinking often attributed to democratic post-revolutionary or postcolonial governments everywhere, full of ideals but lacking in the practical experience that would make for sensible decision-making, while the Old Man is the voice of reason and experience gained from centuries of colonial administration.

<sup>40</sup> Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* [1964], trans. Boleslaw Taborski, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 1988), 143.

Shakespeare plays to be staged at the Abbey Theatre during Yeats's lifetime, in January 1936, when it was directed by Hugh Hunt, who would be given the task of directing the premiere of *Purgatory* two-and-a-half years later. Yeats particularly chose *Coriolanus* for the Abbey in order to stir controversy, and perhaps even to incite another riot so that he might make a speech in defence of the play and its message as he had once done for *The Playboy of the Western World* and *The Plough and the Stars*.<sup>41</sup> He was also doubtless trying to make the kind of point about contemporary politics to which that play so readily lends itself, as European productions from different ends of the political spectrum throughout the 1930s demonstrated.<sup>42</sup> In his autobiography, Frank O'Connor records how Yeats insisted that the Abbey's *Coriolanus* be played 'in coloured shirts', referencing the uniform of the local fascists—General O'Duffy's 'Blueshirts'—as was the fashion for revivals of *Coriolanus* across Europe in that turbulent decade. Yeats did not get his way, though. He was outvoted by the Abbey board, so that when the play was eventually produced it was in Elizabethan dress and Roman togas, rather than in the 'coloured shirts' that would have given it the immediate topical flavour of contemporary politics.<sup>43</sup>

Yeats's stubborn attempt to realise an Irish-fascist *Coriolanus*, even if it never materialised on the boards at the Abbey Theatre, remains nevertheless of utmost significance as it points to the presence of that play in his political and dramatic consciousness in the years immediately leading up to the writing of *Purgatory*. That Yeats was both capable and inclined in the 1930s to view Irish politics

<sup>41</sup> Frank O'Connor, *My Father's Son* (1968; London: Pan, 1971), 152.

<sup>42</sup> A fascist production at the Comédie Française in Paris in 1934 treated *Coriolanus* 'as an all-out attack on democracy', resulting in violent demonstrations outside the theatre, and in Germany the Nazis hailed the play as 'a hymn to strong leadership'. In Stalin's Soviet Union, meanwhile, it was cast as a Bolshevik treatise against a 'contemptible, aristocratic, Western-style enemy of the people'. *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 92.

<sup>43</sup> O'Connor, *My Father's Son*, 152. On Yeats and *Coriolanus* at the Abbey, see also Lauren Arrington, *W. B. Yeats, The Abbey Theatre, Censorship and the Irish State: Adding the Half-pence to the Pence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 168–70.

through Shakespearean eyes (rather than exclusively through those of a follower of the political philosophy of Edmund Burke, or even, for a brief time, of European fascism<sup>44</sup>), and through the lens of *Coriolanus* in particular, is further suggested by his dismissal, in the prose section of *On the Boiler*, of government officials like the Lord Mayor of Dublin. Yeats scornfully observed how the current holder of that office ‘thinks ... that his duty is to make himself popular among the common people’. Instead, Yeats approved of officials temperamentally more like Coriolanus, ‘who despised them with that old Shakespearean contempt and were worshipped after their death or even while they lived’ (*Ex* 409–10). The adjective ‘Shakespearean’ is telling. The summary of that second type of officialdom in *On the Boiler* is reminiscent of two scenes in *Coriolanus*. One is the exchange between two Officers in the Capitol about the ‘many great men that have flattered the people, who ne’er loved them’ (II.ii.7–8); the other is Coriolanus’ ominous prediction on going into exile later in the play that ‘I shall be lov’d when I am lack’d’ (IV.i.15).

Yeats may have been unsuccessful in his attempt to insert a degree of topicality into the Abbey’s staging of *Coriolanus* in 1936, but the long shadow of that play can still be seen in *Purgatory*, where its idioms are rewritten for the setting of an Irish country road. In *Purgatory*’s recasting of the opening scene of Shakespeare’s final tragedy, the Boy takes the role of the ‘mutinous members’ (*Coriolanus* I.i.148) while the Old Man is cast as the benevolent, though patronising, Menenius Agrippa—a role in which it is not difficult to imagine the seventy-year-old smiling public man, a former Senator of the Irish Free State, that Yeats had by the late 1930s become. One detail that may have been inserted (at the very last minute) for the purpose of signalling an intended parallel with the concerns of the opening scene of *Coriolanus* may be that which marks the conclusion of the argument

<sup>44</sup> On Yeats’s Burkean political thought, and its overlaps with the fascism with which he briefly flirted earlier in the 1930s, see for example Grattan Freyer, *W. B. Yeats and the Anti-Democratic Tradition* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1981); and Elizabeth Cullingford, *Yeats, Ireland and Fascism* (London: Macmillan, 1981).

between Old Man and Boy. It may not be a coincidence that the respective exchanges between the voices of establishment and rising force in both plays is brought to a close with a base threat or insult by the patrician which involves one or more of the digits. Menenius compares the First Citizen to the 'great toe' of the body politic of the Roman state (*Coriolanus* I.i.153–57); the Old Man simply threatens to break the Boy's fingers if he does not hand over the money-bag.<sup>45</sup> In addition, Yeats's imagining in *Purgatory* of the debate between rash new statesmen versus seasoned administrators as a family row inverts Menenius' paternal image of the plebeians who 'slander | The helms o'th' state, who care for you like fathers' (*Coriolanus* I.i.75–76), since the father in *Purgatory* cares for his son much like a functionary in an overbearing state apparatus. In the end, though, despite all the reasonableness of their respective patricians' arguments—and despite the ageing Yeats's possible temperamental likeness to the wise, aristocratic but pompous Menenius trying desperately to reason with a populace whose outlook he cannot fully comprehend—both *Coriolanus* and *Purgatory* allow *as much* sympathy for the 'mutinous citizens' who may yet deserve a chance to assert their economic independence no matter their administrative inexperience or youthful folly.<sup>46</sup> Great poets, after all, as Yeats had written nearly four decades earlier in his essay 'At Stratford-on-Avon', do not judge the world 'with the eyes of a Municipal Councillor weighing the merits of a Town Clerk' (*E&I* 105). Evidently, some of that Romantic attitude survived even amid the mature cynicism of *Purgatory* and *On the Boiler*.

<sup>45</sup> The line 'I will break your fingers' (*VPI* 1047) was a very late additions to the text. It does not appear in any of the surviving manuscripts or typescripts prepared by Yeats; its earliest preserved appearance is in the 'Longford Page Proofs' (LPP1) that were sent to Yeats in the south of France. See Siegel, *Purgatory*, 196n and 220.

<sup>46</sup> It is this ideological openness that had allowed French and German fascist productions as well as Soviet communist interpretations of *Coriolanus* earlier in the decade. Jan Kott proposed that *Coriolanus*' long lack of popularity was due to its inherent political, moral and philosophical ambiguity (*Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 142).

## IV

The relationship between a text and its precursors is rarely pure and never simple. For scholars of literary influence, it is tempting to seek a single, authoritative intertext for each allusion in a text, but practice dictates that this is not always how the imagination of a great poet works. The most memorable lines of prose or verse can sometimes draw upon a number of antecedents at the same time, with varying levels of conscious intent on the part of the author. In the case of *Purgatory*, it is curious how some of the lines in which the underlying presence of Shakespeare can be most distinctly heard simultaneously contain equally distinct echoes of key moments in the plays of Synge.

Multiple influences are at work simultaneously in *Purgatory* when the Old Man in his final speech refers to being no more than 'a wretched foul old man' (*VPI* 1049). In that line, Yeats may be paying homage to Synge by means of a recollection of Molly Byrne's rebuke of Martin Doul's proposition at the end of Act 2 of *The Well of the Saints*: 'That's the way to treat the like of him is after standing there at my feet and asking me to go off with him, *till I'd grow an old wretched road woman*' (JMSCW iii, 119 italics added). Such an intertext would serve to reinforce *Purgatory's* links with the satirical comedies of Synge and the tradition of poetic peasant dramas of the early Abbey. More than that, an alignment here and later in the same speech (to which this essay will shortly turn its attention) with Synge's various ironic takes on the idealised figure of the unspoilt peasant from the western seaboard would reinforce Yeats's own critical stance toward the more narrow-minded manifestations of the nationalist pieties of the Revival era.

As various critics have pointed out, however, the most obvious intertext in that line is again *King Lear*. When the Old Man asserts that

I am a wretched foul old man  
And therefore harmless (*VPI* 1049)

Yeats is aligning his protagonist with the ageing Lear, as F. A. C. Wilson argued many years ago, '[through] so unusual a device as the inflection of the verse ... When Yeats echoes a phrase and rhythm of

Shakespeare in this way, he does so with a definite intention, here to enhance the stature of his hero, and to make the audience see him in a grimmer and more terrible light'.<sup>47</sup> Both the words—their sound-pattern as well as their emotional register—and the formal rhythm of the metre repeat Lear's expression of guilt and remorse to Cordelia, the daughter he has wronged:<sup>48</sup>

I am a very foolish, fond old man,  
Fourscore and upward ... (IV.vii.60–61)

In addition, the Old Man's words—though not the 'inflection of the verse' or the 'rhythm'—are also reminiscent of Lear's submission to the force of the hostile elements of nature on the heath during the storm earlier in the play:

Here I stand your slave,  
A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man. (III.ii.19–20)

Despite the imperfect match of the verse, this earlier speech from Act 3 is probably the more useful analogy (certainly the adjectives are a better lexical match for 'wretched', 'foul' and 'harmless'). Even at this late stage, the Old Man does not show remorse for the misdeeds against his child, nor even so much as a trace of personal growth. As Richard Allen Cave points out, if the echo of Lear's remorseful speech to Cordelia in Act 4 is indeed intended by Yeats, then this is problematic because it would suggest a psychological transformation in the Old Man analogous to that undergone by Lear at that late stage in the play. The existence of such a transformation in the protagonist of Yeats's play is belied, however, by the fact that, in place of Lear's expression of 'genuine humility, the Old Man's [words] are suffused with self-pity and total self-delusion'.<sup>49</sup> Like Maurya at the end of Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, or the Lear of Act 3, Yeats's Old Man

<sup>47</sup> F. A. C. Wilson, *W. B. Yeats and Tradition* (London: Gollancz, 1958), 159.

<sup>48</sup> Neither Wilson (*W. B. Yeats*, 159) nor Knowland (*Dramatist of Vision*, 236–37) actually cite Lear's apology to Cordelia, but it is clear that this is the speech to which they allude. Desai (*Yeats's Shakespeare*, 219–20) and Cave both identify this speech in particular as the original of the echo which Yeats 'may well have intended deliberately' (Cave, *W. B. Yeats, Selected Plays*, 379n).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*



can only submit to the superior forces of nature or the will of the universe. But he is not yet ready at this point, as Lear is by the time he is confronted with Cordelia in Act 4, to accept any culpability for his actions or to ask forgiveness from those he has wronged; nor is he ever likely to be. At the conclusion of *Purgatory*, the main character undergoes no Lear-like 'enlargement of ... vision' of the kind described by Yeats in his definition of tragedy in 'A General Introduction for My Work' (*E&I* 522). Quite the opposite, in fact: the Old Man is intent on eradicating the 'pollution' to his family's bloodline represented by *others*, but he stops short of taking his *own* life, hypocritically claiming that he is 'harmless' due to his advanced age. This wilful blindness throughout to his own part in his family's disgrace is surely significant to Yeats's tragic meaning in this play written for an individualistic generation. Because one of the themes of *Purgatory* is the tragic elusiveness of the crucial psychological insight that, as Yeats's friend Masfield said of *Hamlet* in that book apparently so much indebted to Yeats's conversation, 'damnation comes from within, not from without'.<sup>50</sup>

The ghost of *King Lear* can be felt throughout the Old Man's final speech. His entreaty to a vague and cruel deity in the play's final words that 'Mankind can do no more. Appease | The misery of the living and the remorse of the dead' (*VPI* 1049) does not repeat any specific line of the mad Lear or the blinded Gloucester. (In fact, if those final lines recall any original at all it may be the conclusion of *Riders to the Sea*: 'They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me ... and may [God] have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of everyone is left living in the world' [JMSCW iii, 23, 27], or even the cadence of the final sentence of Joyce's 'The Dead'.) But Yeats's elastic iambs—and in that final line of the play they are *very* elastic—certainly do revive *King Lear's* master-themes of pointless and arbitrary human cruelty and suffering, and hard-won compassion. The analogy with Lear's suffering was explicitly signalled by a verbal allusion in an early draft of the Old Man's final speech:

<sup>50</sup> John Masfield, *William Shakespeare* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1911), 163.

and  
 Again ^ again & again on—on on, on, on, on  
 O God release my mother s soul  
 Theres nothing mankind can do appease  
 The misery of the living & the remorse of the dead<sup>51</sup>

The four *ons* that disrupt the rhythm of the verse line repeat, in reverse, Lear's four *nos* on being reunited with Cordelia outside Edmund's prison camp:

No, no, no, no. Come, let's away to prison;  
 We two alone will sing like birds i'the cage.  
 When thou dost ask me blessing I'll kneel down  
 And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live  
 And pray, and sing, and tell old tales ... (V.iii.8–12)

The reverse verbal echo of Lear's departure to prison with Cordelia in this early manuscript draft may have been intended to highlight the theme of remorse and forgiveness, but also to suggest the continuation of the mother's, and indeed the Old Man's purgatory, where parent and child will be stuck rehearsing the 'old tales' of the past. Whatever its intention, Yeats apparently soon changed his mind, and from the next draft onward the echo disappeared from the text of *Purgatory* forever.

It is when the Old Man marks his near-exit towards the end of the final monologue that the voices of Synge and Shakespeare merge seamlessly. Near the end of the play he announces a new beginning:

When I have stuck  
 This old jack-knife into a sod  
 And pulled it out all bright again,  
 And picked up all the money that he dropped,  
 I'll to a distant place, and there  
 Tell my old jokes among new men. (*VPI* 1049)

Without recalling any passages in particular, bloody knives stuck in sods of earth would be equally at home in Synge's macabre comedies and Shakespeare's martial tragedies. It is the last two lines of this

<sup>51</sup> Manuscript of the First Verse Draft (MS 8772#2), in Siegel, *Purgatory*, 104–5.

speech, however, that are of particular interest, as they echo pivotal speeches from two different plays simultaneously. The Old Man's intention to go 'to a distant place, and there | Tell my old jokes among new men' appears in the first instance to be a repetition of Old Mahon's parting speech at the conclusion of *The Playboy of the Western World*, when he takes his leave of the villagers by proclaiming his intention of becoming a wandering purveyor of comic tales:

but my son and myself will be going our own way and we'll have great times from this out telling stories of the villainy of Mayo and the fools is here. (JMSCW iv, 173)<sup>52</sup>

This link is not without its problems. The connection between the *language* of these two speeches may be clear, but any link between the dramatic contexts in which they appear must remain more ambivalent. Yeats's Old Man does not strike us as a comic character. He has not told any jokes so far; far from it, he started the play with a lament for the 'jokes and stories' that had once been contained in the house that is now dead (*VPI* 1041). Yeats's echo of the conclusion of *The Playboy of the Western World*, then, is an ironic one, as the reconciliation of the patricide with his supposedly dead father in Synge's comedy is but a distant memory in the face of the Old Man's ghoulish ritual killing of his son at the end of *Purgatory*. The restoration of the family unit at the end of *The Playboy* is twisted at the conclusion of Yeats's play into a sense of nothingness. 'Twice a murderer and all for nothing' (*VPI* 1049), the Old Man reflects when he realises that his deed has not trammelled up the consequences of his mother's transgression in the way he had hoped it would. While that thought may recall the comic question Christy asks his father after 'killing' him a second time—'Are you coming to be killed a third time or what ails you now?' (JMSCW iv, 171)—the Old Man's realisation in Yeats's play does not

<sup>52</sup> It is perhaps surprising that critics of Irish drama have not picked up on this echo. It is not unlikely, on the other hand, that members of the play's early audience must have been struck, if only subconsciously, by the similarity between the two endings when *Purgatory* was revived on a double bill with *The Playboy* between 5 and 10 December 1938. This is especially likely given that the role of the father in both plays was played in that run by the same actor, Michael J. Dolan.

have the farcical intent of Synge's joke. Instead, the hellishness of his realisation is closer to the most hopeless moments of Shakespearean tragedy than it is to Syngean farce. Echoing Macbeth's fear after the murder of Duncan that 'To be thus is nothing' (*Macbeth* III.i.47) because the horrible deed may yet fail to yield the desired result in the name of which it was carried out, the Old Man's final epiphany of nothingness is brought about by the sound of hoofbeats in his head which, like the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth*, wake the protagonist to a belated realisation of the horrible futility of his actions.

The Old Man's resolution to go 'to a distant place, and there | Tell my old jokes among new men' is also reminiscent of a more clearly tragic antecedent in Shakespeare's plays. Not only do his words recall the conclusion of *The Playboy of the Western World*; their indebtedness to the rhyming couplet that marks the Earl of Kent's exit from the opening scene of *King Lear* is equally clear:

Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu;  
He'll shape his old course in a country new. (I.i.187–88)

The invocation of this second intertext is steeped in a different type of dramatic irony. The Old Man may imagine for himself a physical departure from the scene of his mother's transgressions and his own crimes; but even before the return of the fateful hoofbeats seals his fate, the echo of Kent's parting words already confirms that his attempted escape must be doomed to failure. Borrowing Kent's words effectively immobilises the Old Man—prevents rather than enables his going hence. In Shakespeare's play, Kent is characterised by his inability to leave the stage: even after he is exiled from the court for offering his frank advice, he soon returns in order to 'serve where thou dost stand condemned' (*King Lear* I.iv.5). Instead of leaving on the foreign adventure he announces, Kent must remain to wander the heath and endure the repercussions of the king's crimes against his child that have offended both the natural and the social order. And so the Old Man's triumphant announcement of intended foreign travels near the end of *Purgatory* through an echo of Kent's deceptive farewell is merely the ironic preamble to an endless repetition of the woes of the present, and the past. As the play's final lines show,

the Old Man, like his mother, is condemned to remain perpetually rooted to the place where their original transgressions took place.

## V

In *Yeats the Playwright*, Peter Ure characterised *Purgatory* as a 'Shakespearean tragedy in miniature'.<sup>53</sup> Certainly, Yeats's play addresses common concerns, and does so through a host of strategically placed echoes and allusions to Shakespeare's tragedies in a way that suggests a desire to establish a kinship with Shakespeare's tragic enterprise. In the end, though, *Purgatory* must be classed a failure if it is measured against the standards of Shakespearean tragedy. For one thing, Yeats could not affirm the premise of a tragic universe in which the action is concluded by a restoration of the moral order.<sup>54</sup> If *Purgatory* contains a version of *King Lear*, a play to which its language and imagery constantly gesture, then Yeats's re-writing takes away the original Shakespearean possibility for the final salvation of the 'silly old man'<sup>55</sup> who is responsible for disturbing the social and the natural order. With only the unrepentant infanticide left on the stage, *Purgatory* aborts the promise of the restoration of that order through the natural transference of worldly affairs to a younger generation—Edgar, Malcolm, Fortinbras—whose statements of intended new departures typically mark the conclusions of even the bloodiest of Shakespeare's tragedies. The fact that the play ends with an echo not of any of these young successors, or even of the dying Lear, but of the banished Kent from Act 1 preparing for his non-departure only

<sup>53</sup> Peter Ure, *Yeats the Playwright: A Commentary on Character and Design in the Major Plays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 112.

<sup>54</sup> On the restoration of the moral order that is a generic imperative of Shakespearean tragedy, see for example A. C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1904), still in print today but already antiquated by the time Yeats came to write his final plays.

<sup>55</sup> 'A silly old man' is the Boy's indolent answer to his father's question: 'study that tree, | What is it like?' (*VPI* 1041). His answer is clearly intended as a mockery of his father, the 'silly old man' who asked him a silly question; but the Boy's terse description of what the tree reminds him of *also* gestures to the presence in *Purgatory* of King Lear in his self-confessed dotage—the 'very foolish, fond old man' of IV.vii.60.

works to affirm this sense of the static or repetitive, rather than the transformative or visionary or even the redemptive, all epithets that have at one time or another been appended to Lear in the moments leading up to his death.

Nor was Yeats inclined to see death as an ending. Tragedy, as Tom Stoppard's outrageous Elizabethan tragedian (anachronistically adapting Oscar Wilde) defines it, is a genre in which 'The bad end unhappily, the good unluckily';<sup>56</sup> but in Yeats's last plays they do not 'end' at all. The idea of a purgatory in which the dead endlessly act out the transgressions of their lifetimes may be a distinct theological possibility for some of Shakespeare's tragic heroes (Hamlet (I.v.9–13; III.i.66–88) and Macbeth (I.vii.4–12) fear the repercussions of the actions of this life in the life to come);<sup>57</sup> but it is not a concern for the dramatist, for whom the tragedy comes to an end after the death of the protagonist. The action of *Purgatory*, like that of *The Death of Cuchulain* (the one play Yeats completed after it) and poems like 'Cuchulain Comforted' and 'The Cold Heaven', on the other hand, is not bounded by the limits of mortal existence in the same way. In fact, it may be said that in these texts the tragedy only *begins* with the death of the hero. All of these are attempts to find what Ure calls an 'intelligible representation of the life of the dead', a problem that preoccupied Yeats since at least 1911.<sup>58</sup> Many of Yeats's greatest lyric and dramatic writings are tragic precisely because the soul is incapable of being released into the oblivion that Lear by the end craves, and is instead 'sent | Out naked on the roads, ... and stricken | By the injustice of the skies for punishment' ('The Cold Heaven', *VP* 316).<sup>59</sup> In failing to rise to the tragic *crescendo* of the endings of Shakespearean tragedies, therefore, Yeats was making a point both about the absence of a 'moral order', and the possibility of a cruel, repetitive afterlife of the soul. Both those points would

<sup>56</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), 58.

<sup>57</sup> On Shakespeare's heroes and their beliefs in the afterlife, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>58</sup> Ure, *Yeats the Playwright*, 84.

<sup>59</sup> For this theme in Yeats, and its various possible sources, see Deirdre Toomey, 'The Cold Heaven', *YA18* 191–214.

be elaborated by post-War playwrights like Samuel Beckett, many of whose plays further exploited the dramatic potential of endless repetition that was first introduced in *Purgatory*.

But there is perhaps one more dimension to the story of Yeats's struggle with Shakespearean tragedy in this play. If Shakespeare, as Yeats told Dorothy Wellesley on his deathbed in January 1939, was no more than 'a mass of magnificent fragments' (*LDW* 194), then perhaps the writing of *Purgatory* should be seen not merely as a failed attempt to write a 'Shakespearean tragedy in miniature', a project whose success or failure can be measured in relation to an established Shakespearean yardstick. The very idea of *miniaturization*, however casually it is introduced by Ure at the end of a chapter, is essential. That process is not always the result of modesty or lack of ambition; it can also be the outcome of a crucial act of refinement. As an example of the latter, *Purgatory* may be read as Yeats's heroic—or perhaps rather tragic—attempt to rehabilitate a heterogeneous mass of Shakespearean 'fragments' into a single 'scene of tragic intensity' (as he wrote to Edith Heald about his initial conception of the play [*CL InteLex* 7201]), which achieves the unity of vision and purpose that Yeats believed was lacking in Shakespeare. Tragic, that is, because the attempt to improve Shakespeare of course constitutes an act of immense hubris. The attempt is always doomed to failure, yet the struggle with the Shakespearean example is necessary in the establishment of a new tragic form fit for the twentieth century, and ultimately confirms Yeats as the leading proponent of the tragic stage since Shakespeare.

## The Textual History of Yeats's *On the Boiler*<sup>1</sup>

William O'Donnell

AN EDITOR SERVES THE READER BY PROVIDING USEFUL ACCESS to the author's work. Doing so inevitably involves editorial judgments as to the relative importance of a wide spectrum of textual information doggedly gathered but never fully complete. Sometimes an editor's searching is rewarded, as when John Kelly used his legendary diplomatic skill at gently persuading elderly women to give him access to Yeats letters.<sup>2</sup> Searches by generations of scholars have benefitted from the Yeats family's long-sustained interest in the preservation of and access to manuscripts and other materials. The trove of letters now available and the archives of Macmillan and of

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [wodonnll@memphis.edu](mailto:wodonnll@memphis.edu)? Quite apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

<sup>2</sup> But not invariably so, for John Kelly and I each were unsuccessful in getting in touch with Harry Clifton, who surely must have received a thank you letter from Yeats for his gift of the lapis lazuli carving. In that instance, some consolation was available by noticing that Harry Clifton's entry in *Who's Who* listed his interests succinctly as 'people, horses, and dogs', but then each time the entry was updated, one of those interests was deleted, ending with just 'dogs', and in the next up-date the entire entry disappeared, and didn't reappear in *Who Was Who*.



Charles Scribner's Sons have multiplied our information, but there will always be gaps, as I discovered in my unsuccessful hunt for information from the printing firm that first produced *On the Boiler*.

The innate fascination of a search for information can sometimes bias an editor against recognizing that hard-won data can end up being of little or no use, for example one long-sustained opinion that differences between the house styles of an American and a British publisher were of key significance in the editorial history of *John Sherman and Dhoya*. The technology used in searching has expanded to an extent once unimaginable. Penn State University, which actively supported even Humanities faculty who wanted to use computing, in the days when a back-up of *The Speckled Bird* manuscripts was a three-foot tall stack of boxes of computer punch cards, arranged for a Computer Science graduate student to spend an entire summer to produce an alphabetical word list, all in uppercase, on green and white paper, and every search required the writing of a program. In those years before MS Word and WordPerfect (which first was issued on a single floppy disk), the main-frame computer's word-processing program, Waterloo Script, was cruelly unforgiving of even the smallest error in formatting code, so that I once spent two days to find a single omitted semi-colon that was blocking all processing of my file. So perhaps if there are gods of punctuation, they belatedly rewarded me when a semi-colon in the page proofs (first state) of *On the Boiler* (Wade no. 201) proved to be the key that began unlocking a particularly complex aspect of the textual history.

The profound impact of electronic search and storage and optical character recognition was similarly slow in its development. Optical character recognition arrived with the Kurzweiler in 1978–1979, but was so expensive that only Science and Engineering faculty were allowed access—Humanities faculty could only stare through the candy shop window of the special room devoted to it at the university computer center. Even a textual scholar as technically savvy as Peter Shillingsburg, who developed one of the early machine-collation programs, counselled that the most cost-effective procedure to obtain a reliably accurate computer-stored version of a text was to get a grant to hire off-shore typists, preferably who did not know English, to key

in the text three times, and then to use machine collation on those three texts to identify the mistakes, for manual correction. When that process had been completed for another text, the two texts could be run through a machine-collation program.

The textual history of *On the Boiler* is of particular interest because it intersects such a wide range of issues. A substantial amount of documentary evidence about *On the Boiler* is available, but some key items are not extant, some are difficult to date, some were the product of multiple persons working singly or together, sometimes close by and sometimes separated by long distances, and sometimes on more than one occasion, sometimes separated in time by as much as two decades. To further enrich the textual complexity, sometimes a single document was reused and marked on different occasions for different end products, and sometimes it is difficult to assign a marking to a particular person or even to a particular occasion. A single instance of this for *On the Boiler* provides an introductory overview of the textual problems. Two sets of page proofs (first state) for Wade no. 201 from the Longford Printing Press, sixty miles outside Dublin, were sent to F. R. Higgins in Dublin, who forwarded them to Yeats in the South of France, where Yeats and George Yeats jointly corrected one set. Then as a precaution, George Yeats transcribed those corrections cleanly onto the other set (though inadvertently skipping two corrections). At an indeterminate date, Yeats mailed the main set to F. R. Higgins in Dublin, who passed them along to the Press, but did not report that to Yeats, despite multiple inquiries. Alarmed, Yeats concluded that Higgins was undependable, and so mailed the other set directly to the Press from France. The Press used the first set to produce the Wade no. 201 page proofs (second state), which were delivered several weeks later, after Yeats's death.<sup>3</sup> Those page proofs (second state) were corrected by George Yeats in February 1939 and

<sup>3</sup> This supersedes the complicated and fragmentary account by Richard J. Finneran, in *EYPR* 140–45, as well the earlier versions by Finneran in *EYP* 113–16, and by Sandra F. Siegel in her edition of *Purgatory: Manuscript Materials including the Author's Final Text by W. B. Yeats* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), hereafter cited as *Cornell Purgatory*, 14–20. Those second state proofs are discussed below, 423–25.

the book was ready in July, but was so poorly printed that George Yeats, together with Higgins and Elizabeth C. (Lolly) Yeats, as the directors of the Cuala Press, decided to withhold publication and had a different printing firm prepare a completely reset version, Wade no. 202, that was published at the end of August 1939.

In the interim, Macmillan (London) and Charles Scribner's Sons (New York) each wanted the text of *On the Boiler* to include in their separate planned collected editions of Yeats's works. In June, George Yeats mailed the corrected page proofs (second state) of W201 to London, where they were marked with queries and emendations by Thomas Mark, the long-time and much-trusted editor of Yeats, in postal consultation with her. Proofs were prepared in July 1939, but outbreak of World War II halted the project, but which was not abandoned until 1940. Meanwhile in June 1939, she had sent to Scribners (New York) pages from the cleanly transcribed set of earlier corrected page proofs (first state) from December 1938. In New York, Scribners labelled them but did not make emendations and did not typeset *On the Boiler* before the Scribners collected edition was cancelled. Then those materials were re-used and augmented for production of *Explorations* in 1960 to 1962. The complex web of primary textual materials ended up dispersed at London (Macmillan and then BL), Dublin (George Yeats to Michael Yeats and then NLI) and Austin, Texas (Scribners to HRHC), with some materials in the Charles Scribner's Sons archive at Princeton.

The author's death in the midst of the publication process further complicates the evidence, as do the highly unusual factors, not expected in twentieth-century publishing, of the first printer's extraordinary lack of expertise—for a Nobel laureate to have a book printed by a commercial job press that had never published a book—compounded by the unreliable intermediary, F. R. Higgins. Those circumstances had the effect of increasing the importance of George Yeats and then of Thomas Mark at Macmillan in the posthumous editing.

ON THE BOILER (W. 1938; PUBL. 1939)

In November 1937, in Dublin, Yeats began planning *On the Boiler*, which was initially planned to be a semi-annual miscellany with its first issue in spring (Beltaine) 1938. At that time the Cuala Press urgently needed to increase its income, as he explained in a letter written 17 December 1937 to Ethel Mannin:

The other day I discovered that I must increase the income of the Cuala Press by about £150 a year & decided to issue a kind of *Fors Clavigera*.<sup>4</sup> I must in the first number discuss social politics in so far as they effect [*sic*] Ireland. I must lay aside this pleasant path I have built up for years & seek the brutality, the ill breeding, the barbarism of truth. Pray for me my dear, I want an atheist's prayers, no Christian can do me any good.

The practical, commercial necessity of producing revenue for the Cuala Press did nothing to quiet Yeats's increasing relish for controversy, and the recent example of strong sales by his eccentric editing of the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* could even have encouraged him to think of *On the Boiler* as parallel to John Ruskin's *Fors Clavigera*. On 11 November 1937 he gleefully told Dorothy Wellesley, 'I shall be busy writing a *Fors Clavigera* of sorts my advice to the youthful mind on all manner of things & poems. After going into accounts I find that I can make Cuala prosperous if I write this periodical and publish it bi-annually. It will be an amusing thing to do—I shall curse my enemies & bless my friends. My enemies will hit back & that will give me the joy of answering them'. (*CL IntelLex* 7113, L 900).

<sup>4</sup> *CL IntelLex* 7135, L 903. John Ruskin's outspoken miscellany *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain* was published as a series of pamphlets 1871 to 1884. Yeats, in a letter to the editor of the *All Ireland Review*, Standish James O'Grady, published 22 September 1900, had advocated for 'a kind of Irish "Fors Clavigera"' (*CL2* 571), and the annotation to *CL2* points out (571, n. 3) that 'O'Grady had already been hailed as the author of another *Fors Clavigera*, in a review of his Toryism and Tory Democracy (1886) in the *Dublin University Review* (April 1886)'. Ruskin's source for the term '*Fors Clavigera*', literally 'Fortune the Nail-bearer', is a description of the figure of Destiny in Horace, *Odes*, Book I, poem xxxv, lines 17–20, which contains the word '*clavos*' but does not use either '*Fors*' or '*Clavigera*'. (See commentary by Clive Wilmer, <http://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/wilmerc/cmmtryf.htm>)

And that same day, he wrote to Edith Shackleton Heald, 'I am at work on the Patangali aphorisms for the Swami & when this is done, as it should be this week, will take to writing verse, or writing the first number of my Fors. My working day is growing longer—it has been very short for some time'. (*CL IntelLex* 7116). That enthusiasm continued, as he wrote to Dorothy Wellesley, three days later, 'In my bi-annual (my *Fors Clavigera*) I shall do what I thought never to do—sketch out the fundamental principles, as I see them, on which politics & literature should be based. I need a new stimulant now that my life is a daily struggle with fateague [*sic*]. I thought my problem was to face death with gaety [*sic*] now I have learned that it is to face life' (*CL IntelLex* 7122, 20 November 1937). And on 28 November 1937 he wrote to Heald: 'My head is full of my first Fors. I propose to write out a policy for Young Ireland' (*CL IntelLex* 7126, L 901).

Yeats was at work on the manuscript of *On the Boiler* on 7 December 1937, in Dublin, when he announced to Dorothy Wellesley: 'For the first time in my life I am saying what are my political beliefs .... I shall lose friends if I am able to get on to paper the passion that is in my head. I shall go on to poetry & the arts, & shall be not less inimical to contemporary taste' (*CL IntelLex* 7132; misdated as 17 December 1937 in *LDW* (1940) 166 & L 902).

He was in the south of France from early January through 19 March 1938; his wife arrived 4 or 5 February. By 4 January 1938 he had finished an early portion of the manuscript.<sup>5</sup> And by 24 January 1938 he reported, to Ethel Mannin (*CL IntelLex* 7169), 'I have all but finished the first number of my political publication ...'. And on 26 January 1938 he wrote to Dorothy Wellesley, 'I am finishing my belated pamphlet and will watch with amusement the emergence of the philosophy of my own poetry, the unconscious conscious. It seems to increase the force of my poetry' (*CL IntelLex* 7171, L 904, *LDW* (1940) 168). The first typescript, dictated to and/or typed by George Yeats, contains an early version of 'To-morrow's Revolution'

<sup>5</sup> He wrote from France to George Yeats in Ireland, a week later, 'I am writing at my essay. General approval [*sic*] by Dulac etc makes me return to "on the old boiler"—each number to contain two or three lines of explanation perhaps in verse'. (*CL IntelLex* 7159, 11 January 1938).

and of the first two sections of 'Private Thoughts'; a carbon copy is extant of that central portion of *On the Boiler* (NLI Ms. 30,551).

In early February 1938 he was nearing completion, reporting happily to Dorothy Wellesley, 'I was ill more or less for two weeks, but now I am very well ended [*sic*], and have done much work, my political pamphlet (which will amuse you), the proof sheets of my new poems, and the revision of somebody else's work for the Cuala Press. In a few days I shall start writing poetry again (*CL InteLex* 7175, 6 February, [1938]). On 8 February 1938 he wrote to Edith Shackleton Heald, who had left only three days earlier, 'I have written two poems since you left—one a kind of half nursery rhyme to wind up a note in *On the Boiler*. . . .' (*CL InteLex* 7178). That would be the poem with which *On the Boiler* concludes, 'I lived among great houses' ['Avalon' or 'A Statesman's Holiday'] (*CW5* 250–51 and 441–42, n. 130). He added that later the same afternoon, when George Yeats returned from the post office, he planned to 'dictate the untyped part of my *On the Boiler* essays. After that I shall, I hope, write nothing but verse'. Two days later, 10 February 1938, his letter to Olivia Shakespear implied he had completed drafting *On the Boiler*: 'I have just written a long pamphlet which my sister will publish as no 1 of "On the boiler" an occasional publication of mine. I have taken the name from an old ships-boiler at Sligo where a mad ships-carpenter used to preach. This pamphlet is so tory that there is not a tory in the world will agree with it. It is violent, amusing & convincing & will be put down to the declining faculties of old age'.<sup>6</sup>

The complete typescript (NLI Ms. 30,551) was finished by mid-February 1938, as shown by his letter to Edith Shackleton Heald, [c. 12 February 1938]: 'The typed copy of my essay—40 pages—is finished & I have in my head poems on this subject matter & am according much happier'. (*CL InteLex* 7181). He continued in the same vein in a letter to Ethel Mannin on 17 February 1938: 'I have decided that you will not dislike my pamphlet. It has meant a long

<sup>6</sup> *CLInteLex* 7179. See also Yeats to Ethel Mannin, 4 January 1938, cut from Yeats to Ethel Mannin, 24 January 1938, 'I call it "On the boiler" in commemoration of a mad ships carpenter who, in my childhood, used to preach from the top of an old steamboat boiler on the Sligo keys [*sic*, quays]' *CL InteLex* 7169.

explanation of my convictions, or instincts, & at first I had black moods of depression, thinking you & one or two other friends would turn against me. Certainly no party will be helped by what I say, & no class. You will find me amusing & I have begun writing poetry from this new subject matter' (*CL IntelLex* 7182, *L* 904–5).

But he at once began extensive revision of the typescript. On 20 February 1938 he wrote to Dr. C. P. Blacker, General Secretary of the Eugenics Society, London: 'I am revising the typed script of a long essay on eugenics & various connected topics. I find one gap. Is there any authoritative definition or description of what quality constitutes "intelligence"? The men who made the tests must have had some clear idea of what they were testing. Is it power of attention & coordination? Or is it a sense of the significance & affinities of objects? Cattell gives me no adequate help[.] I would be greatly obliged if you could help me' (*CL IntelLex* 7183). Yeats's correspondence with Blacker had begun 13 Jan 1938 (*CL IntelLex* 7161).<sup>7</sup> The revisions continued, reporting to Heald on 2 March that he was 'patching [?] that long essay here and there' (*CL IntelLex* 7193, ALS Harvard), and on 3 March he gaily wrote to this sister Susan Mary (Lily) Yeats, 'I am writing for Cuala a sort of Samhain but called *On the Boiler* in commemoration of "the great Maccoys" sermons on the old ships-boiler in the Sligo quays. I have finished the first number & put in a note on your Diana Murphy embroideries. Some rich American may buy the lot' (*CL IntelLex* 7197). By 8 March, a full typescript had been completed and corrected (NLI Ms. 30,461). After nearly completing *On the Boiler* Yeats turned to writing the play *Purgatory*, which occupied him in the second half of March, when he went to England, and continued through April and into May 1938.<sup>8</sup> He returned to Dublin on 13 May.

Visiting in England in March, Yeats read from the typescript of *On the Boiler* to two separate sets of friends. On both occasions they told him the content was very timely, which led Yeats to worry that

<sup>7</sup> See David Bradshaw, 'The Eugenics Movement in the 1930s and the Emergence of *On the Boiler*', *YA9* 189–215.

<sup>8</sup> See *L* 907, n. 2 and Yeats to George Yeats, *CL IntelLex* 7208, 6 April 1938; cited by Siegel, Cornell *Purgatory*, 15.7

a delay in publication might lessen its impact. And as he told his wife, 'I count on a rumpus over "On the Boiler" to advertise Cuala'. He asked Lolly Yeats how soon the Cuala Press would be free, and was dismayed at her reply that it would be six months or longer.<sup>9</sup> He wrote back to Lolly in a cautiously delicate but nonetheless futile attempt to persuade her to accept the new project at once. He described it as 'merely a pamphlet on the lines of my old Samhains which I have written especially to advertise Cuala. It would take too long to explain. I expect much notice in the press & a quick sale. I spent two months on it while in France. It is now completely finished & typed. George knows all about it'.<sup>10</sup> He was not willing to wait and so he turned to a completely new alternative, which he described to his wife in a letter of 27 April:

Lolly said she cannot do a third book till October. I think it will be best to get 'On the Boiler' printed by some commercial printers & made to look as like the old 'Samhain' as possible & put something of this sort upon the cover

'On the Boiler'

An occasional publication, written by W. B. Yeats,  
printed by (say) Peter Piper of Pepper Hill &  
sold by Elizabeth Yeats at the Cuala Industries 132 Lower Baggot Street,  
price 2/6 edition limited to 500 copies.

I would pay the printer, & Lolly would make as much by selling it as if she had herself printed it, or almost. She could then have for October book O'Connors Art O Leary poem—14 pages—illustrated by Jack. A good Xmas book. O Connor & Jack have agreed.<sup>11</sup>

This would be the approach used for the printing and publication of *On the Boiler*. All of the Cuala books had been printed in-house on their Albion hand press. But this printing method would be similar

<sup>9</sup> Yeats to George Yeats, 31 March, 17 and 25 April 1938, *CL InteLex* 7205, 7216, and 7223.

<sup>10</sup> Yeats to Elizabeth C. (Lolly) Yeats, [26 April 1938], *CL InteLex* 7224.

<sup>11</sup> *CL InteLex* 7227. The eventual price of *On the Boiler* (Wade no. 202) was 3/6. Frank O'Connor's English translation of 'The Lament for Art O'Leary' by Eileen O'Connell had been published by Cuala in 1932 in his *The Wild Bird's Nest*, 25–39, without illustrations.



to *Samhain: An occasional review edited by W. B. Yeats*, of which the November 1905 number was published by Maunsel & Co., Ltd., 60 Dawson Street, Dublin and by A. H. Bullen in England, but printed by Sealy, Bryers and Walker, Middle Abbey Street, Dublin. *On the Boiler* would also generally resemble *Samhain* in its contents, with prose by Yeats followed by the text of a play (or plays), and also in its general physical size and appearance. The selection of a printing firm for *On the Boiler* would be delayed for at least six weeks.

Although Yeats had reported on 26 April 1938 that *On the Boiler* was 'completely finished and typed', a week later, 3 May 1938, he is writing three short additional sections.<sup>12</sup> After 13 May 1938, when Yeats returned to Ireland, a smooth typescript was made by George Yeats (NLI Ms. 30,552). In 1954–1955 and 1960 at the home of George Yeats, the late Curtis Bradford studied the extant partial manuscript and three typescripts, plus carbon copies with some separate revisions; he published a detailed account of those materials in 1965.<sup>13</sup>

Then, in the first week of June 1938, with *On the Boiler* very close to being fully ready for publication, a new player enters who was to have a nearly catastrophic impact on the project, Yeats's friend and protégé F. R. Higgins, a forty-two-year-old poet and a director of the Abbey Theatre. Higgins was returning to Dublin after managing an eight-month tour of the USA and Canada by the Abbey Theatre Players. It was the seventh such tour in the history of the Abbey Theatre. They had sailed from Belfast on 18 September 1937, opened in New York on 2 October 1937, and spent thirty-five weeks touring the USA and Canada.

<sup>12</sup> Yeats to Lolly (Elizabeth C. Yeats), *CL IntelLex* 7224. Yeats to George Yeats, *CL IntelLex* 7230. The new material might have been the first half of the preface (although in a subsequent typescript Yeats signed and dated the preface 'July 1938'); the poem '[Why should not old men be mad?]' (*CW5* 221, Ex 407–8); 'Ireland after the Revolution', section III (on King George V; *CW5* 242–43, Ex 442–43); and the second paragraph of 'Other Matters', section VII (on physical ideals in art; *CW5* 249, Ex 450–51, as section 'VI').

<sup>13</sup> Bradford 377–85; see also David Bradshaw, 'The Eugenics Movement in the 1930s and the Emergence of *On the Boiler*', *YA9* 204–10.

Yeats was looking forward eagerly to Higgins's return. Half way through the long tour Yeats, who was enjoying a winter respite on the south of France, wrote to his wife, 'I think well pleased of spending what will be left of spring & then summer and autumn in Dublin working with Higgins & then returning here to this bright dream' (*CL InteLex* 7170, 26 January [1938]).

And then throughout the two months before Higgins's return Yeats impatiently asked his wife and their daughter, Anne, who was working at the Abbey Theatre, for news of when Higgins would be back.<sup>14</sup> That Yeats had not heard from Higgins during that long absence was not unusual, for Higgins had an abysmal record as letter writer: he had sent his wife only one letter during the trip.<sup>15</sup>

Even though *On the Boiler* was written while Higgins was away from Ireland and not in communication with Yeats, the complicating impact of Higgins on the publishing history of *On the Boiler* is so considerable that we need to be acquainted with him. Frederick (Fred) Robert Higgins, born 24 April 1896 in the west of Ireland near Foxford, Co. Mayo, was the oldest of the nine children of a Protestant railway engineer and strict Unionist, from Co. Meath. His mother was from Clifton, Co. Galway. He first attended a nearby Convent school in Co. Mayo and then, from early in 1907, St. Columba's (Church of Ireland) National School, Waterloo Avenue, North Strand, Dublin. In 1910, at age fourteen, he went to work in the office of a large Dublin builders' providers firm, where he met Beatrice May Moore, harpist and his fellow office-worker, whom he would marry in 1921. He was dismissed in 1913 for attempting to form a branch of the Clerical Workers' Union, which then hired him as secretary. He went on to edit a variety of trade journals and a short-lived women's magazine.<sup>16</sup> Six of his poems were published in a pamphlet titled *The Salt Air*, in 1923, which was followed by four books of poems, *Island Blood* (London: John Lane, 1925), *The*

<sup>14</sup> Yeats to Anne Yeats, 6 and 12 April 1938, and to George Yeats, 17 and 21 April and 3 and 5 May 1939 (*CL InteLex* 7209, 7213, 7216, 7220, 7230, 7231).

<sup>15</sup> Yeats to Edith Shackleton Heald, 6 June [1938], *CL InteLex* 7249.

<sup>16</sup> NLI Ms. 27,854 F. R. and May Higgins papers 1900–1982: biographical notes by May Higgins and Alan Denson.

*Dark Breed* (London: Macmillan, 1927), *Arable Holdings* (Dublin: Cuala Press, 1933), and *The Gap of Brightness* (London: Macmillan, 1940). His fascination with the Gaelic culture of the west of Ireland is reflected especially the first two of those books. In his one-act verse play *A Deuce o' Jacks*, performed at the Abbey 16 September 1935, a character sings a comic Dublin ballad and the on-stage crowd of Dublin rabble join in for the last line. That same year Yeats and Higgins were editors of the Cuala Press's series of monthly Broad-sides, with music, which reflect Higgins's lively interest in singing and in Irish folk ballads. Cuala's bound version of the 1935 series *Broad-sides: A Collection of Old and New Songs* has a prefatory essay 'Anglo-Irish Ballads', signed by Yeats and Higgins, but likely written by Yeats with input from Higgins on some technicalities of Irish music.<sup>17</sup> Higgins is credited with a poem or an adaptation of a traditional ballad in seven of the twelve issues.

Yeats's earliest contact with Higgins was perhaps in 1924, when Higgins contributed poems to each of the only two issues of *To-Morrow*, in which Yeats had published 'Leda and the Swan'.<sup>18</sup> Yeats included Higgins in the Irish Academy of Letters by 1933, and at the Academy's dinner on 25 May 1937, Higgins sang poems of his own and of Yeats.<sup>19</sup> When Yeats chose poems for the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936), he famously favoured his friends, awarding fifteen pages to Dorothy Wellesley and twelve to Oliver St. John Gogarty, and six pages to Higgins; by comparison, T. S. Eliot had only four pages, but unlike Higgins was mentioned in Yeats's introduction.

Higgins's penchants for alcohol and conviviality were well-known and persistent. Just a few months before his early death on 8 January 1941, when his wife showed him a favourable mention by the *Irish Times* of his newly published poems, he reportedly promptly got up

<sup>17</sup> *PE&I* 175–85, notes 300–5, and textual introduction 334; W249.

<sup>18</sup> *To-Morrow*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (August 1924) included 'Leda and the Swan' and Higgins's 'Intrusions' (2). Vol. 1, No. 2 (September 1924) had two poems by Higgins, 'Wet Loveliness' and 'The Horse-Breaker' (3). See above 160 and ff. on Higgins's role in the whole *To-Morrow* affair.

<sup>19</sup> See *Life* 2 584; Yeats to Edith Shackleton Heald *CL IntelLex* 6934, 18 May [1937], *L* 888; Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley *CL IntelLex* 6936, 19 May, [1937]; Yeats to Edmund Dulac *CL IntelLex* 6942, 27 May [1937], *L* 890.

from his sick bed for a celebratory tour through the Dublin pubs.<sup>20</sup> A fragmentary biographical sketch of Higgins by his widow gives an exaggeratedly rosy and serene description of the friendship of the seventy-year-old Nobel laureate and her forty-year old husband:

... He & F R Higgins were near neighbours & living under contented & easy domestic circumstances, so that WB always felt quite at home with us when he called to see FR & George Yeats always made FR very much at home when he called to see WB. It was thus that they became close friends & co-workers in their devoted service to poetry (NLI Ms. 27,854).

Another perspective, recounted with an edge of delighted Dublin malice aimed at Yeats's sometimes stiff demeanour, and subscribing to the theory that Yeats would have been an even better poet if he had spent some time in pubs, has it that Yeats announced to Higgins, 'I have never been in a pub in my life and I'd like to go into a pub'. Higgins dutifully selected a Dublin pub that he hoped would not offend Yeats's refined sense of propriety. When the great moment came, Higgins took charge and prudently ordered mild drinks. Yeats looked around for a moment and then announced, as his first and last words in an Irish pub, 'Higgins, I don't like it. Lead me out again'.<sup>21</sup> To those must be added the flamboyant perspective of Yeats as the 'wild old wicked man' of his late poems, encouraging ribald talk: 'When you get to be as old as I am, the thing you will find you need most is a young man to come and tell you dirty stories'. Higgins filled the bill.<sup>22</sup> Higgins memorialized the friendship this way in the Yeats commemorative issue of the Abbey Theatre's journal *The Arrow*,

<sup>20</sup> *The Gap of Brightness* was published 27 August 1940. Regina M. Buccola, 'F. R. Higgins', in *Modern Irish Writers: A Bio-critical Sourcebook*, ed. by Alexander G. Gonzalez (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 112.

<sup>21</sup> As told by Brinsley MacNamara in a BBC broadcast, June 1949, 'W. B. Yeats: A Dublin Portrait' by William R. Rogers; rpt. in *In Excited Reverie: A Centenary Tribute to William Butler Yeats: 1865-1939*, ed. by A. N. Jeffares and K. G. W. Cross (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Frank O'Connor (Michael O'Donovan) by Richard Ellmann, 28 June 1947, Interview Book, Ellmann Papers, Y.8, University of Tulsa; quoted in Foster, *W. B. Yeats*, II, 499. For a complete transcription see Warwick Gould, "'Gasping on the Strand": Richard Ellmann's W. B. Yeats Notebooks', *YA16* 279-361, at 293.

Summer 1939: 'For fifteen years I was acquainted with him; for half of that time I knew him intimately as a close and constant friend: most generous, most frank, full of zest and humour, a magnetic personality, always arrogantly the Irish poet'.<sup>23</sup>

In June 1938 Yeats was facing the daunting prospect of simultaneously reforming the artistic administration of the Abbey Theatre and the financial and artistic administration of Cuala Industries. Previously, on 9 March 1935, his campaign to rejuvenate the Abbey had led to adding Higgins, Brinsley MacNamara and Ernest Blythe as the Directors of the National Theatre Society Ltd. Now, with Hugh Hunt on his way out as Producer at the Abbey, Yeats lamented, in a letter to Edith Shackleton Heald on 13 June 1938, that at the Abbey he did not 'have sufficient authority to control events', but 'as a consolation F. R. Higgins has returned from America full of dominating energy & amorous recollections. I hope that he will become the chief personage both at the Abbey and Cuala. He has joy & a man without joy cannot control our people'. (*CL InteLex* 7255)

Yeats lobbied successfully for the promotion of Higgins to become the Abbey's Managing Director, which took effect in September 1938.<sup>24</sup> And Higgins, despite his fondness for drinking, despite his notoriety for failing to write letters, and although perhaps exhausted after running the eight-month tour, was reliably attentive to the Abbey, attending every meeting of the Directors of the National Theatre Society from 10 June 1938 onwards.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> '[W. B. Yeats] As Irish Poet', *The Arrow*, W. B. Yeats Commemoration Number, Summer 1939, 8.

<sup>24</sup> See Yeats to Ernest Blythe *CL InteLex* 7260, 23 June 1938; E. H. Mikhail ed., *Abbey Theatre: Interviews and Recollections* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), xxvii.

<sup>25</sup> 10 and 24 June 1938 (both chaired by Yeats), 1 July (chaired by Yeats), 29 July (Yeats absent), 5 August (Yeats absent), 12 and 19 August (with Yeats, the 19 August meeting was the last that Yeats ever attended), through 2 September. Higgins missed the meetings on 9 and 16 September 1938 while he was away in London, but resumed his perfect attendance with the meetings on 30 September 1938, 7 October, 21 October, 4 November, 18 November, 2 December, 16 December, 30 December 1938, 13 January 1939, 27 January 1939, and the special meeting on 30 January 'The meeting was called in consequence of the death on Saturday 28th January 1939 of Mr W. B. Yeats'. (National Theatre Society Minute Book 1 September 1937 to 26th May 1939, 94–191. Available online at

Higgins was also key element in Yeats's plans for reorganizing the Cuala Press, then under the often cantankerous management of Lolly Yeats. In early November 1937 when Yeats was formulating plans to reorganize Cuala, he wrote to Dorothy Wellesley to apologize for Cuala's errors in the printing of her poem in the September 1937 *Broadside*, which were so extensive as to require a two-page errata in the bound volume. Yeats continued, 'but I am in the highest spirits at the prospect I hope to make Higgins managing director. If he had been here there would have been no errors in your poem & a wrong artist would not have been chosen. I was never sent a proof .... All the able people in my circle are absorbed in the Theatre'.<sup>26</sup> On 28 November, Yeats anticipated with relish using Higgins as a kind of secret weapon for Cuala, writing to Edith Shackleton Heald: 'In a few minutes my sister comes to have our first talk on the reconstruction of Cuala. Her eyes will be like snails [*sic*] eyes for curiosity but I will tell her nothing until Higgins returns from America'.<sup>27</sup> And two months later Yeats invoked again his idealized notion of Higgins as efficient manager when Yeats wrote in answer to the banker who was complaining about Cuala's continuing debt. Yeats, who was about to leave for France for the winter, told the banker that he would reconstruct Cuala, but requested a delay because of his travel and also because Higgins was away on the American tour. Yeats said that he wanted 'to work in conjunction with a man who has expert knowledge of printing etc. He is now in America with the main Abbey Theatre Company as business manager'.<sup>28</sup> Two days later, Yeats wrote a more detailed letter to the banker, again highlighting Higgins (although again without naming him): '... my plans for reconstruction have been thought out in consultation with a man who has full knowledge of printing and publishing and he is at present acting as a business manager to the Abbey Theatre company which is now touring the United States. He returns with company probably in April. The

the Abbey Theatre Minute Book, <https://digital.library.nuigalway.ie/islandora/object/nuigalway%3Aa25629b6-65ab-4d2d-8b31-74695205cad3>)

<sup>26</sup> Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley, [2 Nov 1937] (*CL InteLex* 7106).

<sup>27</sup> *CL InteLex* 7126, omitted from *L* 900-01.

<sup>28</sup> Yeats to S. C. Scroope, *CL InteLex* 7149, 2 January 1938.

Abbey Theatre has gone through exactly the same vicissitudes [*sic*] as Cuala. After a period of heavy loss it began to prosper a year or two ago and has now paid off its debts and is making a steady profit.<sup>29</sup>

Cuala was reorganized as a limited company, Cuala Industries Ltd., on 6 October 1938, with Yeats, George Yeats, Lolly, and Higgins as the four directors. The first meeting of the directors was 12 October, and with the appointment of Frank O'Connor as auditor, another Abbey director who was seven years younger than Higgins, Yeats's plan for controlling Cuala seemed fully in place.<sup>30</sup> But all was far from well. William Murphy, in his magisterial study of the Yeats family, comments: 'Whether WBY chose Higgins with malice aforethought is hard to know, but he could not have found anyone less temperamentally in tune with' Lolly. In the prior months, Lily Yeats noted that Lolly and Higgins 'were so rude to each other that they could not even talk to each other on the phone'.<sup>31</sup> Roy Foster is even blunter about Yeats's selection of Higgins: 'His clear intention was to leave the succession tied up, hoping that Higgins would inherit his own function, there as at the Abbey. In this, as in several other ways, his estimate of his friend was ludicrously wide of the mark .... Higgins's real idea of joy came in bottled form, and he was neurotically inefficient, incapable of answering letters or signing cheques. In Lolly's eyes he had no redeeming features whatsoever ...'. Foster goes on to acknowledge that anyone would find Lolly extremely difficult, quoting Lily's deliciously tart remark about Lolly, that "an angel from heaven" could not work with her, "perhaps a very strong person from the other place might do it & live".<sup>32</sup>

In mid-June Yeats was confident of timely publication of *On the Boiler*, now that the typescript was finished and Higgins was tasked

<sup>29</sup> Yeats to S. C. Scroope, *CL InteLex* 7156, [c. 4 January 1938].

<sup>30</sup> Minute book of meetings of Directors of Cuala Industries 12 October 1938–2 December 1941, Cuala Archive, Box. 2, no. 1, Trinity College Dublin.

<sup>31</sup> William M. Murphy, *Family Secrets: William Butler Yeats and His Relatives* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 254 and quoting Susan Mary (Lily) Yeats letter to her cousin Ruth Lane-Poole (née Pollexfen), 3 July 1938.

<sup>32</sup> *Life* 2 623 citing Susan Mary (Lily) Yeats letter to her cousin Ruth Lane-Poole, 29 June 1938.

with making all the arrangement for printing, including selecting a printing firm. Yeats began planning a second issue. He told Edith Shackleton Heald: 'I am studying for my On The Boiler, No 2. My theme is that the soul is once more established in its old place. I make from this a number of deductions'.<sup>33</sup> And three days later he expanded on that in a letter to Dorothy Wellesley:

Yesterday I reminded myself that an eastern sage had promised me a quiet death & hoped that it would come before I had to face On the Boiler No. 2. Today I am full of life & not too disturbed by the enemies I must make. This is the proposition on which I write 'There is now overwhelming evidence that man stands between two eternities, that of his family, that of his soul'. I apply these beliefs to literature & politics & show the changes they must make. Lord Acton said once that he believed in a personal devil, but as there is nothing about it in The Cambridge Universal History which he planned he was a liar. My belief must go into what I write, even if I estrange friends; some when they see my meaning set out in plain print will hate me for poems which they have thought meant nothing.<sup>34</sup>

On 7 June Yeats had ordered a copy of *Science and Physical Phenomena*, a newly published book by G. N. M. Tyrell, a British mathematician, physicist, and—importantly for Yeats—parapsychologist. He later was President of the Society for Psychical Research (1945–1946) and is credited with coining the term 'out-of-body experience'. Tyrell's prior book *Grades of Significance* (1931) parallels the motifs that Yeats mentioned in his plans for a second number of *On the Boiler*, and although there is no record of Yeats having owned a copy, his eagerness to purchase Tyrell's new book suggests that Yeats had some familiarity with the content of *Grades of Significance*.<sup>35</sup>

Yeats made arrangements to meet Tyrell in England for a weekend in October at the home of Dame Edith Lyttelton, President of the

<sup>33</sup> *CL InteLex* 7258, [19 June 1938].

<sup>34</sup> *CL InteLex* 7259, 22 June 1938 (with *literatim* misspellings 'my self', 'beleifs', 'beleived' and 'beleif'), L 910–11, *LDW* (1940) 182–83.

<sup>35</sup> We know *Science and Physical Phenomena* arrived promptly because on the inside back cover of his copy (YL 2178) Yeats wrote five drafts of a revised line 12 of *Purgatory* ('So you have come the path before') that he added in ink as a late change to the typescript that Yeats gave to Higgins before 8 July and which was the copytext used by the Longford Printing Press.



Society for Psychological Research 1933–1934, explaining in letters to Edith Shackleton Heald and to Dorothy Wellesley, ‘I am to meet a certain Tyrell, whose book will be the foundation of *On the Boiler* No 2. at Mrs Alfred Lyttleton’s [*sic*] on Oct 15. It has turned out to be the only possible date. I was to have gone there on Oct 8 but events have upset my plans’.<sup>36</sup>

Yeats left in two very brief but fascinating typescripts evidence about his plans for a second number of *On the Boiler*. Both of them have significant, but generalised links with Tyrell, especially *Grades of Significance* (1931), as well as to Yeats’s *A Vision* (1925 and 1937). The first, titled ‘Seven Propositions’ is two pages and undated:

I Reality is a timeless and spaceless community of Spirits which perceive each other. Each Spirit is determined by and determines those it perceives, and each Spirit is unique.

III [*sic*, II] When these Spirits reflect themselves in time and space they [cancelled: are so many destinies which] still determine each other, and each Spirit sees the others as thoughts, images, objects of sense. Time and space are unreal.

III This reflection into time and space is only complete at certain moments of birth, or passivity, which recur many times in each destiny. At these moments the destiny receives its character until the next such moment from [cancelled: all other] those Sprits [cancelled: or from] the external universe. The horoscope is a set of geometrical relations between the Spirit’s reflection and the principle [*sic*, principal] masses in the universe and defines that character.

IV The emotional character of a timeless and spaceless Spirit reflects itself as its position in space. The position of a Spirit in space and time therefore defines character.

<sup>36</sup> Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley, 26 September 1938, *CL InteLex* 7306); Yeats to Edith Shackleton Heald *CL InteLex* 7305, c. 23 September 1938: ‘... to meet Tyrell whose books I base No 2 of *On The Boiler* upon’. See also Yeats to Edith Shackleton Heald, 2 October [1938] *CL* 7307: ‘I may be able to get to England by Oct 10th or 11th. George Lyttleton let her house to war refugees in the middle of the scare so her party is off’. *ChronY* 310 mentions that lumbago forced him to postpone a visit planned for 8 October, and a dental problem kept him from travelling for the rescheduled 15 October weekend.

V Human life is either the struggle of a destiny against all other destinies, or a transformation of the character defined in the horoscope into timeless and spaceless existence. The whole passage from birth to birth should be an epitome of the whole passage of the universe through time and back into its timeless and spaceless condition.

VI The acts and nature of a Spirit during any one life are a section or abstraction of reality and are unhappy because incomplete. They are a gyre or part of a gyre, whereas reality is a sphere.

VII Though the Spirits are determined by each other they cannot completely lose their freedom. Every possible statement or perception contains both terms—the self and that which it perceives or states.<sup>37</sup>

The second is a typewritten single page, on Idéal Séjour notepaper, dated 23 December 1938, dictated to his wife (NLI Ms. 30,280). That same day he wrote to Ethel Mannin (*CL InteLex* 7357, L 921), 'I am in better health than usual & writing Boiler No 2'. She later described it as a 'synopsis': 'He knew that he had not long to live, but he thought he had still time to finish a great deal of work already planned. Actually he finished all the work that he had in hand, and was proposing a rest of a week or so before starting on a new series of essays of which he had dictated to me a synopsis'.<sup>38</sup> It reads:

I. Discoveries in eugenics will compel reversal of old politics. What must disappear? What changes in literature. Must strengthen conviction that nothing matters except poetry. What are its elements?

II. Discoveries in psychical research must revolutionise all thought even more completely.

III. Recent movement in philosophy must apply everywhere to religious life the implication implied in this sentence: we can express truth but we cannot know it. Get some summary. (German philosopher in Oxford or Cambridge) compare Vico. compare Zen

<sup>37</sup> NLI Ms. 30,280. Richard Ellmann printed it and usefully describes it in *The Identity of Yeats*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 1964), 236–37.

<sup>38</sup> George Yeats to Patrick McCartan, 20 February 1939. *Yeats and Patrick McCartan A Fenian Friendship*, ed. by John Unterecker, Dolmen Press Yeats Centenary Papers, No. X (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1967), 418.

It echoes in some ways his poignant letter on 4 January 1939 letter to Lady Elizabeth Pelham:

... I know for certain that my time will not be long. I have put away everything that can be put away that I may speak what I have to speak, and I find 'expression' is a part of 'study'. In two or three weeks—I am now idle that I may rest after writing much verse—I will begin to write my most fundamental thoughts and the arrangement of thought which I am convinced will complete my studies. I am happy, and I think full of an energy, of an energy I had despaired of. It seems to me that I have found what I wanted. When I try to put all into a phrase I say, 'Man can embody truth but he cannot know it'. I must embody it in the completion of my life. The abstract is not life and everywhere draws out its contradictions. You can refute Hegel but not the Saint or the Song of Sixpence ....<sup>39</sup>

But any planning toward a second number of *On the Boiler* was, of course, dependent on publishing the first number. The final typescript (NLI Ms. 30,552) was finished before Higgins returned to Dublin in the first week of June 1938. Yeats and Higgins were at the 10 June 1938 Abbey Theatre meeting, and because Yeats would have been very keen to show the *On the Boiler* typescript to Higgins, we can assume that Higgins saw it by mid-June. Yeats, in a letter to Dorothy Wellesley a month later, reported Higgins's reaction,

He has been away eight months & so was quite unprepared. His comment was 'I expected an old man's oracular serene remarks—death holding the ledger. And I get ['got' in *LDW* (1940) and *L*] this. That boiler is going to be very hot.<sup>40</sup>

Higgins probably was the source for one or both of the last footnotes, which Yeats added on pasted-in slips to the smooth typescript at this time.<sup>41</sup> Another last-minute change was a revision of line 12 of *Purgatory*, which Yeats entered in ink on the typescript (see 407 n. 35 above).

<sup>39</sup> Emphasis added. Joseph Hone, *W. B. Yeats 1864–1939* (London: Macmillan, 1965), 476; *L* 922, *CL InteLex* 7362.

<sup>40</sup> *CL InteLex* 7271, 14 July 1938; it is dated 13 July 1938 in *LDW* (1940) 199 and *L* 912.

<sup>41</sup> *CW5* 431–32, n. 59 (*Ex* 427 n. 1) and *CW5* 433, n. 76 (*Ex* 433 n. 1).

Now that Higgins was back in Dublin, Yeats's reorganization of the Cuala Press could proceed, and Yeats assigned to Higgins the responsibility for choosing an outside printing firm for *On the Boiler*, as had been decided at the end of April. Higgins chose the Longford Printing Press, a small family firm in Longford, seventy miles from Dublin. It had a long history as a printer and publisher of newspapers reaching back to 1836 and has been in the same premises since 1870,<sup>42</sup> but in 1918 Harold Irvine, grandson of the founder and the editor of the *Longford Independent*, died of the Spanish Influenza at age thirty-two, and his widow had difficulty sustaining the business, so publishing ceased in 1922. Her sons Eric and Harold Turner took over the company in the late 1930's and gradually invested in some new equipment and enlarged the premises. Thus in 1938 when the Longford Printing Press undertook to print *On the Boiler*, it was quite inexperienced and not well-equipped for book printing. One indicator of those limitations was that the galley proofs had not set book titles and stage directions in italics because the press, as George Yeats would learn when she travelled to Longford, 'They have no Italics so I arranged for the stage directions to be printed in brackets and smaller type. I did not think the "Manager" very brilliant!<sup>43</sup> Eventually Yeats would describe Higgins's choice of the Longford Printing Press as an act of 'pure eccentricity'.<sup>44</sup> There would be a series of delays and very poorly executed work at every phase, from design through typesetting and printing.

Yeats, who travelled to England on 8 July 1938 for a one-month stay, had left the typescript, On the Boiler (NLI Ms. 30,485) with F. R. Higgins, who was to send it to the printer.<sup>45</sup> We don't know

<sup>42</sup> Turner's Printing Company, 4 Earl Street, Longford, Co. Longford. When I enquired in 2005, the firm had no records pertinent to *On the Boiler*.

<sup>43</sup> George Yeats to Yeats, 1 November 1938, YGYL 547-47, quoted in *EYPR* 141. Italics were used for the refrain lines of the poems 'I lived among great houses' [later titled 'A Stateman's Holiday'] and 'Three Marching Songs', but not for the titles of books and plays. 'Three Marching Songs' was dropped after the page proofs (second state) had been prepared.

<sup>44</sup> Yeats to Ethel Mannin *CL InteLex* 7357, 23 December, 1938, *L* 920-21.

<sup>45</sup> Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley *CL InteLex* 7271, 14 July 1938; it is dated 13 July 1938 in *LPDW* 199 and *L* 912.

how long a delay there was from when the typescript was entrusted to Higgins until it reached the Longford Printing Press. But he would have required time to select the printing firm and to complete arrangements with it, especially because the firm had little or no experience with book printing. Yeats was sanguine about the process, telling Maud Gonne McBride on 16 July that *On the Boiler* 'will be published in about a month'.<sup>46</sup> Yeats took a copy of the typescript with him to England, where Dorothy Wellesley and Edith Shackleton Heald read it during his visits. Throughout July and August he remained unaware of, or at least was silent about, what turned out to be the lack of progress on the printing. He returned to Dublin on 8 August, and the next day wrote cordially to Higgins without any mention of *On the Boiler*, 'I am back .... When can we have an evening together. I have a lot of new poems'.<sup>47</sup>

On 28 August, Yeats hosted Ethel Mannin and Reginald Reynolds, her new lover and future husband, to dinner at the Shelbourne Hotel 'taking along Higgins to make up the foursome' (BG 553).

His frequent letters to Edith Shackleton Heald during August, written from Dublin, have no mention of the *On the Boiler* printing. But then in his next letter to her, on 4 September, comes the first news, 'On the Boiler has at last gone to press'.<sup>48</sup> Higgins made a trip to London, 12–22 September, while Yeats remained in Dublin all of September and until 27 October.

The galley proofs are not extant and there is no direct documentary evidence as to when Yeats and his wife corrected them and returned them to Longford Printing Press. But the 4 September 1938 letter indicates that the printer received the typescript copy in very early September 1938. And we know that the galleys had been printed, corrected, and returned to Longford Printing Press by 27 October 1938, when George Yeats travelled the seventy miles to Longford to

<sup>46</sup> *CL IntelLex* 7273, 16 [July 1938], L 910, where it is misdated 'June 16' because of Yeats's error in dating the letter 'June 16'; the letter is from Steyning, Sussex, where he visited 12–19 July 1938; he was in Ireland throughout June 1938.)

<sup>47</sup> *CL IntelLex* 7286, 9 August [1938].

<sup>48</sup> *CL IntelLex* 7299, 4 September 1938. His August letters to her were [10 August], 15 August, and 24 August (*CL IntelLex* 7287, 7289, and 7295).

visit the Longford Printing Press. She was not favourably impressed, as she reported to her husband, who had left for England on 25 October. The timing of the galley proofs can be further narrowed by the likely *terminus a quo* of Yeats's letter c. 23 September 1938 to Edith Shackleton Heald, which has no mention of *On the Boiler* printing, and the *terminus ad quem* of Yeats's departure for England on 25 October.<sup>49</sup>

Even though those galley proofs are not extant, an idea of the kinds of corrections and emendations made on them is recoverable by collation of the typescript (NLI Ms. 30,552) copy-text with the page proofs (first state) (NLI MS. 30,485). Disregarding the play *Purgatory*, which occupies the final one-sixth of the book, there were twenty-seven substantive revisions made of the galley proofs; twenty-five punctuation revisions, some perhaps made by the compositor but most probably were made on the galleys; nine hyphenation spelling differences, some of which could have been made by the compositor of the galleys; and nine corrections of obvious errors in the typescript, many of which were probably made by the compositor. Twelve other differences went uncorrected on the galleys; three of those would be corrected on the page proofs (first state), four more on the page proofs (second state), two were not corrected until the 1939 page proofs of the never-published Coole Edition and then *Explorations* in 1962, and three were left unemended.<sup>50</sup>

At about this same time Yeats added another initiative to boost the Cuala Press, a planned new series of *Broadsides* to begin monthly publication in January 1939. That project was approved at the 19 October 1938 meeting of Cuala's newly constituted board, less than a week before he left Ireland, for what would be the last time. Yeats chaired the meeting, which included Higgins, who had been co-

<sup>49</sup> *CL InteLex* 7305, [c. 23 September 1938]; *ChronY* 310.

<sup>50</sup> The two not corrected until the Coole Edition and *Explorations* are 'threats' instead of 'theatre' (*CW5* 232, line 40; *Ex* 428, line 8) and stanza divisions not closed up in Swift's 'Ode to the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Sir William Temple' (*CW5* 235; *Ex* 432). The three left unemended are '£140' instead of '£240' (*CW5* 229, line 22 (with '£240' in an explanatory note); *Ex* 422, line 8); 'alter Europe and all opinion' instead of 'alter European and all opinion' (*CW5* 239, line 15; *Ex* 438, line 3); and 'be ashamed, as' instead of 'be shamed, as' (*CW5* 241, line 13; *Ex* 441, line 1).

editor with Yeats for the 1935 *Broadsides* and had contributed to the next series of *Broadsides* (1937), for which Dorothy Wellesley was co-editor with Yeats. In his letter to Dorothy Wellesley inviting her to be an editor of the new series, Yeats was very up-beat about Higgins: 'Just before I left we decided to start a new set of Broadsides, starting on Jan 1. Will you be English editor as usual? We want three numbers complete before we start. We would like a poem of yours in the first three. Higgins is now on the board & goes to Cuala every day so everything will go much more smoothly. However if I may come soon we can talk over all these things. I may ask Higgins to send you some suggestions about English work. He is a good musician'. Yeats had also praised Higgins to Dorothy Wellesley a month earlier saying that he had wanted 'to introduce you to him. You & he are my soul critics of poetry. There is equal though different sensitiveness'. (*CL InteLex* 7300, 7 September 1938).<sup>51</sup>

From early September, when Yeats first reported that *On the Boiler* had gone to press, the Longford Printing Press had produced the galley proofs within four or five weeks. The Press had told George Yeats, during her visit on 27 October that the page proofs would be ready immediately. Yeats optimistically expected that to be true. So that on 7 November 1938, when he learned that the Abbey Theatre wanted his approval for a 5 December revival production of *Purgatory*, he wrote back to Higgins: 'I consent, of course, on the understanding that the version used is that in the "Boiler". You can take it from the page proof'. (*CL InteLex* 7327) And then he immediately added a postscript in a hasty second letter: 'I forgot to say please worry the Longford people so that On the Boiler may be out when my play is performed. I have not yet had the paged proofs'. (*CL InteLex* 7328) But the page proofs would not be available in time for that production, which opened Monday, 5 December 1938, as scheduled.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Minute book of meetings of Directors of Cuala Industries 12 Oct 1938—2 Dec 1941, Cuala Archive, Box 2, No. 1, Trinity College Dublin; *CL InteLex* 7320, 30 October, [1938].

<sup>52</sup> Yeats to Edith Shackleton Heald, *CL InteLex* 7350 [Thursday] 8 December 1938, L 919) [L is from a typed copy; *CL InteLex* 7350 records the ALS verbatim

Yeats wrote to Higgins on 22 November 1938 (*CL InteLex* 7342) about the planned series of *Broadsides* and complains about the slowness of printers, in this instance the Cuala Press, but there is no specific mention of *On the Boiler*: 'These printers are so damnably slow that you may find it had [*sic*, ?hard] to be out in time'.

George Yeats came to London on 25 November 1938, and they travelled together to the South of France, arriving 28 November 1938. There, at the Hotel Idéal-Séjour at Cap-Martin, George Yeats and he received the page proofs (first state) and corrected them. There were two sets, from the same typesetting but with occasional differences in how completely they were inked. The Longford Printing Press did not return the marked galley proofs, which was a serious inconvenience when Yeats corrected the page proofs, probably with some assistance from his wife.<sup>53</sup> The set that they marked (NLI Ms. 30,485) has some preliminary, initial copy editing in black pencil that is relatively inexpert, often merely a question mark in the margin, and ends at the beginning of *Purgatory*. This black pencil copy editing might have been done by Higgins, who could well have received the proofs from Longford and then posted them to Yeats in France, but no documentary evidence is available. Yeats went through the entire set, including *Purgatory* and 'Three Marching Songs', clarifying and correcting the pencil markings, using black ink. He signed one instruction in the margin of page 22.

Then, just before sending that marked set to Higgins, in Dublin, for him to pass along to Longford Printing Press, George Yeats transcribed the corrections cleanly onto the second set (*HRHRC*, Yeats Collection, Box 4, Miscellaneous case). Because Longford Printing Press had failed to send the corrected galleys to Yeats along with the page proofs, the need for having a backup set was particularly urgent. Presumably working in haste, George Yeats skipped two of

[cancelled: Tuesday] Wed Dec 8'. Yeats had attended the premiere of *Purgatory* at the Abbey on 10 August 1938.

<sup>53</sup> Yeats complained in a letter to Longford Printing Press (NLI Ms. 30,513 and *EYPR* 142, and a TS copy in *CL InteLex* 7367, 10 January 1939), 'I had a great deal of trouble in making these corrections because you did not return to me the corrected galley proofs when sending paged proof'.



the corrections: (1) the change of a semi-colon to a comma in the opening sentence of 'To-morrow's Revolution', Section III: 'mind; their' changed to 'mind, their'), and (2) the addition of 'black' in the footnote to the final paragraph of 'To-morrow's Revolution', Section V: 'or lines' changed to 'or black lines' (page 10, line 3 and page 10, line 3; *CW5* 228, line 29 and *CW5* 432n59, line 4; *Ex* 420, line 9 and *Ex* 427n1, line 4).

Those two small omissions turn out to be crucially important evidence for puzzling out the history of the text, by definitively establishing that Longford Printing Press used the first set, and not the imperfectly fair-copied other set, when it produced the page proofs (second state) (BL Add. MS 88551), which incorporated both of the emendations that were omitted in other set. And, as we will shortly see, knowing which of the two sets was used by Longford Printing Press untangles the complex situation that had confronted the two textual scholars who independently had sought to piece together the publication history of *On the Boiler* because that book included some poems, in the case of Richard Finneran, and the play *Purgatory*, in the case of Sandra Siegel.<sup>54</sup>

It was probably mid-December 1938 when Yeats received the page proofs (first state), corrected them, and sent them to Higgins to pass along to the press.<sup>55</sup> The dating is necessarily uncertain because it depends primarily on a letter from Yeats to Higgins that is undated. *Collected Letters* (7354) labels it only as '[December 1938]', although Richard Finneran and Sandra Siegel have variously suggested dates ranging from late November 1938 (*Cornell Purgatory* 19 n. 30 misstating *EYP* 114) and early/mid December 1938 (*EYP* 114) to 'the first few days of January 1939' (*EYPR* 142) and 'probably between December 24, 1938, and January 10, 1939' (*Cornell Purgatory* 19n30). But the additional evidence available from carefully detailed study of the textual documents now has clarified the chronology. The

<sup>54</sup> *EYPR* and his earlier *EYP*; *Cornell Purgatory*, and Siegel's earlier 'Yeats's Quarrel with Himself: The Design and Argument of *On the Boiler*', *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities* 81. 3 (Autumn 1978), 349–68.

<sup>55</sup> In 1994 in the textual introduction to *On the Boiler* in *CW5* 489 I had dated this as 'probably during the last week of December 1938 or in early January 1939'.

full text of that letter needs to be quoted because it is at the heart of the controversy about the date of the page proofs (first) state:

[typed on printed notepaper]

HOTEL IDÉAL-SÉJOUR  
CAP-MARTIN  
FRANCE (A.-M.)

My dear Higgins

I shall write to you about Cuala etc in a few days[.] For the moment I confine myself to the BOILER.

Paged proofs came some days ago and my wife and I have spent a good deal of our time at them. I think we have now corrected everything, but I think it probable that when you look through them you will decide that another revise is necessary. There will be no<sup>56</sup> need for it to be sent here if you would be so kind as to look through it. Indeed much of it is revisions of the press which should be done by somebody who can hear in a day or so or by telephone.

They have evidently never done printing of our kind before and get into great confusion. Indeed their errors are of a kind that I dont always know how to correct.

They sent no proof of title page and I would be very much obliged if you would arrange about the cover. I enclose the cover paper I preferred. I enclose also their letter. My wife tells me that you have the estimate they refer to.

I hope your face is better and that you are well[.]

[in ink]

Yrs  
W B Yeats

<sup>56</sup> *CL IntelLex* 7354, to F. R. Higgins [December 1938]. The typescript letter (*HRHRC*, Yeats Collection, Box 6, Folder 7) reads: 'beno' with an inked obolus inserted to separate the two words. The 'o' of 'not' is an overstrike imposed upon an 'a'; see Plate 40 below.

out Cuala etc in a few days  
 BOILER. Paged proofs  
 ve spent a good deal of  
 ow corrected everything, but  
 look through them you will  
 y. There will be so need  
 so kind as to look through  
 of the press which should  
 or so or by telephone.  
 g of our kind before and  
 their errors are of a kind

Plate 40. Detail of typescript letter from W. B. Yeats to F. R. Higgins, December 1938 (*HRHRC*, Yeats Collection, Box 6, Folder 7). Image courtesy the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Texas.

My reading of this undated letter is that it transmits the first set of corrected page proofs (first state) to Higgins, for him to pass along to Longford Printing Press. Yeats says that when Higgins has looked over the corrected page proofs (first state) Higgins will agree that 'another revise is necessary'. Yeats asks Higgins to arrange for Longford to produce the second state page proofs, but instead of sending them to him in France, to have Higgins review them on Yeats's behalf. 'There will be no need for it to be sent here if you would be so kind as to look through it. Indeed much of it is revisions of the press which should be done by somebody who can hear in a day or so by telephone'. Yeats mentions that Longford had not sent

a title page in the page proofs, and he asks Higgins also to arrange about a front cover.

The first clue for dating this letter is Yeats's statement that he will write to Higgins 'about Cuala etc in a few days'. Part of the background for the situation is in Yeats's 22 December letter to Edith Shackleton Heald (*CL InteLex* 7356, *L* 919–20): 'Nothing seems going on in Dublin or if there is I am being told nothing. Higgins has dropped in a gulph owes me four letters—damn'. And the next day he updated Ethel Mannin about the delays in publication of *On the Boiler*, exaggerating those delays by a month and a half: 'This is the bother about The Boiler. Went to the Printer seven months ago—small Longford printer selected in pure eccentricity by the poet Higgins—not yet out'. But he added, in a more cheerful tone, consistent with knowing that the corrected page proofs had been sent back to Ireland, 'I am in better health than usual & writing Boiler No 2' (*CL InteLex* 7357, *L* 921). Then, on 24 December 1938, Yeats did write to Higgins (*CL InteLex* 7358) about Cuala Press projects, beginning by gently urging him about tardiness in the preparations for the new series of Cuala *Broadsides* with Dorothy Wellesley, who was spending the winter nearby and who had called on the Yeatses on 21 December.<sup>57</sup>

My dear Higgins

I hear that you have had a great deal of extra work at the Abbey. If I had known I would not have seemed to hustle you. We may have to pick a somewhat later date for the first number of the *Broadsides*; we could call them 'Number One' 'Number two' etc without any allusion to the months. You had better however write a word to Lady Gerald, as when I left her she was rather keyed up on the subject.

and then asking Higgins to confirm that he had received the corrected page proofs (first state) of *On the Boiler*, and reminding Higgins that timely publication of *On the Boiler*, which contains his preferred text of *Purgatory*, was a matter of concern, and then

<sup>57</sup> *Life* 2 765 n. 93 citing Dorothy Wellesley letter to Higgins, 14 November 1938, NLI Ms. 10,864. *ChronY* 311.

quite forcefully withdrawing his suggestion in the undated letter that Higgins might take care of the corrected page proofs (second state) when they became available.

You might let me know if you have received the proofs of 'On the Boiler'. I want Purgatory played from 'On the Boiler['] 'version' and the text in the hands of the public as soon as possible after the performance. I must of course correct my own proofs.

The letter concludes with asking Higgins's help in finding a new volume for the Cuala Press, and then a postscript mention that he is writing *The Death of Cuchulain*.

A week later, Yeats wrote a brief letter to Higgins (*CL IntelLex* 7361, 1 January 1939), suggesting that the Abbey Theatre consider asking George Bernard Shaw for his topical political play *Geneva, a Fancied Page of History in Three Acts*, which had premiered 1 August 1938 at the Malvern Festival and would open in London on 27 January 1939. Yeats did not mention *On the Boiler*, but diplomatically reported 'Anne writes to me that you have been tremendously busy at the Abbey, as indeed I assumed'.

On 1 January 1939 Yeats reported to Edith Shackleton Heald (*CL IntelLex* 7360, this portion is omitted in *L* 922.) about the situation with Higgins:

Nothing about The Boiler. Higgins is probably the cause of delay. He is manager at the Abbey & he has been at work there all day long. Abbey has been in chaos. A new producer, born a gaelic speaker, who passes from one fit of hysteria to another, a play that the author constantly rewrites at rehearsal. From to-morrow my daughter is sole designer of costume & scenery & a week ago in the general despair was asked to produce as well but had not time. Meanwhile Higgins answers no letters—Hilda & Dorothy (who feel responsible for half the Broadsides) & my wife & I have not had a word. No Broadsides, nothing. Now that the play O Connors Fenians—has come out & had a bad press I am hoping for a letter from Higgins. I judge from a letter of my daughters that Higgins is gradually waking from the dream. It is the first letter my daughter herself has written for several weeks.

Yeats's frustration with Higgins's failure to reply was heightening into anger, as is evident in his pointed reply 4 January 1939 to Anne

Yeats (*CL InteLex* 7363) to Anne's letter about Higgins and the Abbey Theatre:

You have told me quite a lot of things, but not what look there is on Higgins. Can you judge by a drop in his eye, or the shape of his waist, or his walk, that he is thinking about the 'Boiler'; that the proofs have been seen through the press. Or perhaps you might get at it by palmistry, if he is too busy to speak—no ask him to tea & find out by his tea leaves.

So it comes as no surprise that on 8 January he, with George Yeats and Dorothy Wellesley and her companion Hilda Matheson, fired Higgins (*in absentia* and *incommunicado*) as an editor of the projected series of *Broadsides* because, as Yeats explained to Edith Shackleton Heald, 'he has not answered any letter for months being overwhelmed by Abbey work' (*CL InteLex* 7365).

Assuming it had been mid-December when Yeats had posted the corrected page proofs to Higgins, it had now been three weeks without any word as to whether the proofs had reached Longford Printing Press. No longer willing to risk relying on Higgins, the Yeatses decided to mail the other set of those page proofs directly to the press; that was the set onto which George Yeats had transcribed the corrections (or, as we now know, all but two of the corrections). Yeats prepared a letter of transmittal to Longford Printing Press, dated 10 January 1939, of which two copies are extant, identical except that one (NLI Ms. 30,513, printed in *EYPR* 142) has underscoring added to emphasize the phrase 'copy with my corrections'. The other is *CL InteLex* 7367, from a private collection as of 2003. The letter of transmittal, which has the letterhead 'Hotel Idéal-Séjour, Cap-Martin, France', reads:

Dear Sirs:

I return one set of paged proofs corrected. Please send me a revise to the above address, [cancelled: enclosing] and return to me the copy with my corrections. I had a great deal of trouble in making these corrections because you did not return to me the corrected galley proofs when sending paged proof.

Have you yet received from Mr. F. R. Higgins the copy of the estimate you refer to in your last letter? I have asked him to send it to you.

I shall be glad to receive the revised page proof at your earliest convenience.

That same day, to make doubly sure of minimizing delay in Longford Printing Press starting to work with the corrected page proofs, Yeats wrote to Anne Yeats in Dublin (*CL IntelLex* 7368, 10 January 1939), enclosing a copy of the letter of transmittal to the press. He instructed her to ask Higgins if he received the corrected page proofs but did not send them on to Longford Printing Press and if so to get that set of the corrected page proofs back from Higgins and then send them to the press with the enclosed letter.

My dear Anne

Will you please ask Higgins if he received the corrected page proofs of 'On the Boiler' which I sent him. If he has received them but has not sent them on to the Longford Printing Press, Longford, please get them back from him and send them off by registered post with the enclosed letter. Please let me have a reply by return of post.

We know, from the evidence of the two missing corrections, that Longford Printing Press used the set of corrected page proofs that Yeats had sent to Higgins in mid-December, and not the second set of those page proofs that Yeats sent directly to the press on 10 January. But still Yeats didn't know, despite his having asked Anne, in the 10 January letter, 'Please let me have a reply by return of post'. On 15 January, he asked Anne (*CL IntelLex* 7372): 'Have the proofs been sent back to the Longford Printing Press yet? If not, please alter the date of my PREFACE from July to October. This is important. If proofs have been returned, please telephone to Longford and ask for the manager and ask him if this can be done'.<sup>58</sup>

Ann Saddlemyer poignantly records George Yeats's 21 January 1939 letter to Anne, written the day after Michael Yeats had arrived for Christmas with his parents and while Yeats's health was strong enough that George Yeats was still planning to return to Dublin in a

<sup>58</sup> The set of corrected page proofs (NLI 30,485) that Yeats had sent to Higgins probably in mid-December has the preface with the printed date 'July, 1938'. In W201 the preface has the revised date of 'October, 1938'. The preface is not extant in either other set of page proofs (first state) (*HRHC*) or the page proofs (second state) (BL Add. MS 55881).

week. George Yeats wrote sprightly of her eagerness to learn “all ALL ALL the Abbey news at Breakfast” in Anne’s room, especially about Higgins who has never written’ (*BG* 560). Yeats died 28 January 1939, before the Longford Printing Press had completed the revised page proofs.

With that much of the chronology laid out, we can pause for a moment to look at how the evidence was interpreted by Richard J. Finneran in *Editing Yeats’s Poems: A Reconsideration* (1990) and his earlier *Editing Yeats’s Poems* (1983) and also by Sandra F. Siegel in her Cornell *Purgatory* and earlier in a collateral way as a something of a side issue in her ‘Yeats’s Quarrel with Himself’ (*loc. cit.*, n. 54 above). In Finneran’s *EYP* (1983), the chronology is that Yeats corrected the galley proofs ‘at some point in the fall of 1938’ (*EYP* 113) and then corrected the page proofs shortly after he arrived in France on 28 November. He then sent the corrected page proofs to Higgins enclosed with the undated letter in early/mid-December. All of that is consistent with the evidence. However, Finneran then assumed that later, when Higgins received the 24 December letter, he was confused by Yeats’s shift away from the tentative proposal that Higgins might take care of correcting subsequent page proofs to Yeats’s firm assertion in the 24 December letter that he would correct the proofs himself. Finneran then conjectured that Higgins, instead of delivering the corrected proofs to Longford, mailed them back to Yeats in France ‘and suggested that it would be better if Yeats continue to deal directly with the printers’ (*EYP* 114). Under that barely plausible scenario, Yeats on 10 January mailed the corrected proofs directly to Longford Printing Press.

Finneran in *EYPR* in 1990 had access to some additional evidence and significantly recast his views.<sup>59</sup> Finneran had controversially chosen as copy-text for *the On the Boiler* poems in his earlier *W. B. Yeats The Poems: A New Edition* (New York: Macmillan, 1983). Now the galley proofs were read ‘perhaps’ before or, much less conjecturally, ‘at

<sup>59</sup> He also (*EYPR* 140) changed his choice of copy-text for poems in *On the Boiler* to the corrected page proofs (first state), (NLI Ms. 30,485) from the corrected page proofs (second state) (BL Add. MS 55881), which were used in 1939 for *On the Boiler* W201 and for Macmillan ‘Coole Edition’ page proofs (BL Add. MS 55895).



some point not long' (*EYPR* 141) after Yeats's report on 4 September 1938 that *On the Boiler* has at last gone to press (*CL InteLex* 7299, see 412 above). The page proofs, however, had not yet arrived when Yeats wrote to Higgins on 24 December 1938. Finneran newly interpreted that letter as asking if Higgins had yet received the page proofs from the Longford Printing Press, rather than asking for confirmation that Higgins had received the corrected page proofs from Yeats. Then Finneran gives a whole series of conjectures: 'It appears that his plea at last succeeded and that the proofs were sent to Yeats within the next few days. Probably in the first few days of January 1939, Yeats returned the corrected proofs to Higgins' (*EYPR* 141–42) as an enclosure to his undated letter (see 416 above). And then, on the basis of that letter's closing, 'I hope your face is better and that you are well', Finneran indulges himself: 'I conjecture that in fact Higgins was not well and that he returned the proofs to Yeats with the request that he deal directly with the Longford printers'. (*EYPR* 142) In fact, Higgins was in robust health.<sup>60</sup>

But in a note Finneran continues with the illness theory for one sentence before allowing the much more likely alternative: 'Higgins died on 8 January 1941, at the age of forty-four. Alternatively, Higgins might have said that he was simply too busy with other work to watch over *On the Boiler*'. Yeats had begun his letter of 24 December 1938 by saying, 'I hear that you have had a great deal of extra work at the Abbey. If I had known I would not have seemed to hustle you' (*EYPR* 142 n. 33). Finneran did not pay attention to the second set of the page proofs with the transcribed corrections, and he certainly must not have been aware of the key letters to Anne Yeats, particularly that of 10 January 1938 (*CL InteLex* 7367).

Siegel's two publications (in 1978 and 1986) that involve the editorial history of *On the Boiler* are focused on *Purgatory* and did not have access to as much evidence is now available. In her prudently sketchy account, at the end of June 1938 Yeats gave a typescript (or a non-extant duplicate) to Higgins, who then gave it to Longford

<sup>60</sup> None of the extant correspondence has any mention of Higgins's health, only of his being overwhelmed by Abbey work, leaving no attention for the Cuala Broad-sides, possible new Cuala books, or *On the Boiler*. On 8 January 1941 Fred Higgins died suddenly of heart failure (*BG* 588).

Printing Press ‘probably early in July’. The non-extant galley proofs were corrected ‘some time in the autumn’. Then ‘in late December or early January’ (Cornell *Purgatory* 187), Longford sent the page proofs (first state) to Yeats, which he corrected, without access to the galleys. Her account acknowledges that the press sent him two sets of those page proofs, but asserts that only one of the two sets is extant: ‘One copy was sent to Longford and had the author’s holograph corrections. It is this set that survives’ (Cornell *Purgatory* 19). As we will see, that set, with the transcribed corrections, was eventually returned to George Yeats and was sent on to New York for the never-published Scribner’s ‘Dublin’ edition and is now at HRHC. Siegel confronts at length, although to no avail, the difficulties of the relationship between the undated letter to Higgins, the 24 December letter to him and the 10 January forwarding letter to the Longford Printing Press (Cornell *Purgatory* 17–19). In what can be regarded as a controversial decision she assigns more authority to the typescript than to the corrected page proofs (first state), which Finneran eventually chose in 1990 as copy-text for the poems from *On the Boiler* in *CW1* and which I also chose as copy-text for *On the Boiler* in *CW5*. Siegel explains her preference of the typescript over the corrected page proofs (first state) by focusing on Yeats not having the galleys in hand when he corrected the page proofs (first state): ‘But since Yeats corrected the Longford proofs without the galleys to guide him, and since the galleys have not survived. I have chosen to key the variants in the readings that follow to the typescript rather than to the first set of Longford page proofs, even though this is the last version of the play Yeats saw and on which he made corrections’ (Cornell *Purgatory* 188).

With Yeats’s death, 28 January 1939, *On the Boiler* was now in George Yeats’s charge, one part of her many responsibilities as sole Executrix. She returned to Ireland on 2 February. Higgins had now become more helpful, and wrote to the Longford Printing Press, presumably at George Yeats’s request, about delivery of the page proofs. She received them on Saturday, 25 February and on Monday, 27 February wrote to thank Higgins and arrange to meet with him about the title page and cover, for which Jack Yeats had made a black ink drawing.



Plate 41. Jack B. Yeats: Original Drawing for front cover of *On the Boiler*, with Jack Yeats's instruction 'To Block Maker Please keep original drawing Clean'. Image courtesy Philip Errington, and Sotheby's, New Bond St., London.

The salutation ‘Dear Fred’ shows some warming from her earlier practice of ‘Dear Mr. Higgins’:

Dear Fred

Many thanks for the letter to Longford. The proofs arrived on Saturday night’s post!

I should like to consult you regarding one or two points—cover, title page etc—and would call at the Abbey anytime tomorrow (Tuesday) or Wednesday or Thursday morning if you could give me a ring to say what hour would suit you. I have a secretary in the afternoons on Wed. and Thurs. so only the mornings wld. be poss.

Have you got, or did you send on to Longford, Jack Yeats’ design for the cover? You may remember that I sent it to you just before leaving for France in November.

Yours very sincerely  
George Yeats<sup>61</sup>

George Yeats corrected these page proofs (second state),<sup>62</sup> which incorporated the corrections for the first-state proofs. She would have been able to check the second state page proofs against the two copies of the marked first-state page proofs, which the Longford Printing Press returned, in accordance with Yeats’s emphatic instructions in his 10 January forwarding letter to the press. It was thus a much more straightforward process than had been the case with the first-

<sup>61</sup> NLI Ms. 27,883 (17). For the Jack Yeats drawing, see Plate 41 and Hilary Pyle’s catalogue raisonné, *The Different Worlds of Jack B. Yeats: His Cartoons and Illustrations* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994), 47 and 203, no. 1467. The black ink drawing (110 x 170mm) was sold at *Yeats: The Family Collection*, Sotheby’s, London, 27 September 2017 as lot 184.i, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2017/yeats-family-collection-117136.html>. Jack Yeats made two drawings; the one that was not selected is Pyle no. 1468; Pyle does not include an illustration of it.

<sup>62</sup> BL Add. MS 55881, which has only its pages [3] through 33, which are the prose sections, from ‘The Name’ through the poem ‘I lived among great houses’ [later titled ‘A Stateman’s Holiday’]. It lacks the front matter, *Purgatory* (34–21) and ‘Three Marching Songs’ (42–44). NLI Ms. 30,485, second item in the folder, has unmarked pp. 42 and 43 [p. 44 is not present], which are the first two of the three pages of ‘Three Marching Songs’, page proofs (second state), unmarked, incorporating the corrections that were marked on page proofs (first state), which are NLI 30,485, first item.

state page proofs. The printer had made most of the corrections, but ignored the instruction to spell out '20' (at 'Preliminaries', Section IV, line 5; *CW5* 225, l. 12; *Ex* 414, l. 22) likely because the line was so tightly spaced that the change would have required resetting more than one line. George Yeats marked the change on these second-state page proofs, but the printer's recalcitrance persisted and the book (Wade no. 201) was printed with '20' instead of 'twenty'. As it happens, that event is useful evidence because she wrote out 'twenty' in the margin in exactly the same way as she had done when she transcribed the first-state page proofs corrections onto the extra set. These second-state page proofs were later to be marked by George Yeats, Thomas Mark and others, so her writing of 'twenty' conclusively identifies one of those many markings, and is part of the evidence that these same second-state page proofs would be re-used a few months later as copy-text for the replacement *On the Boiler* that was to be printed by Alex. Thom & Co., Ltd. (Wade no. 202) and in which the change was adopted.<sup>63</sup>

George Yeats was under considerable stress at this time and so could very well have wanted to finish the proofs expeditiously and with a minimum of effort. She missed the misprint of 'theatre' as 'threats' (*CW5* 232, l. 40; *Ex* 428, l. 8), the skipped heading for 'Private Thoughts' section II (*CW5* 234; *Ex* 431, l. 1), and five punctuation corrections in the last sentence of 'Other Matters' section VI (*CW5* 249; *Ex* 451). Two decades later, when the Macmillan published *On the Boiler* in *Explorations*, using those same second-state page proofs and a copy of the Alex. Thom & Co. book (Wade no. 202), there would be scores of items to emend, but for George Yeats in February 1939 it would have been a relief just to be done with *On the Boiler*.

With Yeats's death, the Cuala board now was reduced to George Yeats, Higgins, and Lolly, who despite poor health continued to be

<sup>63</sup> Other items that were marked on the second-state page proofs but which were ignored by Longford Printing Press in Wade no. 201, but then were adopted in the Alex. Thom & Co. printing are the addition of hyphens in 'coat-cleaning' (*CW5* 239, line 19; *Ex* 438, line 9), 'broad-backed' (*CW5* 249, line 23; *Ex* 451, l. 9) and 'bridge-playing' (*CW5* 241 l. 33; *Ex* 441, l. 23), the removal of an erroneous hyphen from 'demerits' (*CW5* 244, line 14; *Ex* 444, line 16), and the addition of the acute accent in 'de Valéra' (*CW5* 436, n. 94; *Ex* 441, n. 1).

bothersome. The board's first meeting since November 1938 was on 10 March 1939. The minutes note that Higgins was in the Chair and that the financial woes were continuing, and 'that Mrs Yeats & Mr. Higgins should see the auditors on Monday March 13th at 11 am'. There would be a Board meeting every fortnight, and

Mrs Yeats proposed & Mr. F. R. Higgins seconded, that Mr. Jack B. Yeats be asked if he would consent to act as Director. It was decided that Mrs W. B. Yeats and Mr. F. R. Higgins be appointed Joint Editors of the Press.<sup>64</sup>

Jack Yeats declined, and the Board remained at only three members until after Lolly's hospitalization on 14 December 1938 and death 16 January 1940.

Cuala's most recent books had been Yeats's *New Poems*, published 18 May 1938, and Frank O'Connor's translations from the Irish, *Lords and Commons*, published 25 October 1938. Cuala was preparing Yeats's *Last Poems and Two Plays*, at this time still tentatively titled *Last Poems*, which would be published 10 July 1939. The Cuala minutes for 21 April and for 16 May state that 1,000 cards announcing the new books "Last Poems" and "On the Boiler" were being sent out. There was no news from Longford Printing Press until sometime after 17 July when the first copies arrived. They were a disaster. Each of the page numbers in the table of contents was four less than it should have been; the type in much of the book has poor clarity, especially in the extensive footnotes; the opening line of a section is left widowed at the bottom of a page; very wide gaps are left between words; and Latin text is not set in italics. The binding was clumsily done with two staples through the thickness of the book. Rather than wait for the next fortnightly meeting of the Cuala board, George Yeats convened a special meeting on 24 July. At that point the Cuala Order Book already had seventy advance orders, totaling 182 copies.<sup>65</sup>

Prompt, decisive action was needed, and George Yeats did not hesitate, as the minutes make clear:

<sup>64</sup> Minute book of meetings of Directors of Cuala Industries 12 Oct 1938—2 Dec 1941, Cuala Press archive 1902–1986, Box 2, no. 1, Trinity College Library.

<sup>65</sup> Cuala Press Archive, Trinity College Dublin.

The following resolution was proposed by Mrs. W. B. Yeats & seconded by Mr. F. R. Higgins[:] “That the Cuala Press take over from Mrs. Yeats the copy of “On the Boiler by W. B. Yeats” and have it published on terms to be arranged later with Mrs. Yeats[.]”

Estimates for Printing to be invited from

Cahill Parkgate Printing Works

Thom[']s[.] Crow St [Alex. Thom & Co., Limited, Crow Street, Dublin]

Thom[']s to be asked to send on a traveler[.] F. R. Higgins suggested (to save time)[.] named ‘Ryan’ so that we can give him particulars of size etc—

It was decided to refuse delivery of the whole edition of ‘On the Boiler’ from the Longford Press as it was considered impossible for the Cuala Press to offer the book for sale owing to the numerous errors in the text; the careless inking etc—& the following letter was drafted, & was to be sent immediately to the Longford Printing Press[:]

‘We regret to say that we are unable to offer for sale any of the copies of “On the Boiler” as printed by you. Your printing is so deplorable in *style* and *inking*—apart from the many typographical errors in the text—we feel it would seriously damage the reputation of the Cuala Press if the work went out under our name[.]’

As we cannot take the responsibility of storage please let us know immediately what we are to do with the spoilt edition?’

The meeting then adjourned.<sup>66</sup>

A year later, a Dublin waste paper firm hauled away the copies of the withdrawn edition.<sup>67</sup>

George Yeats later told Allan Wade that ‘only about four copies of this edition had been issued when it was decided to reprint the book; the whole remainder of the edition was then destroyed and the new edition substituted’. That was that.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Minute book of meetings of Directors of Cuala Industries 12 Oct 1938—2 Dec 1941, Cuala Archive, Box 2, No. 1, Trinity College Dublin.

<sup>67</sup> Cuala Press diary, 25 June 1940, cited in Liam Miller, *The Dun Emer Press, Later the Cuala Press* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1973), 122.

<sup>68</sup> Wade no. 201. Extant copies: Dublin Municipal Library; Emory University; Wesleyan University; and George M. Harper collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (formerly in the collection of Senator Michael Yeats); and Colin Smythe reports three other copies: P & B Rowan, Belfast have sold two copies, one without a cover, and Birgit Bramsbäck owned a copy, which was sold at Sotheby’s 18 December 1995, lot 318.

Alex. Thom & Co., Ltd., Dublin, the long-standing publisher of Thom's Dublin Street Directory, continuously since 1844, had the printing experience that Longford Printing Press did not. No proofs or other documentation are extant, but collation of the Alex. Thom printing (Wade no. 202) against the marked page proofs (second state) from February 1939 for the Longford Printing Press (Wade no. 201) conclusively establishes that those marked proofs (second state) were the copy-text for Wade no. 202.<sup>69</sup>

It did set the Latin quotations in italics, as had not been the case with Longford, but presumably to avoid additional copy editing, the titles of books and plays were left in quotation marks instead of being converted to italics. Wade no. 202 was a considerable improvement over the Longford Printing Press in terms of accurately following the copy, but errors in the copy itself meant that Wade no. 202 was far from error-free, for example 'threats' instead of 'theatre' (BL Add. MS 55881, 15, l. 25; Wade no. 202, 21, l. 23; corrected in *Ex* 428, l. 8 & *CW5* 232, l. 40), stanza divisions not closed up in Swift's 'Ode to the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Sir William Temple' (BL Add. MS 55881, 18; Wade no. 202, 23–24; corrected in *Ex* 432 & *CW5* 235), and skipping a numbered section division (Section 'II' of 'Private Thoughts', BL Add. MS 55881 p. 17; Wade no. 202, 23, l. 5; *Ex* 431, l. 1 and furthermore with the 'II' wrongly placed at *Ex* 432; corrected in *CW5* 234). The new *On the Boiler* (Wade no. 202) looked better because it was bound with glue rather than heavy staples. An official date of publication is not known, but the Cuala Order Book states that the 236 copies that had been ordered in advance were shipped on 31 August 1939.<sup>70</sup> That date accords with the British Library copy, which is date-stamped 4

<sup>69</sup> In addition to the evidence of 'twenty' mentioned 428 above, all of the corrections listed in n. 63 above were adopted in Wade no. 202.

<sup>70</sup> Cuala Order Book, Cuala Press Archive, Trinity College Dublin. The London representative of Charles Scribner's Sons advance order is 19 May 1939 and Macmillan, London is 6 June 1939. Harold Macmillan's letter on 5 June ordered 'your editions of Mr. Yeats's last poems, his last two plays and 'On the Boiler' (to Miss E. C. Yeats, BL Add. MS 55825, f. 20). The Scribner's copy (*HRHC* Scribners papers, box 2, file vol. VII) had been passed along to its New York office before 19 September ([John Hall Wheelock] memorandum to Harold Cadmus, 19 September 1939, carbon copy, Princeton, author files I, box 174, folder Yeats 2).



September. After the 236 copies from 95 advance orders had been shipped, the rest of 1939 had 171 copies in 59 orders. In 1940 there were 90 copies in 49 orders, 1941 had 22 copies in 11 orders, and for 1942–1945 only 16 copies in 12 orders. The grand total of copies ordered was 535. The size of the print run is not recorded, but Colin Smythe heard the figure to be in excess of 2,000 copies (Information from Warwick Gould).

Yeats had relished the prospect that *On the Boiler* would elicit ferocious responses from reviewers and readers, which would boost sales. But that was not to be. Just four days after the first copies of *On the Boiler* were shipped to customers, Britain declared war on Germany. Six weeks later Macmillan decided to postpone publication of Yeats's *Last Poems and Plays* (Wade no. 203) until January 1940 because, as Harold Macmillan explained to George Yeats (BL Add. MS 55830, f. 281), 'the present state of the publishing world is so difficult'. He added, specifically about reviewers, 'I am hoping in connection with this book to revive interest in all the work, and in a period of less rush I think reviewers will do more justice to these poems and Mr. Yeat's [sic] work as a whole'. Ann Saddlemyer records the similar opinion of George Yeats that the war was to blame for the lukewarm reception of *On the Boiler*, that 'there had been very few reviews of *On the Boiler*, for the English papers seemed to be reviewing "nothing but war books & fiction"' (BG 586–87).

But that's far from the end of the editorial history of *On the Boiler*. At the start of 1939 work was well underway for two expensive, limited collected editions, one of seven volumes ('The Dublin Edition', which soon would be increased to eleven volumes) in New York at Charles Scribner's Sons and the other in London at Macmillan (the 'Edition de Luxe', soon to be renamed 'The Coole Edition') with eleven volumes and advertised at 16 Guineas.<sup>71</sup> Scribner's planned

<sup>71</sup> Macmillan 'Preliminary Notice', BL Add. MS 55821, f. 487 and also Princeton, Author Files I, box 174, folder: Yeats has 15 guineas, but a later advertisement in *The Arrow*, W. B. Yeats Commemoration Number, Summer 1939 (copy inscribed 16 August 1939 to May Higgins from Elizabeth C. Yeats), 4]: 'This edition will be limited to 350 copies for sale; each set will have the author's signature; there will be five or six photogravure portraits of the author. In Eleven Volumes. Sixteen Guineas net'. (NLI Ms. 27,878) A proof of the prospectus that

to publish its first volumes in early autumn 1939. Harold Macmillan wrote to George Yeats on 28 February, 'We should like to publish it in September, and it is therefore important that we should have as soon as possible any poems, plays, or essays for which we do not possess the material'.<sup>72</sup> Each publisher wanted to make its collected edition to be complete by including *On the Boiler*.

George Yeats travelled to London for a few days for the Yeats memorial service on 16 March 1939, staying at the London flat of Dorothy Wellesley and Hilda Matheson, with whom she would have discussed the Cuala *Broadsides* project of which Dorothy and Higgins were editors. The next day she met with Harold Macmillan and Thomas Mark to discuss plans for *Last Poems & Plays* (Wade 203) and the possibility of additional 'autobiographical and other material' for the Edition de Luxe.<sup>73</sup>

On 14 April 1939 Macmillan sent her a proof of a draft prospectus (BL Add. MS 55890, ff. 1–2) for the eleven-volume edition. George Yeats wrote in 'On the Boiler' at the end of the listing of contents for volume XI ('Later Essay', and earlier titled 'Essays and Introductions').

The editorial roles and mutual respect of George Yeats and the trusted editor Thomas Mark are evident in their letters to each other at this time. George Yeats compliments him for 'your own invaluable help in reading of proofs'. And Mark underscores her helpful role and his enthusiasm for the work:

Thomas Mark send to George Yeats on 21 April 1939 (BL Add. MS 55822, f. 550) had the price at sixteen and one-half guineas. For the history of those projects see: Warwick Gould, 'The Definitive Edition: A History of the Final Arrangements of Yeats's Work', Appendix Six of *Yeats's Poems*, ed. and ann. by A. Norman Jeffares, 3rd edition (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1996, 706–49; Warwick Gould, 'W. B. Yeats and the Resurrection of the Author', *The Library* 6–16. 2, 1 June 1994, 101–34 and <https://doi.org/10.1093/library/s6-16.2.101>; *VSR* xx–xliii, *Myth 2005* lxxv–viii, and *CW5* 483–91; Edward Callan, *Yeats on Yeats: The Last Introductions and the 'Dublin' Edition*, New Yeats Papers 20 (Mountrath, Portlaoise: Dolmen Press, 1981), 87–103. Also compare *EYPR* 5–23 ('The Edition de Luxe and the Scribner Edition') and to some extent 39–51 ('Collaborative Revision: Thomas Mark and George Yeats, 1939–49').

<sup>72</sup> BL Add. MS 55820, ff. 203–4. J. H. Wheelock, Scribner's to A. P. Watt, 6 February 1939 BL Add. MS 55819, f. 190.

<sup>73</sup> *BG* 574–75. Thomas Mark to George Yeats, 14 April 1939 BL Add. MS 55822, f. 342.

There are some queries I was going to submit to Mr. Yeats when I went through the revised proofs, and I should be glad to have your advice on some points if it would not be troubling you too much ... I wonder if you would like the alterations made as marked on the pages of proofs enclosed herewith. Please let me know if you would rather let questions like this be decided here. I need scarcely say that it will give me great pleasure to do anything I can with regard to existing volumes, the new material you have ready, and the volume that has still to be edited, as I have always taken great pride in the work that has been entrusted to me in connection with Mr. Yeats's writings.<sup>74</sup>

That was reinforced by Harold Macmillan in his 13 June 1939 letter to George Yeats (BL Add. MS 55825, f.302), 'Mr. Mark has told me of the very kind help you are giving him with the proofs, and I am pleased that you have been able to collaborate so actively in this edition'.

There was some discussion about whether to add *On the Boiler* to the last volume, XI, or to Volume VIII, with autobiographical works, because, as Harold Macmillan explained in his 13 June letter to George Yeats, Volume XI 'threatens to be a good deal lengthier than the other prose volumes. We would like to keep the books as close to the same length as possible, to avoid having to use a specially thin paper in some cases'. George Yeats pointed out that *On the Boiler* 'can hardly be regarded as "autobiographical"' and that she had marked it as an addition to the final volume, XI, 'mainly because it represents the studies Yeats had been occupied with for the past two years of his life'. That placement in Volume XI carried the day, perhaps in part because Macmillan, with the support of George Yeats, decided not to include the two essays that would otherwise have been added to Volume XI, 'If I were Four-and-Twenty' (1914) and 'Ireland, 1921–1931' (1932).<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> George Yeats to Thomas Mark, 13 April 1939, photocopy from Richard Finneran. Thomas Mark to George Yeats, 14 April 1939, BL Add. MS 55822, f. 344.

<sup>75</sup> George Yeats to Macmillan, 14 June 1939, photocopy supplied by Richard Finneran. Harold Macmillan to George Yeats, 19 June 1939 (BL Add. MS 55825, f. 501). See *CW5* 464–65, where I mention the possibility that Yeats in 1938 considered using 'If I were Four-and-Twenty' in (or as) a later number of *On the*

On 2 June, when Macmillan asked George Yeats for copy-text of *On the Boiler*<sup>76</sup> it still was scheduled for Volume VIII (*Autobiographies II*), which would reach page proofs by 21 June, so there was no room for delay. She promptly sent him the set of marked page proofs (second state) (BL Add. MS 55881) of Wade no. 201, which the Longford Printing Press had finished using by then. Within a month, that set of page proofs had been copy-edited by Thomas Mark at Macmillan and set in proofs<sup>77</sup> as the final item (357–409) of Volume XI, *Later Essays*, of the Macmillan Coole Edition, date-stamped throughout ‘R. & R. Clark, Ltd. | 9 July 1939 | Edinburgh’ (BL Add. MS 55895).<sup>78</sup>

Those Longford page proofs (second state) had been marked by George Yeats at the end of February, and then in June/July were further marked at Macmillan by Thomas Mark. In the margin of page 3 of the Longford page proofs, at the poem ‘Why should not Old Men be Mad?’, is a hand-written notation ‘Follow text as

*Boiler*. It later was printed as the title essay, paired with ‘Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places’ (1914), in a Cuala book (Wade no. 205) published 28 September 1940.

<sup>76</sup> 2 June 1939, Macmillan letter-book, BL Add. Ms. 55824.

<sup>77</sup> The marked page proofs (second state) BL Add. MS 55881 has black pencil marking by the Coole Edition compositor on page 8, right margin, 15 lines from the end of ‘Preliminaries’, Section IV: ‘that were not 369/2B’. In the Coole Edition proofs BL Add. MS 55895 of Volume XI, the first words of page 369 are ‘that were not’, and at the bottom of that same page is the signature notation: ‘VOL. XI 2B 369’.

<sup>78</sup> Additional confirmation that BL Add. MS 55881 was the copy-text for the Coole Edition proofs BL Add. MS 55895 is available from changes marked on BL Add. MS 55881 that were adopted in the Coole Edition proofs:

55895, 362 (‘Preliminaries’, Section I, first paragraph, 4th line from the end: ‘gin-palace’ (with lower-case and hyphen) (vice ‘Gin Palace’)

55895, 367, ‘Preliminaries’, Section IV, opening paragraph, line 5: ‘twenty’ (spelled out) (vice the numeral ‘20’).

55895, 370, ‘To-Morrow’s Revolution’, Section I, opening words: ‘WHEN I WAS IN MY TEENS I admired my father’ (with a large initial capital ‘W’ and then the first six words in small capitals).

55895, 380, ‘To-Morrow’s Revolution’, last section, footnote, last line: ‘or “That is a man.”’ (with capitalized ‘T’) (no comma after ‘or’).

55895, 382, ‘Private Thoughts’, Section I, opening words: ‘I AM PHILOSOPHICAL, not scientific, which’ (with a large initial capital ‘I’ and then small capitals for the next two words).

corrected in proof of *Last Poems*, referring to the proofs of the Cuala Press *Last Poems and Two Plays* (Wade no. 200). George Yeats had sent corrected page proofs of that Cuala book to Macmillan and also to Scribner's, and because the Scribner's set (*HRHRC*, Yeats Collection, Box 4, Miscellaneous case) has page numbering from a penultimate stage of production, she sent the proofs of the Cuala Press *Last Poems and Two Plays* to them probably in late April or early May.<sup>79</sup> Those Longford page proofs (second state) (BL Add. MS 55881) are complex and well-travelled. They were (1.) marked by George Yeats in February 1939 (2.) were at the Longford Printing Press in March for production of Wade no. 201 (3.) were marked again April or May by George Yeats for the Coole Edition (4.) and then by Thomas Mark in May or June, with some queries answered by George Yeats (5.) were marked by the Coole Edition compositor in July 1939 in Edinburgh, and (6.) a week or so later were at the Alex Thom & Co. press in Dublin for production of Wade no. 202. And, as we will soon see, had a role two decades later in the preparation of *Explorations*, published in July 1962. Few of those many markings can be attributed with full confidence to a particular person, but collations do enable identification of the phase at which many of the markings occurred, and the sequence of markings in various media is sometimes identifiable.<sup>80</sup>

The 19 July 1939 Coole Edition proofs of the Volume XI (BL Add. MS 55895), in which pages 357–409 have *On the Boiler*, has blue-ink copy-editing by Thomas Mark in 1939, as well as his queries for George Yeats in 1939, but those queries were not about *On the Boiler*, and whenever it was that she did eventually answer,

<sup>79</sup> The pagination changed when four lines were deleted from 'High Talk'. The Cuala Minute Book describes *Last Poems and Two Plays* as 'the new book now in preparation' (10 March), 'being printed' (21 April), printing 'continuing' and 'continuing steadily' (9 and 16 May), and printing 'was finished last week' and the sheets are now being be readied for the bindery (14 June). The colophon states it was 'finished in the second week of June 1939' and published 10 July 1939.

<sup>80</sup> The likely sequence of the markings on BL Add. MS 55881 is:

(1.) Black ink, with a broad nibbed pen that was clumsy to use on this cheap, highly absorbent paper; (2.) Black pencil, in a large hand; (3.) Blue ink; (4.) Blue pencil; (5.) Black pencil, in a small hand; (6.) Red pencil; and (7.) Black pencil of compositor 'R. M.', in the left margin.

also in blue ink, she apparently did not return them until at least after the 12 February 1940, when Mark, writing for Macmillan in Harold Macmillan's absence, to A. S. Watt (BL Add. MS 55834, f. 522) asked Watt to get George Yeats to sign and return the American contract for *Last Poems and Two Plays* that was now more than two months late:

I wonder if you think that you could do anything by wiring to Mrs Yeats. I have written to her several times about some outstanding proofs of the big edition of her husband's works, but have had no reply.<sup>81</sup>

George Yeats had helped by looking at proofs of several of the Coole Edition proofs, but the disruption associated with her move on 26 July from Riversdale to 46 Palmerston Road, Rathmines would have been a practical limitation.

Meanwhile, in New York, as of 5 January 1939, some three weeks prior to Yeats's death, Charles Scribner's Sons had planned to begin work on the layout and general format of its 'Dublin Edition' in March 1939 and to publish the 'first volume or so' in autumn 1939.<sup>82</sup> When Yeats died, Scribner's expanded their plans for the 'Dublin Edition' by adding all of Yeats's works published since 1937, so that the edition increased to eleven volumes. On 6 February 1939, J. H. Wheelock, Scribner's, in a letter to Yeats's agent A. P. Watt, indicated that 'the material on hand contains everything of Mr. Yeats's work that has been published to date' and asked for information about any plans for additional, posthumous publication: 'as the Dublin edition is intended to be definitive, we shall naturally wish to include among the last volumes published any future books of Mr. Yeats'. That would include *On the Boiler*, but their first volume, planned for October 1939, was *Poems*. Accordingly, during the spring George Yeats concentrated on providing them the additional poems needed for that volume, rather than sending copy for *On the Boiler*, which

<sup>81</sup> E.g., answered queries on 250–51 ('An Indian Monk') and on 250–51, 267, 270–71, and 275 ('The Holy Mountain').

<sup>82</sup> John Hall Wheelock, Scribners, New York, to Charles Kingsley, London representative of Scribners, 5 January 1939 (carbon copy), Princeton, author files I, box 174, Yeats folder 2.

Scribner's planned for Scribner's Volume VII in the now expanded Dublin Edition. She certainly would have expected to have been able to furnish Scribner's a copy of the published book, rather than page proofs. But when she sent them a large packet of copy for additional essays and introductions for the Dublin Edition, shortly before 19 June 1939, she resorted, presumably only as a temporary measure, to sending the cleanly transcribed set of earlier corrected page proofs (first state) for the Longford Printing Press *On the Boiler*.<sup>83</sup> In New York, Scribner's labelled them but did not make emendations and never typeset *On the Boiler*. Scribner's copy of *On the Boiler* Wade no. 202 (see note 70 above; *HRHC* Scribners papers, box 2, file vol. VII) has no copy-editing of its text, but has hand-written pagination '329' through '364', its top page ('329') is marked 'Duplicate', and the table of contents is marked to show excision of the play *Purgatory*.

On 3 September 1939 Britain declared war on Germany, and both the Macmillan 'Coole Edition' and the Scribner's 'Dublin Edition' were postponed, and then eventually abandoned, because of the unfavourable economic condition of the book market. Scribner's had published its eight-volume 'Hampstead Edition' of John Keats in 1938–1939 at only about one-third the price that had been mentioned in 1935 when the Yeats edition was planned.<sup>84</sup> Thomas Mark wrote to George Yeats, 19 October 1939 (BL Add. MS 55830, f. 334), acknowledging receipt from her of the proofs of *Last Poems and Plays* (Wade no. 203) and also of Volume V (the second volume of plays) of the Coole Edition:

<sup>83</sup> See 415–16 above. *HRHC*, Yeats Collection, Box 4, Miscellaneous case lacks p. 32, which George Yeats inadvertently omitted, probably because that page is misfiled among the corrected typescript in NLI Ms. 30,461. The set, like NLI Ms. 30,485, lacks a title page, table of contents, and preface. *HRHC* collection has a second set that is a photoduplication (definitely not a re-transcription because the every marking matches perfectly) on which a Scribner's editor wrote 'Duplicate Vol VII' in the top margin of its first page.

<sup>84</sup> [Charles Scribner, Scribner's, New York] to George P. Brett, Jr., President, Macmillan, New York, 7 November 1935 and Charles Scribner, Scribner's, New York memo to C. B. Merritt, Scribner's, New York, 17 December 1935, Princeton.

The former were just in time, as the book was about to go to press, though you will by now have heard from Mr. Harold Macmillan that it will be advisable to postpone publication until 1940. The Coole Edition has to wait for better times, and perhaps you will not mind letting me know if I may now send the proofs of Volume XI, with the typescript of all the new Introductions, and 'ON THE BOILER'. I understand that there is no difficulty about sending the material to Ireland, but I should like to know that it will be convenient for you to look at it now.

Ten weeks later, 3 January 1940, Thomas Mark was still waiting for a reply from George Yeats as to whether she was ready to read proof of volume XI: 'I think that one or two of my letters may not have reached you, as I have not had any reply. I hope that you will not mind letting me know if I may send you the proofs of Volume xi of the Coole edition with the typescript of the new Introduction, and "On the Boiler". There are a few points on which I should like to have your decision, but I do not want to send you the material until it is convenient for you to deal with it' (BL Add. MS 55833, f. 223). And then on 12 February 1940 he pressures A. S. Watt to get action from George Yeats on her signing of a Macmillan, New York contract for *Last Poems and Two Plays* that was some three months late: 'I wonder if you think that you could do anything by wiring to Mrs Yeats. I have written to her several times about some outstanding proofs of the big edition of her husband's works, but have had no reply' (BL Add. MS 55834, f. 522).

On 20 February 1940 Lovat Dickson at Macmillan notified Scribner's representative in London that the Coole Edition had been indefinitely postponed.<sup>85</sup> Scribners, however, retained some hope of publishing their Dublin Edition as late as 1949.

The next appearance of *On the Boiler* was two decades later, in the extensive excerpts published in *Explorations* (1962, Wade no. 211Y). Despite the statement on its title page and dust jacket of *Explorations* that the contents had been 'Selected by George. W. B. Yeats', the choices were made largely at Macmillan, London, by Lovat Dickson

<sup>85</sup> To Charles Kingsley, Scribners' Sons, London, but mistakenly mailed to the New York office, copy in Princeton, author files I, box 174, folder: Yeats (2).



and/or the recently retired Thomas Mark, who continued actively to assist until *Explorations* was published, 23 July 1962. George Yeats eventually did provide a list of contents, but only quite late in the process of production.

The earliest documentary evidence of the *Explorations* project is in late 1959 (or very early 1960), with an undated and unsigned pencil draft of a letter to George Yeats (BL Add. MS 55896) about the corrections to be made on the autumn 1959 page proofs for *Essays and Introductions* (Wade no. 211T, published 16 February 1961). The draft letter mentions Thomas Mark several times, in the third person, but was probably written by him rather than Lovat Dickson. Mark regularly drafted letters to George Yeats for signature by Harold Macmillan. The draft letter gives a tentative list of contents for the volume, ending with *On the Boiler*:

Selections of general interest from *On the Boiler* (1938)

Much of this is so personal that it would come very suitably after the [Pages from a] 'Diary' [Written in Nineteen Hundred and Thirty]. Perhaps you would like to consider the following [cancelled: extracts] tentative list:

The Name

Preliminaries II, III, IV

Tomorrow's Revolution I

Private Thoughts IIV

Other Matters IIV, VI, VII

The draft letter concludes: 'We have not yet gone into this proposal officially, but it naturally interests me greatly, and I shall look forward to hearing what you think of it and whether you have anything else you would like to include. If the book were put in hand, T.[homas] M.[ark] says he would be very happy to join you in seeing it through the press'.

That tentative listing would have reduced *On the Boiler* by 43 percent of its full length. Months passed without a reply from George Yeats, and on 11 August 1960, in what perhaps was Lovat Dickson's next letter to her on this project, he wrote (NLI Ms. 30,755), 'I shall look forward with great interest to seeing your list of material that might appear in *Explorations*'. He sent her several items associated with *Explorations*, the 1939 proofs of 'The Irish Dramatic

Movement 1901–1919’ and ‘A Packet for Ezra Pound’, plus a marked copy of *Pages from a Diary 1930*, and, importantly for us, a disbound copy of *On the Boiler* (Wade no. 202), into which Thomas Mark had transcribed from the much-travelled Longford page proofs (second-state) (BL Add. MS 55881) his extensive copy-editing and George Yeats’s answers to queries. The marked, disbound copy of *On the Boiler* (NLI Ms. 38,461, 4th item) could well be the one that Macmillan ordered from the Cuala Press in 1939. It was very heavily marked with copy-editing, proposed cuts and queries, by Thomas Mark in 1939 and by Thomas Mark and/or Lovat Dickson in 1960. The drastic 43 percent cuts reflected in the tentative listing had now been softened to only 8 percent; they are exactly the cuts that were made in the published *Explorations*:

‘Preface’ (CW5 220) (specific to *On the Boiler* and mentions the play *Purgatory* that is not included in *Ex.*)

‘Private Thoughts: V’ (CW5 239) (brief section on a proposal to teach Greek in association with Gaelic)

‘Ireland after the Revolution: IV–V’ (CW5 239–43) (poem ‘I am tired of cursing the Bishop’ [‘Crazy Jane on the Mountain’ VP 628] (IV); and a brief section on the next number of *On the Boiler* (V))

‘Other Matters: V’ (CW5 247–48) (on Cuala Press *Broadsides* and plans for a new series that was cancelled).<sup>86</sup>

He also returned Yeats’s personal copy of Hone and Rossi’s *Bishop Berkeley* (YL 911 or 911a), from which Macmillan had taken the introduction used in *Essays and Introductions*. At the end of this 11 August 1960 letter, Lovat Dickson added, after mentioning that

<sup>86</sup> The sections that had not been in the tentative listing of contents but now were to be incorporated and so were not queried for cutting in the marked copy of *On the Boiler* are: ‘Preliminaries: I’ (CW5 221–22, *Ex* 409–10) (on the Lord Mayor of Dublin’s Christmas card featuring the Mansion House, which Yeats argues should be restored to its eighteenth-century form); ‘To-morrow’s Revolution: II–V’ (CW5 227–33, *Ex* 418–28) (on Eugenics); ‘Ireland after the Revolution: I–III’ (CW5 239–43, *Ex* 438–43) (on education) (I); (on national defence) (II); and (against the popularity of the Crown among the English) (III); ‘Other Matters: VIII’ (CW5 249–50, *Ex* 451–53) (poem ‘I lived among great houses’ [‘Avalon’, also titled ‘A Statesman’s Holiday’ VP 626–27] and on the Cuala Press *Broadsides* and plans for a new series that had since been cancelled).

Thomas Mark sends his regards, 'We are both delighted, as everyone here is, that you are prepared to make up a list of material to appear in *Explorations* and I will look forward to hearing from you about this at your convenience'.

A full eight months later, on 19 April 1961, Lovat Dickson still had not received a list of contents from her (NLI Ms. 30,755): 'I hear indirectly that you are distressed about the cuts suggested in the marked copy sent to you of *On the Boiler*. I don't know whether this is the reason why I haven't heard from you in reply to my letters of last August and January of this year, but if it is I wish that I had known that. We are perfectly read[y] to print *On the Boiler* without any alterations at all. The suggested cuts were indeed only suggestions, and they can be ignored altogether'. He went on to plead, 'Do let us get on with *Explorations*. The other books have done very well, and it is a pity not to add this valuable material to W. B. Y.'s published work'.

Two Macmillan lists of contents for *Explorations* are extant, presumably both dating from between that letter of 19 April 1961 and the 24 November—8 December 1961 galley proofs of *Explorations*. The first list is written in blue-black ink with a ball-point pen, perhaps by Thomas Mark. It has the first mention of 'If I were Four-and-Twenty', but still lacks 'Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places'. The list has 'Cuchulain', 'Gods and Fighting Men', 'If I were Four and Twenty', 'The Midnight Court', 'Pages from a Diary 1930' and 'On the Boiler'. At the bottom is a later notation referring to the Macmillan editor T. M. Farmiloe: 'given to T. M. F. to go back to George Yeats. May 23, 1962' (BL Add. MS 55896).

The other list of contents for *Explorations* was written by George Yeats, in blue ball-point, and coincides exactly with the contents as published in *Explorations*. The list, which is headed 'Explorations', contains 'Cuchulain of Muirthemne 1902', 'Gods and Fighting Men 1904', 'Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places 1914', 'The Irish Dramatic Movement 1901–1919', 'If I were Four and Twenty 1919', 'The Midnight Court 1926', 'Pages from a Diary Written in 1930', 'Introduction to The Words upon The Window Pane',

'Fighting the Waves (play & introduction)', 'The Resurrection', 'The Cat and the Moon 1934' and 'On the Boiler 1939'. Below this list, in another hand, is the comment: 'If cuts necessary remove Swedenborg &/or If I were Four & Twenty' (BL Add. MS 55896). No such cuts were needed.

At some point George Yeats did return the marked copy of *On the Boiler* (NLI Ms. 38,461, 4th item), which then was used by the printer for setting galley proofs date-stamped 24 November 1961—8 December 1961 (BL Add. MS 55896).<sup>87</sup> The galleys of the text of *On the Boiler* are date-stamped 7 and 8 December 1961. Queries were marked in pencil and then responded to in blue ball-point probably by Thomas Mark. But the only substantive emendation for *On the Boiler* is the deletion of the brief section IV of 'Ireland after the Revolution', which was printed despite being marked for deletion on the copy-text marked copy of *On the Boiler* (NLI Ms. 38,461, 4th item).<sup>88</sup> There is no documentary evidence of George Yeats having seen those galleys. But she did see the page proofs, as we know from her letter to T. M. Farmiloe on 30 May 1962, writing from 46 Palmerston Rd.:<sup>89</sup>

Thank you very much for sending proofs. I will sent [*sic*] them today by registered letter post. Please give my deepest thanks to Mr. Mark. I would like to suggest to him that on p. 137 'Colm' be spelt 'Colum' & the note deleted. P. 138 Colum as already on p. 182. I should like to change on p. 428—'Ninette de Valois, herself a dublin [*sic*] woman' to 'an Irish woman'. I am sure Ninette would not like the inaccuracy of 'a Dublin woman'.

Those emendations were made to 'Samhain: 1904' (*Ex* 137) and to *On the Boiler* 'To-morrow's Revolution', Section V (*Ex* 427), although the note was retained in 'Samhain: 1904' (*Ex* 138). *Explorations* was

<sup>87</sup> NLI 38,461 marked copy of *On the Boiler* has no marginal notations about the slip divisions but does have a stroke in the midst of the line (25, l. 9) that exactly coincides with the start of slip 137 and a stroke in the midst of the line (27, l. 2) that exactly coincides with the start of slip 138.

<sup>88</sup> Slip L 145: 'Explorations—140' has a pencilled query 'Not done? Keep this par. or omit?' and then in blue ball-point, underscoring of 'omit'.

<sup>89</sup> Transcription by Warwick Gould from uncatalogued materials in the BL Macmillan Archive, M118.

published by Macmillan, London, on 23 July 1962 (Wade no. 211Y) and by Macmillan, New York, on 1 April 1963 (Wade no. 211Z).

My 'Editor's Preface' to *Later Essays* (CW5), a volume that includes *On the Boiler* among its twenty-one main works, specified that the copy-text for each was the last version seen by Yeats, but then pointed out the necessity of considering individually the editorial history of each work, and the 'often difficult problem of how much authority should be assigned to decisions made collectively by George Yeats and Thomas Mark of Macmillan, London, after Yeats's death', especially 'for *On the Boiler*, which Yeats saw only in an early proof version of the rejected first edition, and for the two introductions for the Charles Scribner's Sons "Dublin Edition", which Yeats last saw in typescript. The evidence available from manuscripts and typescripts suggests that in many instances George Yeats possessed documentary authority for posthumous emendations'. Then after a couple of clear examples from the Scribner's introductions, whose editorial history is relatively simple in comparison with that of *On the Boiler*, came the obvious but important dictum that the 'posthumous emendations are not all of one cloth; they should neither be accepted wholesale nor rejected out of hand' (CW5 xi).

In CW5 the copy-text for *On the Boiler* is the marked page proofs (first state) from the Longford Printing Press, as the last version seen by Yeats (NLI Ms. 30,485). But that text, even after another revise of its page proofs (BL Add. MS 55881), had been so inexpertly printed (Wade no. 201) that the Cuala Press chose not to publish the book until it had been completely reprinted, by a different printer (Wade no. 202). Consequently, I allowed an additional measure of authority to the posthumous evidence in the set of marked page proofs (second state) (BL Add. MS 55881) that George Yeats sent to Longford Printing Press in March 1939 for the first printing (Wade no. 201), and then sent to Macmillan in June 1939 for the Coole Edition, and then sent to Alex. Thom & Co. in July 1939 for the second printing (Wade No. 202). As we have seen, however, that set of marked page proofs is complicated by the additional emendations and queries of Thomas Mark, George Yeats, and some other hands. If the publication of *On the Boiler* in the Coole Edition had been able

to be completed in 1939, then a persuasive good case could be made for according it special authority, even though posthumous, and perhaps, by extension, even for selecting it as copy-text for *CW5*. But that was not so. And the passage of two decades before much of that material was reused but also augmented for *Explorations* complicates the problems facing an editor. To illustrate, consider three instances (among other) of Thomas Mark omitting (perhaps deliberately or perhaps accidentally) an item when he was transcribing his markings from the Longford page proofs (second state) (BL Add. MS 55881), which had been used as copy-text in setting the Coole Edition page proofs of July 1939, onto the marked disbound copy of *On the Boiler* (NLI Ms. 38,461, 4th item), which would be the copy-text for setting *Explorations* in 1960:

‘such and such’ *unhyphenated*, emended to ‘such-and-such’ *with hyphens* (*CW5* 220, l. 18)

‘boat;’ *semi-colon* emended to ‘boat,’ *comma* (*CW5* 220, l. 27)

‘hell wherein we suffer ... the world itself is hell’ *lower-case ‘hell’* emended to ‘Hell wherein we suffer ... the world itself is Hell’ *capitalised ‘Hell’* (*CW5* 223, ll. 14 & 16)

And to compound uncertainty, although in the first two examples *Explorations* printed them without emendation (*Ex* 407), thus predictably following its copy-text, in the third example *Explorations* left the first ‘hell’ in lower case, but capitalized the second ‘Hell’ (*Ex* 411).

*CW5* used:

*CW5* 220.18: ‘such-and-such’ rather than ‘such and such’ [citing GY 55881]

*CW5* 220.27: ‘boat;’ rather than ‘boat;’ [citing GY 55881]

*CW5* 223: ‘hell ... hell’ [No emendation]

This usefully reminds an editor to be cautious of assumptions based on what might otherwise seem abundant documentary evidence. There is always more to find. The discovery by Warwick Gould of a letter from George Yeats to T. M. Farmiloe (443 above) has provided evidence that *CW5* should have adopted the *Explorations* printing ‘an Irish’ (*Ex* 428) instead of ‘a Dublin’ (*CW5* 233, l. 2).

Of some 228 emendations to *On the Boiler* in *CW5*, 205 of them are parallel to those in *Explorations*, and twelve are to sections that were omitted in *Explorations*. However, *Explorations* has ninety-three other posthumous copy-editing emendations that exceeded my textual emendation policies for *CW5* and thus were not been adopted. Nearly half of the posthumous copy-editing changes that I did not adopt from *Explorations* were made probably at the sole initiative of the publisher because they were not marked on the copy of *On the Boiler* (Wade 202) that Macmillan had sent to George Yeats in August 1960 (NLI Ms. 38,461, 4th item). Seven of the unadopted emendations from *Explorations* were corrections to quotations and references. The five unadopted emendations of wording from *Explorations* for *On the Boiler* are listed in the note here.<sup>90</sup>

Apart from the emendation of wording, *Explorations* created one section division (*Ex* 432, l. 26; *CW5* 235, l. 31) to compensate for a section division elsewhere that mistakenly was omitted in early page proofs; one paragraph division (*CW5* 228, l. 32) was dropped (*Ex* 420, l. 12); and two sentences (*CW5* 249, l. 24) were combined (*Ex* 451, l. 11). Seventeen of the unadopted changes were minor alterations of spelling. The rest were local changes in punctuation, often to add commas.

<sup>90</sup> Five unadopted verbal emendations in *Explorations* were marked in the copy of Wade 202 that George Yeats saw in 1960: 'its' (*CW5* 222, l. 28), 'their' (*Ex* 410, l. 23); 'a' (*CW5* 223, l. 13), 'the' (*Ex* 411, l. 23); 'tinkers' (*CW5* 237, l. 12), 'tramps' (*Ex* 435, l. 9); 'deaths' (*CW5* 245, l. 29), 'death' (*Ex* 446, l. 19); 'disease of which' (*CW5* 246, l. 18), 'disease from which' (*Ex* 447, l. 22).

## RESEARCH UPDATES





## Maud Gonne's Fictional Affair: 'A Life's Sketch'<sup>1</sup>

Edited, with notes, by John Kelly

MAUD GONNE IS BETTER KNOWN for her political rhetoric than for wistfully romantic short stories, and even the discovery that she ventured into fiction, other than her autobiography *A Servant of the Queen*, comes as a surprise. The evidence that she did is provided by a rare copy of a 'Summer Sketch Book', published by the *Weekly Freeman's Journal* on 15 July 1889, to which she contributed 'A Life's Sketch'.<sup>2</sup> The *Weekly Freeman's Journal* had begun issuing these bi-annual supplements the previous December and they were to continue until December 1894, although the summer versions ceased after 1890. An ambitious attempt at a popular literary and artistic magazine for the holidays, they sold for sixpence in broadsheet newspaper format. The first issue was advertised without undue modesty as the 'most attractive and best got-up Christmas Number ever published in Ireland', boasted that it would contain 'Thirty-

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [john.kelly@ox.ac.uk](mailto:john.kelly@ox.ac.uk)? Apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

<sup>2</sup> The *Weekly Freeman's Summer Sketch Book*, 15 July 1889, 10. National Library of Ireland, call mark Ir 05 W5. The story is 1177 words long.

Six Splendid Coloured Etchings', and be produced by 'the New Zincograph Process', while the literary contributions were trumpeted as 'Poems and Stories by some of the Best Writers of the Day'.<sup>3</sup>

In this opening number these included the poets Katharine Tynan and Rose Kavanagh, both of whom had featured with Yeats in *Poems and Ballads of Young Ireland*, as well as Rosa Mulholland, who was part of the same literary circle.<sup>4</sup> Prose writers were represented by John Augustus O'Shea (who had inadvertently supplied Yeats with the source story for *The Countess Cathleen*), Edwin Hamilton ('the renowned Irish Humourist'), Michael McDonagh, and F. A. Fahy, all of whom were regular contributors to Irish weekly and monthly magazines and enjoyed a flourishing local reputation.<sup>5</sup> Members

<sup>3</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 19 November, 7. Zincography was a process of producing images on zinc plates coated with gallic and phosphoric acid. This was a cheaper method of reproduction than lithography, but it was hardly 'new', having been developed in the 1830s, and the advertisement probably refers to a form of photozincography, which allows the printing of large and accurate images on to zinc from photographic negatives.

<sup>4</sup> Katharine Tynan (1859–1931), later Hinkson, poet and novelist, was a close friend of WBY and she helped him, with others, to edit *Poems and Ballads of Young Ireland*, published in May 1888. She contributed poems and stories to a wide range of Irish, British and American periodicals. Rose Kavanagh (1859–1891) published numerous poems and stories in the *Irish Monthly* and other Irish and American periodicals. WBY's obituary article 'Rose Kavanagh' appeared in the *Boston Pilot* on 11 Apr 1891 (*LNI*, II8–24). Rosa Mulholland (1841–1921), daughter of a Belfast doctor, spent a good deal of her early life in the west of Ireland. Charles Dickens encouraged her early attempts at writing and she contributed to his *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* as well as numerous Irish publications. Although she wrote some poetry, she is more noted as a prolific novelist and short-story writer; and like Tynan and Kavanagh, her work is Catholic and national in sentiment. In 1891 she married John T. Gilbert (1829–1898), who founded the Dublin Public Record Office and was knighted in 1897.

<sup>5</sup> John Augustus O'Shea (1839–1905), the 'Irish Bohemian', was born in Nenagh and educated at the Catholic University, Dublin. He became Paris correspondent of Richard Pigott's *Irishman*, and thereafter worked for the *Standard* for many years. As 'a poor student in an attic' in Paris he had translated 'Les Marchands d'Ames' from Leo Lespès' *Les Matinées de Timothée Trim* (Paris, 1865), and published it in the *Shamrock*. Yeats anthologized it as 'The Countess Kathleen O'Shea' in *Fairy and Folk Tales*, giving as his source 'what professed to be a collection of Irish folklore in an [untraced] Irish newspaper', and later used the plot for his play *The Countess Cathleen*, believing it to be based on authentic Irish folklore. Edwin Hamilton (1849–1919) won the Vice-Chancellor's Prize for Poetry at TCD in 1872 and went on to write a number of humorous stories,

of this cohort were to reappear frequently in subsequent numbers, where they were joined by, among others, Douglas Hyde, Hannah Lynch, James Murphy, Eugene Davis, the politician David Sheehy, and the first historian of the Irish Literary Revival, W. P. Ryan.<sup>6</sup>

plays, and comic operas, including the pantomime, *Turko the Terrible*, recalled in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Michael MacDonagh (1860–1946), journalist, historian, and writer of short stories, was born in Limerick and after some time on a local paper moved in 1882 to Dublin and the *Freeman's Journal*. In 1887 he was posted to London to cover debates in the House of Commons and in 1894 was poached by *The Times* to become its parliamentary correspondent, remaining with the paper until 1933. Besides filing reports on politics, he also wrote stories and articles on history and literature. As well as these ephemeral pieces, he published substantial works of history and biography, often based on original sources and personal experience, including *The Home Rule Movement* (1920), *William O'Brien* (1928), and *Daniel O'Connell* (1929). Francis Arthur Fahy (1854–1935), poet, song-writer, and humorist, was born in Galway, where his father lived on Sir William Gregory's estate. After joining the Civil Service he moved to London where in 1883 he helped found the Southwark Irish Literary Club. Later he became a member of the Irish Literary Society, London, and president of the London Gaelic League. He contributed poems and sketches to a number of Irish periodicals, sometimes under the pseudonym of 'Dreoilin', and is best known for his poem 'The Ould Plaid Shawl'. His *Irish Songs and Poems* was published in Dublin in 1887.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Hyde (1860–1949), poet and translator, co-founder of the Gaelic League (1893) and first President of Ireland (1937–1945), was at the forefront of the attempt to revive the Irish language and to preserve Gaelic folklore. He was for many years Yeats's link with the oral traditions of Gaelic Ireland. On 16 December 1888, according to his diary (Dominic Daly, *The Young Douglas Hyde* [1974], 95–7), he met 'the most dazzling woman I have ever seen: Miss Gonne, who drew every male in the room around her. She was wonderfully tall and beautiful. We stayed talking until 1.30 a.m. My head was spinning with her beauty!!' He saw a good deal of her over that winter and in February and March 1889 tried to teach her Irish. Hyde's contributions to the Sketch Books included 'The Death Knight' and 'The Burial and Resurrection of Paddy Beirne'. Hannah Lynch (1862–1904), novelist and member of the Ladies Land League, wrote novels and stories based on the Fenian movement. She lived for a large part of her life on the Continent and died in Paris. James B. Glynn Murphy (1839–1921) was born in Co. Carlow and became a schoolmaster. He was appointed Principal of the Public Schools at Bray, Co. Wicklow, in 1860, and later served as Town Clerk of Bray and Professor of Mathematics in the Catholic University as well as in Blackrock College. He published a great number of action-packed historical stories and novels, most of which went into several editions. His best-known works included *The Forge of Clobogue* (1885), *Hugh Roach, the Ribbonman* (1887), and *Lays and Legends of Ireland* (1912). Eugene Davis (1857–1897), journalist and poet, was born in Clonakilty, Co. Cork, and educated by his father, a distinguished teacher of Classics. Intended for the priesthood, he was sent to

The initiative for the Sketch Book series almost certainly came from Rose Kavanagh, who compiled and edited the first four numbers until her death in February 1891. She had already edited the popular juvenile Irish periodicals the *Shamrock* and the *Irish Fireside*, contributing to the latter a regular feature, 'Uncle Remus to his Nieces and Nephews', which she transferred to the *Weekly Freeman* (and the Sketch Books) after the *Irish Fireside* folded in 1889. She was a close friend of John and Ellen O'Leary, as well as Katharine

the Irish Colleges of Louvain and Paris, but turned instead to writing, adopting the pen name 'Owen Roe', and contributing nationalist poems, literary articles and translations to the *Shamrock*. After leaving the seminary, he wrote for the *Irishman* before joining the Paris office of *United Ireland*, from which he edited an underground version of the paper when it was suppressed in Ireland in December 1881. Machinations by the British Government led to his expulsion from France in February 1885 on political grounds; he moved back to Ireland where he became literary editor of the *Nation* and provided details of Richard Pigott's activities in France to help Parnell in his successful libel case against *The Times*. In 1889 he published *A Vision of Ireland and Other Poems*, but following the amalgamation of the *Nation* with the *Irish Catholic* in July 1891, he emigrated to America, where he joined the *Boston Pilot*, married a wealthy widow, and died prematurely in Brooklyn at the age of forty. David Sheehy (1844–1932), parliamentarian and writer, was born in Co. Limerick. He studied for the priesthood in Paris but returned to Ireland to enter the family's milling business. He joined the IRB and was the Parnellite candidate for Galway South from 1885 to 1900, during which time he emerged as an energetic adherent of the agrarian Plan of Campaign. He supported the Anti-Parnellite faction after the 1891 split in the Irish Party and later, as a close friend of William O'Brien, acted as secretary of the United Irish League, a movement dedicated to land redistribution. He was M.P. for South Meath from 1903 to 1908 (having defeated Parnell's brother for the seat) and was closely allied with John Dillon in the reunited Irish Party. Joyce mentions him in this connection in *Ulysses*, and in the 'Wandering Rocks' episode Father Conmee genteelly begs 'to be remembered' to him through his wife. William Patrick Ryan (1867–1942), journalist and novelist, was born in Co. Tipperary, but emigrated to London in 1886 and became a journalist. He was an enthusiastic member of the Irish Literary Society and served as Sir Charles Gavan Duffy's private secretary until they fell out over the management of the New Irish Library scheme. In 1894 he published *The Irish Literary Revival, the first history of the cultural movement, in which he wondered whether Yeats had 'not really done his best work, or if there is, or will be much in his poetry of the enduring kind'*. After falling foul of the Catholic hierarchy in 1905 while editing the *Irish Peasant*, he returned to London in 1911 to join the *Daily Herald*, remaining on its staff until his death. His novel *The Plough and the Cross* (1910) is a thinly disguised account of the fights over the *Irish Peasant*, while *The Pope's Green Island* (1912) is a critical examination of religious, political, and social forces in contemporary Ireland.

Tynan and, indeed, Maud Gonne, who invited her to stay with her in Paris, although her premature death prevented this.

It was she who accepted 'A Life's Sketch' for publication in the first summer number of the magazine, subsequently advertised as 'Literature for the Seaside and the Country'. In format and contributors, this second Sketch Book closely followed that of the earlier Christmas number, with seven full-page illustrations, fifteen coloured pictures, and poems and stories by Katharine Tynan, Rose Kavanagh, Justin Huntly McCarthy,<sup>7</sup> John Augustus O'Shea, and Edwin Hamilton, as well as Maud Gonne.

At first reading 'A Life's Sketch' may seem merely Mills and Boon with water, but it presents some intriguing aspects. Not the least of these is how strangely aberrant it is in its context. The plangent story of a doomed love affair between an upper-class English heroine, who ends up married to George, a 'hard materialist' British Army officer, and Langton, a former public-school chap turned artist, it sits uneasily, even bizarrely, amid the Irish patriotic poems, Irish historical tales, and rollicking Irish comic sketches in the tradition of Charles Lever and Samuel Lover which dominate the rest of the volume. Had Gonne been driven merely by the desire for publication and a determination to join the Irish literary club, she might easily have chosen some incident in nationalist history for her theme which would have articulated her new and unfolding political aspirations.

<sup>7</sup> Justin Huntly McCarthy (1856–1936), writer and politician, was the son of the journalist, novelist, and sometime leader of the Anti-Parnellite faction of the Irish Party, Justin McCarthy. He spent his childhood in Liverpool, London, and New York, and was educated at University College, London. His first book, *An Outline of Irish History from the Earliest Times*, appeared in 1883 and in June 1884 he became Irish Party MP for Athlone, as well as publishing the very successful *England under Gladstone*. In the November of that year *The Candidate*, the first of his many plays, was a smash hit in London. In 1885 he was again elected as an Irish MP, this time for Newry, and he combined his parliamentary career with the composition of numerous stories, novels, translations, and a substantial historical study, *Ireland since the Union* (1887). As well as contributing to the Sketch Book series at this time, he also wrote extensively for the Parnellite weekly *United Ireland*, and he was the last of the seceding nationalist MPs to abandon Parnell during the schism in the Party in early December 1890. He did not stand again for Parliament, but moved to London where he churned out a rapid succession of historical novels and where his historical plays achieved great popular success.

That there is no Irish angle at all in the story indicates that these aspirations were as yet still far from established, and that in any case they were secondary to more personal entanglements and perplexities.

In this sense, it is not only the non-Irish theme of 'A Life's Sketch' which differentiates it from the other contributions to the magazine. The first-person narrative and the confessional form give it a subjective and private intimacy that also contrasts with its companion pieces. It is, as its title suggests, an autobiographical sketch in which the dying heroine reflects upon the signal passionate event of her life, but it raises the question of just whose life, no matter how briefly, is being articulated. Ostensibly it is that of Iseulte, a young English gentlewoman, now unhappily—or at least indifferently—married, who in her dying days is recalling an idyllic relationship with a soul-mate, encountered, as she maintains, 'too late'. Late, certainly, but not too late, in that with more courage she could have broken off her engagement to George, and consummated her affair with Langton. The opportunity of life's happiness, she reflects, 'presents itself once, and if neglected never returns again'.

A similar opportunity had recently presented itself to Maud Gonne, in strikingly similar circumstances, but she, unlike her heroine, had not 'neglected' it. In other respects, too, there is conspicuous overlapping between authoress and character. Like Iseulte, Maud was a young English gentlewoman, prone to illness, whose love affair had recently played out against an Auvergne landscape. Like her heroine, Maud Gonne was an orphan: her mother had died when she was still an infant, and although her father lived until 1886, he had been absent in India, Austria, Russia, and Turkey for most of her childhood. During this time she had, like Iseulte, been farmed out to live with a series of uncongenial relatives, epitomised by her Uncle William Gonne, to whom she devotes a whole chapter of her autobiography and who exerted a more oppressive influence on her youth than even *A Servant of the Queen* would suggest.<sup>8</sup> As Adrian Frazier has recently pointed out, she 'spent six years in London

<sup>8</sup> Uncle William Gonne (1830–1892) to whom Maud Gonne devotes the whole of Chapter IV of *SQ*. He was born in Portugal into a family of wealthy importers of port wine and in due course became head of the firm in London.

between the various big homes of her aunts and uncles while her father moved from post to post in his military career'.<sup>9</sup>

Other parallels present themselves. In the summer of 1888, the ailing Maud Gonne was advised by her doctor to take the waters and the air in France, and chose to go to Troyat in the Auvergne, a spa situated among hills and mountains, with scenery similar to the town of Vernay as described in her story.<sup>10</sup> On Iseulte's first visit to Vernay she is accompanied by her old nurse, just as Maud Gonne had travelled as a young girl to France with her revered nurse, Mary Ann Meredith, although on the fateful visit to Troyat, her ineffective, indeed compliant, chaperone was her great aunt Mary. It was in Troyat rather than at a railway station that she met her Langton, Lucien Millevoye, fifteen years her senior and, like Langton, 'a tall dark man'. As described in *A Servant of the Queen*, Millevoye and a friend engage her and her aunt in conversation as they sit along the promenade. Rain comes on and the aunt invites the two men back to the hotel. The rain turns into a spectacular thunderstorm and as Maud Gonne watches it alone on the terrace she is joined by 'the very tall Frenchman' who 'put his arm around me and kissed my dripping wet arm'.<sup>11</sup> Over the next weeks they became almost inseparable, in an intimacy resembling that of Iseulte and Langton in the story with perhaps one exception. Although Millevoye told her that his grandfather, Charles, had been a poet,<sup>12</sup> their conversation,

<sup>9</sup> Adrian Frazier, *Adulterous Muse* (Dublin, 2016), 19.

<sup>10</sup> Both Troyat and Vernay are situated in the Auvergne, a volcanic area in the Massif Central in south east central France. Its extinct volcanoes, rivers, and forests would have provided Langton with striking vistas for his landscape drawing, while its restorative hot springs made it attractive to invalids like Iseulte. Maud Gonne presumably chose to set her story in the small commune of Vernay rather than Troyat to distance it from any obvious autobiographical associations, but whereas Iseulte's first visit seems to correspond to Vernay as it was, a 'little mountain village, with its clear springs', by the time of her return it has a stronger resemblance to Troyat with 'the Casino, the theatre, the band, the usual noisy, chattering crowd'.

<sup>11</sup> *SQ* 63.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Hubert Millevoye (1782–1816), was a poet, elegist and translator, who bridged the period between eighteenth-century classicism and the Romantics, and who enjoyed a respectable literary reputation in his day. His only son, Charles Alfred (1813–1891), was Lucien Millevoye's father.



as recalled in *A Servant of the Queen*, centred on politics rather than literature, and it is tempting to discern at least the faint shade of Yeats in Iseulte's recollection that Langton 'used to read his favourite poems to me, with that musical voice of his. It was he who first taught me to care for literature'.

The landscape of Vernay is similar to that of Troyat, but has a more symbolic function in the story, contrasting the natural unbiddable romantic passion of their encounters with the later falsities of social convention: 'We used to sit for hours under the trees, here, where we are sitting now; only then it was a tangled little wood, instead of this trim garden, with its artificial rockeries and sham waterfalls'. Certainly their rides into higher terrain, the 'rugged cliffs and rocks thrown up in strange fantastic shapes by some old volcanic disturbance' hint that human emotional disturbances may be not so extinct.

This is also suggested by Maud Gonne's choice of name for her heroine (as later for her illegitimate daughter by Millevoeye). During an early visit to her rooms in January 1889 Yeats noticed a copy of Algernon Swinburne's epic poem *Tristram of Lyonesse*, published a few years before, which retells the medieval story of the ill-starred adulterous lovers, named Tristram and Iseult in this version. Although with added episodes in which Tristram visits Brittany, Swinburne's plot follows the recognised tradition in which Iseult of Ireland is obliged to marry King Mark but carries on her affair with Tristram and finally dies embracing his mortally wounded body.<sup>13</sup> In Maud Gonne's story Tristram/Langton dies too far off for such a *liebestod*, although the 'Sketch' might be seen in its entirety as a one-handed lover's death in which Iseulte travels to expire if not with her lover at least embracing his memory.

Which begs the question of how far Iseulte and Langton are lovers in the full sense. At the, if we may so term it, climax of the story, alone on an idyllic summer's afternoon 'Langton's eyes fixed on me with an expression I can never forget. In that one look our souls met, never again to be parted. With a little sob, I stretched out

<sup>13</sup> Algernon Swinburne's epic poem *Tristram of Lyonesse* comprises 4488 rhyming pentameters arranged in a prelude and nine cantos. It was published as *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* by Chatto & Windus in 1882.

my hands to him; he held them tightly for a moment, his face was very pale, then he turned abruptly, and we went down the hill path together'. Hardly Lawrentian, or even Swinburnian, the scene has nevertheless a sexual tension, if abbreviated tension, and goes as far as the *Weekly Freeman's Summer Sketch Book* would have permitted or its Irish readership perhaps wanted. It also, in its emphasis on the soul rather than the body, suggests the 'spiritual marriage' with which she held Yeats at bay and which he came to look upon in 'Presences' as 'that monstrous thing | Returned and yet unrequited love'.<sup>14</sup> But in her affair with Millevoe Maud Gonne did requite: she heeded her father's admonition to fear nothing, not even death, and endorsed his Nietzschean belief in the power of the will. The evidence suggests that she and Millevoe became lovers in Troyat, and continued their relationship in London in the late spring of 1889. Probably when she wrote this story, and certainly by its publication, she knew herself to be pregnant

If the story is, then, partly self-portrait it is even more a self-projection, in which Maud Gonne fictionally explores at a crucial emotional and political—and indeed biological—turning point in her life the choices which she might have made but did not. Unlike Iseulte she did not, for instance, marry King Mark/George, although she might easily have done so. In 1886, reunited with her father in Dublin, and pleased to be mistaken for his bride,<sup>15</sup> she was surrounded by eligible young army officers, one of whom she might have been expected to marry. That this did not happen may have had much to do with her complicated relationship with her father, which led her to prefer the company of Generals and senior officers, and eventually to fall in love with the older Millevoe. But if she did not marry a subaltern, her younger sister did, and was already engaged to him when 'A Life's Sketch' was published. 'George' has many of the characteristics of Thomas David Pilcher, who married Kathleen Gonne in December of 1889. After serving with the Northumberland Fusiliers at Rawalpindi, he was posted back to

<sup>14</sup> 'Presences', *VP* 358.

<sup>15</sup> *SQ* 27.

England and on 31 January 1889 Yeats was entertained by Maud Gonne's attack on him over dinner about British rule in India.<sup>16</sup> Given this association, the story becomes almost prophetic. Like Iseulte's husband, Pilcher (who had a brother named George) grew into a 'hard materialist', the divorce petition drawn up by Kathleen and her lawyers in 1911 alleging that 'from the earliest days of the married life' his 'indifference neglect and other conduct' was of an 'habitual and constant a character'. In his case, his preferred diversion was not so much fishing in Norway as playing polo in England: in the summer of 1909, when his wife was pregnant and very unwell in Woolwich, Pilcher, who had remained living in London, 'treated her with the utmost neglect and indifference', and 'when he came to Woolwich it was chiefly to play polo and not to see the Petitioner'. Like George, who in the story is described as having a voice 'so loud it jars', he also had a distressingly noisy manner and after the birth of their third child, when Kathleen was again extremely ill and in desperate need of peace and quiet, 'was utterly indifferent to the Petitioner's state of health and regardless of the necessity for quiet used to shout his orders to the stables and to the servants in and about the house in a loud voice which he made no attempt to subdue although requested to do so'.<sup>17</sup>

By the time the story was published the choice of marrying a young British officer was no longer open to Maud Gonne, even had she wished it: her illegitimate son Georges was to be born in January of the following year. Nor was her liaison with Millevoeye merely

<sup>16</sup> Thomas David Pilcher (1858–1928), the son of a property speculator, joined the 5th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers in 1879 and served in India, 1888–1889. On 31 January 1889, shortly after his return to England, Maud Gonne entertained him to dinner at her rooms in Ebury Street, London, with her sister Kathleen and Yeats, who found it 'pleasant' to hear her attacking Pilcher 'on English rule in India' (*CL1*. 137). Her father's acquaintance and sympathy with India would presumably have provided her with effective ammunition in the discussion. Pilcher married Kathleen Gonne in December of that year but they divorced in 1911 and two years later he married Mrs J. C. L. (Millicent) Knight-Bruce in Bombay. By that time he was a successful career soldier, having distinguished himself in the South African War and being advanced in 1907 to the rank of Major General.

<sup>17</sup> Divorce papers, 4 July 1911. PRO XC3613.

emotional. Her discussions with him, as she reports them, were obsessed at first with his plans for recovering Alsace-Lorraine for France and then with his urging her to give up her determination to be an actress. This was not so difficult since her first attempts to join a professional company in the spring of 1887 were so repugnant to her that she had a nervous breakdown. His second injunction, that she should become an Irish Joan of Arc, presented rather more problems since at that time she had no standing with Irish nationalists. On the contrary, as the Colonel's Daughter she was a representative in Dublin of the senior echelon of the British establishment, a position she had been content to occupy over the previous four years.

Thus 'A Life's Sketch' was written not merely at a cross-roads in her emotional but also her political life, a fact which helps to account for the English tone of the story, but which is obfuscated in her unreliable autobiography, *A Servant of the Queen*, not written until she was in her seventies and only published in 1938. There her adventures in the late 1880s are concertinaed together, often out of order and with few reliable dates to anchor a sometimes breathless narrative of domestic and political rebellion, conversion to Irish nationalism, romantic intrigue in the south of France sealed with an anti-British pact, near abduction and rape in Greece, japes in Constantinople, an allegedly world-changing secret mission to Russia, subversive concerts in Dublin, and evictions in Donegal. Adrian Frazier has recently made an admirably thorough attempt to disentangle the sequence of these events and to distinguish the facts from the fanciful flights and economical truths in Maud Gonne's narrative.<sup>18</sup> To tease out the ambiguities in her stance before and while she was writing 'A Life's Sketch' it is worth following up these investigations by examining in detail her activities in the years 1885 to 1890, particularly as they applied to Ireland.

As has been suggested, not the least intriguing aspect of the story is its place of publication, a magazine dedicated to Irish poetry, fiction, and humour. The choice to publish was part of her up-until-now largely cultural rather than political adoption of an Irish

<sup>18</sup> Adrian Frazier, *Adulterous Muse*, 37-78.

identity. Until she intervened in the Barrow-in-Furness by-election in August 1890, and attended Land League meetings in Co. Kildare later that month, Maud Gonne's one overt political act had been to subscribe in early autumn 1888 to the National Indemnity Fund, a crowdfunding initiative to defray Parnell's legal expenses in his action for libel against *The Times*. And lest her fairly modest contribution went unnoticed among the rest, she wrote to the *Freeman's Journal* on 19 September of that year to draw attention to it and to associate herself self-righteously with the National Indemnity's aims.<sup>19</sup>

She had become familiar with Ireland as a child, while her father was Brigade Major at the Curragh Camp from 1867 to 1874, and this period included an idyllic summer at Howth. She did not return until more than a decade later when her father, now Colonel Thomas Gonne, was appointed to serve on the Staff of the Army in Ireland from 31 January 1885; over the next two years, her mother being dead, she was to act as his social hostess in Dublin. The appointment came at a significant juncture in the Colonel's career. In 1878 he had been promoted to the post of Lieutenant-Colonel in command of the 17th Lancers, a crack cavalry regiment, but was unable to accompany his men to fight in Africa in 1880 because of a serious wound in the thigh, accidentally sustained while he was testing revolvers with his musketry instructor. Since he was incapacitated, the Lancer's former colonel was asked to rejoin as commander in his place and proved such a success that he remained at its head. It seems that Gonne's injury had in any case rendered him unfit for active service and in April 1881 he was appointed military attaché in the British Embassy at St. Petersburg, being transferred a year later to a similar post in Constantinople. Although these were important postings, he felt that they were dead-ends and that, as a result of a gratuitous accident, he had been passed over and even forgotten by the army.

<sup>19</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 20 September 1888, 5. Her sanctimonious letter, dated 'Sept 19th', read: 'I enclose £2 as my subscription to the National Indemnity Fund. It is the duty of all Irishmen and women to show their sympathy and admiration of those who so nobly maintain the struggle against wrong and oppression. Faithfully yours, Maud Gonne'. Three weeks later she enrolled as a member of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, by now a rather sclerotic organization shortly to be eclipsed by the Gaelic League.

He began to look around for other openings and in October 1884 offered himself as a candidate for the Liberal Party in Bridport, a pleasant country town in Dorset. He pitched his manifesto to a crowded meeting of the Bridport Liberal Association on 30 October at the conclusion of which a resolution adopting him as the candidate of the association was, according to the *Bridport News* of 7 November, 'carried unanimously with loud acclamation followed by cheers'.<sup>20</sup> That an army officer, who had seen active service, was standing as a Liberal when, as he himself reminded his constituents at a later meeting, 'the army was Conservative' was in itself unusual, but his manifesto ('which was frequently interrupted by enthusiastic applause') helps to establish more precisely his political position. He 'avowed himself above all things a loyal follower of Mr. Gladstone, and could promise his unwavering support to the Government in all the great questions which were now in debate'. One of these 'great questions' was the position of the House of Lords, which, with its inbuilt but unelected Conservative majority and its powers of veto, the radical wing of the Liberal Party was eager to abolish. Gonne took a more moderate stance: 'He was strongly of opinion that a second chamber was essential to the efficient and well matured legislation, but believed that the House of Lords required reform in order to enable it to perform such a function properly'. He went on to 'several side questions', and was particularly concerned with Imperial affairs, speaking at 'some length on the Egyptian complication, the troubles in South Africa, and on affairs in India and the East. Our present position in Egypt was, from a military point of view, a source of weakness, and it was a great misfortune that the destruction of Hicks Pasha's army prevented our withdrawal from that country'.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Bridport News*, 7 November 1884, 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* The situation in Egypt, and its client state the Sudan, was a growing embarrassment to Gladstone's Liberal administration. Although eager to extricate Britain from both countries, in February 1883 it had sent a hopelessly inadequate expedition to the Sudan under William Hicks, 'Hicks Pasha' (1831–1883), an ex-Indian army officer, to help the Egyptian army put down a popular rebellion led by the Mahdi. Hicks's forces were annihilated at the battle of El Obeid in early November and the following February General Gordon was sent to superintend the withdrawal of what remained of the British and Egyptian

Gonne returned to Bridport on 28 November 1884 to deliver a long lecture to the Liberal electors on 'Afghanistan and the Indian Question', in which he denounced British Jingoism, advocated a more sympathetic appreciation of cultural and religious sensibilities in Afghanistan, and insisted on the necessity of making Indians part of the governance of India: 'Was it not sound policy to give the natives of India such a position that they would have everything to lose and nothing to gain from revolution from without or within? Mr. Gladstone's policy was the only one which would bring it to pass that a Russian threat would bring no danger to British India'.<sup>22</sup>

The Conservative *Dorset County Chronicle* described Gonne on 6 November 1884 as 'a fluent speaker and one well up to foreign affairs. He is not a Radical but a Moderate Liberal, whatever that peculiar personage might be'.<sup>23</sup> From all this, it is evident that his attempt to become a Liberal M.P. was in earnest and enthusiastically supported by the local party. There were two reasons why he did not finally stand for election. Barely a month after the Colonel's unanimous adoption by the Bridport Liberal Association Gladstone introduced the Redistribution of Seats Bill into the House of Commons. The purpose of the Bill was to balance the numbers of electors between constituencies in the light of the extension of the franchise by the Third Reform Act, which had just become law. The redistribution was radical and nowhere more so than in Dorset, where parliamentary representation in all six boroughs was abolished and merged into four county divisions, Bridport becoming part of West Dorset. All bets on the selection of candidates were now off, a situation that Gonne acknowledged at the end of his lecture on Afghanistan and India,

forces. He disobeyed orders and found himself trapped in Khartoum in a siege which lasted for 317 days and which was still in progress as Gonne was delivering his speech. Given Gordon's insubordination, the Government had been reluctant to send him assistance, but were forced to do so by popular demand. The relieving force under General Wolseley reached Khartoum on 28 January 1885, two days too late, and the opprobrium over the delay and Gordon's death contributed towards the defeat of the Liberals in the General Election held later that year.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 December 1884, 4. A gifted linguist, Gonne had been Hindi translator for his regiment and his familiarity with the language would have informed his enlightened sympathy for Indian culture and outlook.

<sup>23</sup> *Dorset County Chronicle*, 6 November 1884, 12.

telling his audience that 'he should regret that the acquaintance which had been so happily begun would be so speedily finished between them. Still he was not quite certain that would be the result. He had not been asked, but he might hereafter be asked, to represent the county in which this borough would be merged (hear, hear). If so he should esteem it one of the happiest moments of his life and he should feel satisfied of this, that at all events he should have their support'.<sup>24</sup>

At this uncertain juncture a crucial promotion changed Gonne's career path. In early January 1885, while his Dorset candidature was still in the balance and after three years of comparative neglect, the army advanced him to a staff position and appointed him to the significant post of Assistant Adjutant Quartermaster-General of the Dublin District. It was not only he who felt the fairness of this. The *World*, in an article that was syndicated in newspapers throughout the country, spoke, it claimed, for the public when it welcomed a 'somewhat tardy act of justice' that had 'been done by the Horse Guards in giving a staff appointment to Colonel Gonne, formerly in command of the 17th Lancers'.<sup>25</sup> Whether Gonne now withdrew his candidature in West Dorset, or whether he was deselected in any case is not known, but it turned out to be a fortunate outcome: the seat in its new configuration returned a Conservative at the next General Election in 1885, and has remained a Conservative stronghold to this day.

The candidature of Colonel Gonne in Bridport lends credence to Maud Gonne's claim in *A Servant of the Queen* that shortly before his

<sup>24</sup> *Bridport News*, 5 December 1884, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Among the many papers which reprinted the paragraph was the *West Somerset Free Press* of 14 February 1885, 1, where many of Gonne's potential electors would have read it: 'A somewhat tardy act of justice has been done by the Horse Guards in giving a staff appointment to Colonel Gonne, formerly in command of the 17th Lancers. His luck was hard. But recently appointed to the command of his regiment when it was placed under orders to take part in the Zulu War, he was badly wounded the leg while trying revolvers . . . . The result of this deplorable accident was that Gonne could not embark with the 17th; its former colonel, Drury Lowe, rejoined it on purpose to command it in the field, and from that moment dates his upward progress, till he galloped into Cairo in 1882 at the head of the cavalry advance. Gonne, with better luck, might have been in his place'.



death 'he told me he had made up his mind to leave the Army and stand as a Home Rule candidate'.<sup>26</sup> He may also, as she states, have shown her the election address he intended to use, based presumably on the one he had delivered in Bridport which pledged allegiance to Gladstone and advocated recognition of the political and cultural aspirations of colonial subjects. Since then Gladstone had been converted to Irish Home Rule, and so the Colonel's new manifesto would certainly have broadened to include and endorse that.

The Bridport address also provides an insight into the political discussions that the Gones would have held in these years when, prior to her radicalization by Millevoe, Maud seems to have shared her father's 'moderate Liberal' position. She certainly had no qualms about associating herself with the British establishment, appearing regularly at Castle dinners, receptions and balls. Even her cultural interests remained firmly under official loyalist auspices. In 1886 her main artistic venture was to appear in *Caste*, the popular realist drama of misalliance by Thomas William Robertson. This amateur production was a well-meaning if paternalistic public relations exercise by the British garrison in aid of the Dublin unemployed during a severe economic recession, and permission to mount it, in the Great Hall of the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, from 27 to 31 March, was given by His Serene Highness Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, Commander of the Forces in Ireland, who also agreed, with the Lord Lieutenant, the Countess of Aberdeen, and Lieutenant-General Lord Clarina, Commanding the Dublin district, to act as a patron of the entertainment. The Company, directed by Colonel Malet of the 16th Hussars, was largely made up of officers drawn from the various regiments stationed in Dublin and army wives or relatives, and took the name 'Her Majesty's Servants'. Maud Gonne was thus identifying herself as a servant of the reigning queen some time before transferring her allegiance to 'queen' Kathleen ni Houlihan.

The plot of *Caste* involves a young aristocratic army officer, Captain George D'Alroy, marrying the beautiful but working-class

<sup>26</sup> SQ 43.

ballet girl Esther Eccles, much to the disgust of his mother, the Marquise de St. Maur, before being ostensibly killed in India. His bride and their child fall upon hard times after the money he has left her is squandered by her ne'er-do-well workshy father, but just as things are at their blackest the hero unexpectedly turns up, reports of his death having been greatly exaggerated. Given her age at this time, one might have expected Maud Gonne to be cast as one of the two junior female leads, the long-suffering Esther or her feisty sister Polly, but in fact she appeared as the class-conscious and austere Marquise. A friendly review in the Dublin *Daily Express* commented that 'Miss Gonne, as the *Marquise*, exhibited without obtrusiveness all the required hauteur and dignity of the cold, highly-bred, pedigree-proud, mother', but noted that she 'looked most attractive, albeit scarcely matronly enough'.<sup>27</sup>

And then on 30 November 1886 Thomas Gonne unexpectedly died of typhoid fever at the Royal Barracks at the premature age of fifty-one. An impressive military funeral procession took place on 2 December, 'the most imposing that has been seen in Dublin for many years' according to the *Irish Times* of the following day, which brought his body to North Wall for conveyance to England and interment.<sup>28</sup> His horses, brougham, and equine tackle were sold by auction on Christmas Eve, and his antique and modern furniture on 14 January of the new year. Maud and her sister had departed Ireland by way of Kingstown (Dún Laoghaire) on the evening of the funeral, and there was no reason why either of them should ever return.

Kathleen Gonne hardly ever did, and Maud did not go back until the early autumn of 1888. But much happened in the intervening eighteen months, some of which informs the biographical underpinning of 'A Life's Sketch'. The influence of Thomas Gonne's moderate Liberalism was replaced by the more radical nationalism of Millevoeye. He suggested in Troyat that her aspiration to be a great actress should be subsumed into the aim of becoming an Irish Joan of Arc. The idea was tempting, and not merely because she

<sup>27</sup> *Daily Express*, Dublin, 29 March 1886, 6.

<sup>28</sup> *The Irish Times*, 3 December 1886, 5.

was besotted with and manipulated by him. Her single attempt to become a professional actress in 1887 had been arduous and potentially embarrassing, a contract with an undistinguished stock company touring secondary British towns with what she describes in *A Servant of the Queen* as an 'abominable melodrama'.<sup>29</sup> Her attempts to dignify the repertoire by the addition of *Heartsease*, a play based on Alexandre Dumas' *La Dame aux Camélias* was perhaps a gesture towards Bernhardt, but the English version was so watered down and sanitized as to be already out of date.<sup>30</sup> First staged in June 1875, its author, the chess-playing dramatist James Mortimer, got round British censorship by converting Marguerite from a courtesan to an actress whose only sin is that her profession causes social embarrassment to her lover Armand's family. The tragic ending is however retained: the heroine, like Iseulte, dies prematurely of consumption and the scene may have influenced the *donnée* of Maud Gonne's story. The experience of days and nights of rehearsals in draughty halls and with perhaps seedy fellow actors seemingly threatened Maud Gonne with a similar fate. It was certainly a long way from her Dublin experience of personating the Marquise de St. Maur alongside Mrs Somerset Butler, Captain Morrison and Major Burn of the 18th Hussars. In the end she couldn't hack it; she had to withdraw from the company through illness and fork out a large sum for breach of contract. 'Was it really a disaster?' she mused in her autobiography, 'Things have a way of turning out so differently from what one expects. ... If I had gone on the stage, it would have taken me away from Ireland'.<sup>31</sup>

At this time she was not yet back in Ireland but she returned there in the early autumn of 1888 to set about becoming the Irish Joan of Arc. Not the least of her problems in such an enterprise was that she was not Irish and no one in Dublin thought that she was. In fact, her

<sup>29</sup> *SQ*, 59.

<sup>30</sup> In *SQ* (59–60) Maud Gonne erroneously identifies this as a translation of Ernest Legouvé's and Eugène Scribe's *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, a play based on the life of the eponymous eighteenth-century French actress. It was in fact *Heartsease*, a version of Alexandre Dumas' *La Dame aux Camélias* by the American-born dramatist James Mortimer (1833–1911). His reformation of Marguerite from courtesan to actress may explain the confusion with *Adrienne Lecouvreur*.

<sup>31</sup> *SQ* 60.

main value to the nationalist movement for some years was precisely that she was an Englishwoman and a Protestant. John O'Leary, who refused to take her political ambitions seriously, abominated her support for the Land League, and made fun of her sentimental idealization of the Irish people, welcomed her because, as she recalls in *A Servant of the Queen*, he was trying to get new recruits for Ireland 'especially from the Unionist element from which he wanted to form an intellectual backing for the Separatist movement'. At their first awkward meeting, Michael Davitt was suspicious of her and many others in the Irish Party suspected that she was a British spy.<sup>32</sup> Even where nationalists were more welcoming, she found that she was barred from their organizations and clubs because she was a woman. In this ambiguous situation she decided to hedge her bets. She made overtures to Irish nationalism while keeping her acting options open by giving recitations at a number of concerts and by ensuring that her contacts with Dublin Castle kept in good repair. She even seems to have resuscitated the idea of becoming a nurse like her cousin May.

This ambiguity is not registered in *A Servant of the Queen*, where time is conflated to produce a narrative of rapid engagement with nationalist politics and an Irish identity, but it silently informs 'A Life's Sketch', which can be read as a farewell to her English life and potential English destiny. An instructive example of the way she accelerates and exaggerates the progress of her Irish mission in *A Servant of the Queen* is her description of the 'Concert of Irish Music' she put on with Ida Jameson. The Concert was designed to *épater la* (West British) *bourgeoisie*, by presenting 'nothing but Irish music and poems by Irish authors', and would daringly dispense with playing the British national anthem at its close.

The Concert was a great success, every seat booked out. All my old Dublin friends were there, to welcome Tommy's daughter, and my new friends, John O'Leary, Willie Yeats and the Contemporary club, and the general public interested in Irish music. From an artistic point of view the concert was irreproachable. ... I recited Todhunter's lovely poem, 'The Banshee and Dark Rosaleen'. To the clamorous encores accorded to Ida and myself,

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 86–87.

who, because of our novelty, were the great attractions, we gave only rebel songs and rebel poems. The gallery was enthusiastic, but I was amused to see, through a hole in the back cloth, the puzzled looks of many in the expensive seats.

Next day we had great Press notices, but letters, and I think, even a leading article in the *Irish Times*, commented indignantly on the omission of *God Save the Queen*, an unheard of thing at any Dublin concert in those days. I replied, and a regular letter controversy arose.<sup>33</sup>

The concert was held in the Antient Concert Rooms on 3 November 1888, but most of the account that Maud Gonne gives of it is inaccurate. The concert was not 'booked out', the *Freeman's Journal* commented on 5 November that the hall, 'though not exactly crowded, was sufficiently well attended to do the city no discredit'.<sup>34</sup> It is possible that John O'Leary attended, but her 'new' friend Willie Yeats certainly did not, for the very good reasons that he was in London and had not yet met her. She did recite John Todhunter's recently published poem 'The Banshee', but not 'The Dark Rosaleen', which in any case is by James Clarence Mangan. Most of the singers and reciters got encores, and the most enthusiastic reception was not for Maud Gonne or Ida Jameson but for Charles Kelly's rendition of A. P. Graves' 'Father O'Flynn'. 'Father O'Flynn', written by a convinced Unionist, is a comic not a political song, and the claim that 'we gave only rebel songs and rebel poems' is wholly misleading as is the claim that the fashionable part of the audience were 'puzzled' by the programme. Over half the items were taken from Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies*, some of which exhibited a genteel patriotism, acceptable to a Unionist audience. Many of the poems by Moore did not even involve patriotic subjects at all, as, indeed, 'The High-born Ladye', which Maud Gonne also recited at the Concert and which has a 'death and the maiden' theme. Other performances were of traditional airs from collections by Bunting and Petrie, and an aria from William Vincent Wallace's romantic opera *Maritana* (which has a Spanish, not an Irish, setting). Far from puzzling the audience

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>34</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 5 November 1888, 6.

because of its uncompromising ‘rebel’ content, the reviewers saw it as pandering to popularity, the staunchly Unionist Dublin *Daily Express* presuming that the ‘programme was compiled with an evident consideration of popular taste, being composed altogether of Irish selections’,<sup>35</sup> while the nationalist *Freeman’s Journal*, perhaps thinking of the over-abundance of Moore, advised ‘that it might be better at concerts on the plan of that of Saturday evening to introduce a little of the classical music of other nations. The Irish items, instead of losing, would gain in effect by the contrast, and the danger of monotony would be avoided’.<sup>36</sup> Nor, despite Maud Gonne’s circumstantial evidence, did anyone so much as mention the absence of the national anthem: there was no leading article in the *Irish Times* and no controversy.

Maud Gonne goes on to allege that she was ‘inundated with requests to recite at Workmen’s clubs and Literary societies’,<sup>37</sup> giving the impression that she immediately embarked on a campaign of cultural propaganda among the workers and advanced nationalist, and, indeed, that she plunged at once into the political task of opposing evictions. In fact, this process took far longer than she implies, and most of the concerts at which she went on to perform were far from working-class events. Twelve days after the ‘Concert of Irish Music’ she appeared in a ‘Grand Concert’ in aid of the Dublin Orthopedic Hospital and under the patronage of Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar. This comprised largely of French and Italian music, with Maud Gonne reciting Thomas Davis’s poem ‘Nationality’ and from the Potion Scene in *Romeo and Juliet* (IV. iii). These two items became her performance pieces of choice, and she repeated them at a ‘Grand Amateur Concert’ on 8 December, where, as the *Irish Times* reported, ‘Miss Maude Gonne, who is an accomplished elocutionist, was received with great applause when, presenting herself in costume which may be described as classic, she recited a short poem by Davis, entitled “Nationality”. Her voice is attractive, her action graceful, and her reading that of a student who was in full

<sup>35</sup> *Daily Express*, Dublin, 5 November 1888, 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 5 November 1888, 6.

<sup>37</sup> *SQ* 94.

sympathy with the composition of the Irish poet. Her recitation of the Potion Scene from "Romeo and Juliet" was not less excellent, and repeatedly she bowed her acknowledgements to the audience for the manner in which they testified to their appreciation of her elocution'.<sup>38</sup> She had taken lessons from an Irish actor, and joined the Dublin Elocution Society, founded by the Revd. Charles Edward Tisdall, a Unionist and Protestant clergyman, who had been one of the best tenors in Ireland and was now a much sought-after reciter.<sup>39</sup> Given this effort and the pains she put into her recitations, and the frequency with which she appeared, it seems that despite Millevoye's urging her mind still ran on the stage as a possible career. Moreover, her performances, although recitations, were noted for their dramatic delivery and the quality of her striking costumes. The Dublin *Daily Express* of 4 March 1889 reported that at a recent Public Recital under the auspices of the Association of Elocutionists 'Miss Maud Gonne's costume recital of "The Progress of Madness" was an impressive, picturesque, and finished piece of acting. She is a clever and very prepossessing young lady, and is likely to make a name as a reciter of dramatic scenes in the near future'.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> *The Irish Times*, 11 December 1888, 7.

<sup>39</sup> Revd. Charles Edward Tisdall (1821–1905) was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and ordained in the Church of Ireland in 1846. He became a Doctor of Divinity in 1859, was appointed Chancellor of Christ Church Cathedral in 1862, and in 1865 began his incumbency of St Dolough's in Dublin, an office he held for over thirty years. He was a staunch Mason, a committed member of the Conservative and Unionist Party, and an advocate of temperance. Besides his religious and parochial duties he was possessed in his younger days of one of the best tenor voices in Ireland and he remained an elocutionist of the first rank. He was the star attraction of numerous concerts, and his recitations from Shakespeare and Dickens in particular drew packed audiences not only in Dublin but throughout Ireland. In 1886 he helped found the Society of Elocutionists, and was elected its first President, although it fell into abeyance after his retirement.

<sup>40</sup> *Daily Express*, Dublin, 4 March 1889, 3. The first part of *The Progress of Madness; or, The Irishman Insane* (Newcastle, 1802), a mock-epic satire in rhyming tetrameter couplets by T. Houston, tells how an Irish immigrant, Patrick Connor, is falsely arrested for trespass and poaching by the splenetic and anti-Irish Squire of Wray, tried before the gluttonous and ignorant magistrate Drivelers, and, despite the prisoner's eloquent and passionate appeal to Justice and the Rights of Man, committed to a lunatic asylum run by the quack Dr Curl. In the second part, Connor, finally released from the madhouse, tries to sue the Squire of Wray

If she was keeping her acting options open, she also kept up her acquaintanceship with the Castle. On 26 April 1889 she attended the Mullaboden Pony Races and Sports, at which the Stewards included the Marquis of Drogheda and the Baron de Robeck, with the Earl of Clonmell acting as Starter. Fellow guests included the Lord Lieutenant as well as Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, and the cream of Dublin high society.<sup>41</sup> Her presence at this grand horsey event recalls Sarah Purser's admonition to Yeats that 'Maud Gonno talks politics in Paris, and literature to you, and at the Horse Show she would talk of a clinking brood mare'.<sup>42</sup> But the possibility of keeping her options open was closed a few months later, when in the early summer of 1889 she found herself with child. The consequences of this discovery, and of her affair with Millevoeye more generally, lie behind 'A Life's Sketch', which is a farewell to her English identity.

She was not in Ireland when her story appeared in the *Summer Sketch Book*. She does not appear to have returned there until August 1890, over a year later, although, despite her condition, she visited London in October 1889 to tend to her ailing sister. By the time of her return it is clear that she has opted for Irish Joan of Arc over international actress. The stage gives way to the platform and the art of recitation to the artifice of rhetoric, and she begins to claim an Irish identity and genealogy. But the farewell to her English identity, foreshadowed in 'A Life's Sketch', proved easier to bid in fiction than it was in real life. Ironically, it was her very Englishness that made her valuable to the Irish national cause. One of her first overtly political acts in Ireland was to join an English delegation to bear witness to agrarian demonstrations on the O'Kelly Estate at Clongorey in County Kildare. Wholesale forcible evictions had taken place there

but, although the case clearly unmasks the bias and stupidity of Drivelers, and the medical ineptitude of Curl, the court finds in favour of the wealthy and influential squire.

<sup>41</sup> See the *Leinster Express*, 4 May 1889, 9. Among the others listed as attending were the Baroness de Robeck, Colonel Hon C. F. Crichton, Colonel Gough, Colonel R. F. Rynd, Mr H. E. Linde, Major R. St. L. Moore and party, Mr and the Misses Henry, and Mr D. Mahony. The paper reports that an 'excellent luncheon was served to all comers'.

<sup>42</sup> *Mem*, 61.



from 1883 and numbers had escalated in 1888 and 1889, augmented by the arrest and persecution of masons and carpenters brought in to build huts for the dispossessed tenants. The Land League had taken up the tenants' cause and brought the landlords' inhumanity to the attention of the national and international conscience. In this process, the arrival of an English delegation, which included Maud Gonne and Edward Morton, a Radical Liberal and Secretary of the British Home Rule Union, was of great symbolic value and the *Leinster Leader* reported on 23 Aug 1890 that despite rainy weather 'the people of Clongorey and its neighbourhood' afforded 'a suitable welcome' to the 'visit of English sympathizers to Clongorey ... who took so kindly an interest in their affairs'.<sup>43</sup> The battling local priest, Father Kinsella, who had defied both the Vatican and the British authorities in his support of his downtrodden parishioners, and been imprisoned for his efforts, announced publically that he was glad 'to welcome our friends from England, who come to show their sympathy with our poor people here in Clongorey. They have seen to-day with their own eyes the state of things that has been created amongst us by tyrannical landlordism, and they are in a position of being able to explain to their countrymen and countrywomen how the Irish people are circumstanced'. He went on to emphasize the value of English public opinion and influence in ameliorating Irish agrarian conditions, and at the conclusion of his speech John Maloney, Chairman of the Newbridge Commissioners moved the resolution 'That we return our heartfelt thanks to the visitors amongst us to-day, who bring to our suffering and homeless people a message of hope from the great English democracy'. J. P. Bermingham, Chairman of the Naas Commissioners, drew attention to a more immediate benefit of the visit, noting that 'the police had been instructed ... to bring only their batons to this meeting, and not their rifles (cheers). The police were ashamed to show their usual methods in presence of their English visitors (cheers). They were on their best behaviour when they came in contact with English people.

<sup>43</sup> *Leinster Leader*, 23 August 1890, 2.

The people should be extremely grateful to Miss Gonne (cheers).<sup>44</sup> Maud Gonne, 'who received a most enthusiastic reception', was clearly embarrassed that her English parentage and upbringing, not to mention her cut-glass English accent, had unaccountably led to her being mistaken for an Englishwoman, tried to equivocate. She announced herself 'an Irish woman', but one who had 'been a great deal in England, and I feel that I may speak to a certain extent for the English people'. She declared that she well knew that the English democracy 'is with us in our hopes and aspirations, and not only has the Tory Government and its method of governing Ireland been condemned by every civilised country in the world, but the great English democracy has condemned it and has doomed it, too (cheers). Once the English democracy knows, and it does know it now, the wrongs that have been inflicted in its name on the people of this country, its indignation is aroused, and they say they will not allow Ireland any longer to continue to suffer in this way (cheers). That voice of indignation is growing louder and louder every day until its swell will overwhelm the vile Tory Government, and extend the privilege of equality and liberty alike to the people of Ireland as well as of England, and give us the recognition of our nationhood (loud cheers)'.<sup>45</sup> The crowd was well-disposed to the claim of this striking young woman, the Colonel's daughter with a posh English accent, to be Irish but did not really believe it. At one point in her address when she was extolling the fortitude of the people in withstanding landlord tyranny, a voice called out 'Anybody would know that you had an Irish heart (renewed cheering)'.<sup>46</sup> An Irish heart in its support and sympathy, but not quite an authentic Irish identity, and when J. T. Heffernan in a final speech thanked her and Morton, he disregarded her assertion of Irishness: 'You heard from them the message of hope which they were commissioned to convey to you and the expression of their desire, and the desire of the vast majority of the English people, that the tyranny practised in this country should cease for

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

ever'.<sup>47</sup> It was the position adopted in an editorial in the *Leinster Leader* of the same day: 'On two dozen Sundays at least within the past two years the police turned out in force, prepared to shoot or stab all and sundry who would attempt to sympathise with the poor people of Clongorey. Three or four English names, however, sufficed to evaporate their valour .... The police came without their rifles. They made no demonstration. It is a message of hope to the Irish people that English visitors come amongst us to inquire into the condition of the country, and that they leave with a heartiness and an anxiety to redress the wrongs which examination [of] the spot convinces them are not sham grievances, as they are represented'.<sup>48</sup>

It was to take many years for Maud Gonne to establish or fabricate an Irish identity, and it continued to be a matter of dispute, especially at times of public scrutiny, as during her divorce case. These were years which lay beyond the publication of 'A Life's Sketch', written at a time when the process of her personal and political redefinition had just begun.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

## A LIFE'S SKETCH

Maud Gonne

“Elle pleure, insensé parcequ'elle a vécu  
Et parce qu'elle vit”

—BAUDELAIRE.<sup>49</sup>

Yes, Nina, before I die, I would like to tell you the story of my life. You have often asked me, but I felt I could not tell even you, though you are always so good and patient with me. But now the approach of death seems to render everything easy.

After all, there is not much to tell, Nina, darling. Remember, take care that you do not throw away your life's happiness. To every one, I believe, the opportunity presents itself once, and if neglected never returns again; but we never profit by the experience of others. The price of that experience is often heavy, but cost what it may, we must buy it each one for himself.

My chance of happiness came to me here in this very place, just ten years ago, but it came too late. Now, you know why, when they told me I was dying, I insisted on coming here; it was not, as they thought, that I clung to the hope that the waters would cure me. God knows I do not want to live! But I longed to see once again the place where I had been happy.

But it is all changed since then; I hardly recognise the little mountain village, with its clear springs, which at that time but few doctors had found out, and which the fashionable world had never even heard of. It was so beautiful and peaceful then; now there are more hotels than cottages. There

<sup>49</sup> The quotation is from Charles Baudelaire's poem 'Le Masque' ('The Mask'), which appeared in the second edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal* in February 1861, and should read 'Elle pleure insensé, parce qu'elle a vécu! Et parce qu'elle vit' ('She weeps, fool, because she has lived | And because she must live on'). The poem, dedicated to the sculptor Ernest Christophe, is subtitled 'Allegorical Statue in the Style of the Renaissance', and the first part celebrates the voluptuous beauty of a statue by Christophe. When the poet examines it more closely he is shocked to discover that its divine body culminates 'en monstre bicéphale!' ('in a two-headed monster'). He quickly discovers that the double heads comprise a sly, smiling mask and an authentic head, which is crying. In the final section the poet asks why she, a perfect beauty, should weep, and the answer provides the epigram to the poem: she is in tears because she is living.

is the Casino, the theatre, the band, the usual noisy, chattering crowd; but the quiet restfulness of the place is gone.

Ten years ago I was very young, not seventeen, yet I was already engaged to George. Poor George! these years have changed him, too. It has not been all his fault, that from a gay, thoughtless boy he has grown into the hard materialist he is now; the society of a fretful invalid, like myself, must have been very trying; but, at least, he has consoled himself, and now, while I am dying, he is away in Norway fishing. There, see how unjust I am! He does not even know that I am very ill. I would not have him told; I wanted to have the last few days alone, at rest. His voice is so loud it jars me, and I could not bear to see him *here*.

You know, Nina, that I was an orphan, and was brought up by an aunt, who found me very much in the way, and was most anxious to get me married, so that I should not interfere with her own daughters, who were just coming out.

It was during my first London season that I met George. My aunt urged me to accept him. She did not hesitate even to tell me what a burden I was to her. I was anxious to escape from the dependent position I was in. I even persuaded myself I loved George. Poor fool! what did I know of love? What does any girl know of it?

Well, we were engaged, and life became a succession of balls, parties, and fêtes, for George was proud of me, and wished me to be seen everywhere. Our wedding was fixed for the summer, but I was always delicate, and long before the end of the season I became so ill that the doctor said I must leave London at once, and recommended the waters and the mountain air of Vernay. George had just received orders to return to his regiment, which at that time was stationed in Scotland, and my aunt could not leave her family, so it was decided that I was to go to Vernay alone under the care of my old nurse.

How well I remember the morning at the railway station. George, noisily fussy and anxious about me, sending porters in every direction to fetch me things I did not want; suddenly he rushed off, and after a few minutes returned, accompanied by a tall, dark man, whom he introduced to me as an old school friend, who by a lucky chance he had just caught sight of; he was starting for a sketching tour in the Auvergne, and at once promised to look after me on the journey, and see me comfortably settled at Vernay. "You will take care of her for me, Langton, won't you?" said George, with an important air; he was such a child in those days, and I was his last new toy.

Ah, Nina, how shall I describe to you the weeks that followed. At first, I was so weak that I took but a languid interest in all that went on, only I

knew that I was perfectly happy; happier than I had ever been before. Day by day I got stronger; Langton was always with me, he was so kind, so gentle. We used to sit for hours under the trees, here, where we are sitting now; only then it was a tangled little wood, instead of this trim garden, with its artificial rockeries and sham waterfalls. He used to read his favourite poems to me, with that musical voice of his. It was he who first taught me to care for literature. Or we would take long drives together through the yellow cornfields, or higher still where the road would wind among rugged cliffs and rocks thrown up in strange fantastic shapes by some old volcanic disturbance.

It was on one of these drives (I was almost well then, and could walk about again quite easily), we had left the carriage by the roadside, while we climbed a little higher to see the view. The scene was, indeed, wonderful; miles and miles of country stretched around us without a single habitation in sight. In the far east a faint haze hung over the Jura mountains; over the whole the cloudless blue of the sky and the glorious afternoon sunshine. A few sweet mountain flowers grew at our feet, a bird was singing in the air; involuntarily I turned, and found Langton's eyes fixed on me with an expression I can never forget. In that one look our souls met, never again to be parted. With a little sob, I stretched out my hands to him; he held them tightly for a moment, his face was very pale, then he turned abruptly, and we went down the hill path together. All the way back to Vernay we never spoke, but as he helped me out of the carriage, "Goodbye, Iseulte", he said, "goodbye: I must go tonight".

\*\*\*\*\*

I have not seen him since. He went to India, and I married George. Last year I heard of his death. Now, darling, you understand why I am so happy to be dying, for I know that we shall meet. Death is less cruel than life! and I am so tired.





## Conflicted Legacies: Yeats's Intentions and Editorial Theory<sup>1</sup>

Warwick Gould

### The Scholars

Bald heads forgetful of their sins,  
Old, learned, respectable bald heads  
Edit and annotate the lines  
That young men, tossing on their beds,  
Rhymed out in love's despair  
To flatter beauty's ignorant ear.  
All shuffle there; all cough in ink;  
All wear the carpet with their shoes;  
All think what other people think;  
All know the man their neighbour knows.  
Lord, what would they say  
Did their Catullus walk that way? (*VP* 337)

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [warwick.gould@sas.ac.uk](mailto:warwick.gould@sas.ac.uk)? Quite apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.



## SOMETHING INTENDED, COMPLETE

Biographers have addressed the fullness of Yeats's life, but his self-fashioning and self-mythologizing compel a parallel task, the biography of his books. Biblio-biography is often confined to the biography of a single book,<sup>2</sup> but Yeats was a pleromatist. Committed to *oeuvre* throughout his life, he updated his collected works as a self-image, and his canon-formations involved the relegation of works which did not fit his idea of a *Collected Works* as a 'permanent self'. '*It is myself that I remake*' was his reply to those who regretted this textual husbandry.<sup>3</sup>

Yeats's biblio-biography, then, will be a history of these paradoxical intentions. Ideally, the writing of such a book would depend upon a fully edited *Collected Works*. Regrettably, the editing of Yeats's works has yet to address the 'fullness', of such an edition, and that is my subject in this present essay. At the heart of his idea of himself as a textual pleroma was a driving awareness of audience. Speaking later in life to Will Rothenstein he

... quoted his brother Jack as saying he painted to please himself and that the public chose to pay him. This was not Yeats's attitude to poetry: 'You must remember your audience, it is always there, you cannot write without it'.<sup>4</sup>

Both as a young poet and increasingly after the establishment of the Dun Emer Press, his individual assemblages were first tested on coterie audiences whilst having been written or rewritten with this wider ambition, though not without a compelling sense of the primacy of his Irish audience. The two-volume *The Poetical Works of William B. Yeats* (1906–1907) sought to bring to American audiences

<sup>2</sup> One thinks of Paul Eggert's *Biography of a Book: Henry Lawson's While the Billy Boils* (Sydney: Sydney University Press and University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> For the 'permanent self' letter see *CL InteLex* 20984; 13 February [1913]; and for the quatrain '*The Friends that have it I wrong*' and its companion '*Accursed who brings to light of day*' see *VP* 778–79.

<sup>4</sup> Sir William Rothenstein, *Since Fifty: Men and Memories 1922–1938, Recollections of William Rothenstein* (London, Faber & Faber, 1939), 259.

some sense of his strategy for growing his Irish audiences by way of the theatre

I am no longer writing for a few friends here and there, but asking my own people to listen, as many as can find their way into the Abbey Theatre in Dublin or some provincial one when our company is on tour. Perhaps one can explain in plays, where one has so much more room than in songs and ballads, even those intricate thoughts, those elaborate emotions, that are oneself.<sup>5</sup>

By contrast, *The Collected Works* in six volumes of 1922–1926 was a reading edition designed for the much greater variety of audiences he perceived himself to have, and which he wished further to foster. The concept of the reading edition, is returned to below, but it is worth saying here that within his audiences, Yeats above all encouraged that coterie of those who had ‘read all that I have written’<sup>6</sup> and who would read new works in the light of that whole. Perhaps it is best to write of that ‘whole’ using his word, ‘work’. For Yeats, ‘work’ was both activity and what it realized, beyond individual works and even the collected works—“The work is done,” grown old he thought, | “According to my boyish plan”, ‘Perfection of the life, or of the work’, the spiritual intellect’s great work’ (*VP* 577, 495, 632). The use of the word goes well beyond the writing and staging of plays, and the repeated use of the word in the following passage of 1906 is typical

My work in Ireland has continually set this thought before me: ‘How can I make my work mean something to vigorous and simple men whose attention is not given to art but to a shop, or teaching in a National School, or dispensing medicine?’ I had not wanted to ‘elevate them’ or ‘educate them’, as those words are understood, but to make them understand my vision, and I had not wanted a large audience, certainly not what is called a national audience, but enough people for what is accidental and temporary to lose itself in the lump.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *VP*, 851; *The Poetical Works of William B. Yeats* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906–1907), I, vii–viii.

<sup>6</sup> *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (Dundrum: Cuala, 1916), [ii].

<sup>7</sup> *E&I* 265; *CW* 4194.

*Oeuvre*, then, is of key importance to the understanding of Yeats's overall intentionalism as well as for the understanding and application of his authorial intentions. He uses the word 'intention' and various forms of it scores of times in critical prose relating to his own work, and in his reviewing. Intentions are articulated or envisaged for poems, plays, books, and works, as well as textual or versional changes, as textual ambitions or (to be more precise) bibliographical foreconcepts, and even in terms of intended audiences. Footnoting his obsession with the paradoxes of sudden changes in historical cycles, by an appeal to *A Vision's* esoteric audience, Yeats tells us that this difficult book is 'intended, to use a phrase of Jacob Boehme's, for my "schoolmates only"'.<sup>8</sup> The remark is not intended to exclude the exoteric audience who are to be teased into that expertise whereby his work can be read in a specialist light: he encourages learning by an appeal for learned feedback.<sup>9</sup>

The 'first principle' in Yeats's 'A General Introduction for my Work'—arguably designed as his final statement on his own writing—begins from an emphatic distinction.

A poet writes always of his personal life, in his finest work out of its tragedies, whatever it be, remorse, lost love or mere loneliness; he never speaks directly as to someone at the breakfast table, there is always a phantasmagoria. Dante and Milton had mythologies, Shakespeare the characters of English history, of traditional romance; even when the poet seems most himself, when he is Raleigh and gives potentates the lie, or Shelley 'a nerve o'er which do creep the else unfelt oppressions of mankind', or Byron when 'the heart wears out the breast as the sword wears out the sheath', he is never the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast; he has been re-born as an idea, *something intended, complete*. A novelist might describe his accident, his incoherence, he must not, he is more type than man, more passion than type. He is Lear, Romeo, Oedipus, Tiresias; he has stepped

<sup>8</sup> *E&I* xi; *CW5* 219. On what Yeats called 'The Moods' and their causation of sudden historical change, see Warwick Gould, 'The Wind Among The Reeds: Yeats's Fatal Book' (lecture, Yeats International Summer School, 1997), recording available from the Yeats Society, Sligo.

<sup>9</sup> Yeats was pleased to receive even the potentially humiliating advice of Dr Frank Sturm. See *Frank Pearce Sturm: His Life, Letters, and Collected Work*, ed. and with an introductory essay by Richard Taylor (Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1969), *passim* but especially 93–95.

out of a play and even the woman he loves is Rosalind, Cleopatra, never The Dark Lady. He is part of his own phantasmagoria and we adore him because nature has grown intelligible, and by so doing a part of our creative power .... The world knows nothing because it has made nothing, we know everything because we have made everything.<sup>10</sup>

When asked for up to eight prefaces for the volumes of the planned *Dublin Edition*, Yeats had demurred. Much as he hated writing prose late in life, he did wish to make a comprehensive statement for his entire *oeuvre*, and he worked at 'the' (or 'my') 'general introduction'<sup>11</sup> as he referred to it throughout its composition, which occupied him exclusively for more than two months.<sup>12</sup> Remarkably attuned to his idiom, Mrs Yeats and/or Thomas Mark, came up with the title 'A General Introduction for my Work' when that essay was finally yielded up by Scribner to Yeats's primary initiating trade publishers Macmillan in London, who prepared it for publication in the context of *Essays and Introductions* (1961).<sup>13</sup>

Yeats's professionalism as a writer included a willingness to delegate certain textual decisions to trusted agents, so much so that he could be impatient when his instructions were compromised, e.g., by Elkin Mathews, and even irascible on one famous occasion in 1907 when A. H. Bullen, starved by Yeats for copy, seemed about to

<sup>10</sup> *E&I* 509–10, *cf.*, *CW5* 204–5, emphasis added.

<sup>11</sup> *CL InteLex* 6789 (where Yeats's words are relayed by Hansard Watt to John Hall Wheelock of Scribner's, 28 January 1937), 6889, to George Yeats, 9 April [1937], 6901, to Dorothy Wellesley 11 April 1937; 6908 to George Yeats, 18 April [1937], 6940 to Ethel Mannin, 24 May [1937], 6951 to Shri Purohit Swami, 1 June [1937] and 6969 to George Yeats [19 June 1937].

<sup>12</sup> The 'General Introduction' was begun on 11 April 1937 and its drafting was largely finished by 22 June: see *CW5* 485 and my own 'W. B. Yeats and the Resurrection of the Author', *The Library*, Sixth Series, 16:2 (June 1994), 101–34 (122). Hereafter 'Resurrection'. That essay is also reprinted in David Pierce ed., *W. B. Yeats: Critical Assessments* (Mountfield, Robertsbridge: Helm Information, 2000), IV, 589–623.

<sup>13</sup> The tangled history is best summarized by William H. O'Donnell in his textual appendices to *Later Essays*, *CW5* 483–87, 504. The preliminary TS was simply headed 'Introduction'. See also Edward Callan, *Yeats on Yeats: the Last Introductions and the 'Dublin' Edition* (Mountrath, Portlaoise: Dolmen, New Yeats Papers XX, 1981).

print from an unrevised text.<sup>14</sup> He was otherwise flexible with such trusted editors as Bullen and, later, the great Thomas Mark (1890–1963) of Macmillan, London, to whom he delegated increasingly.<sup>15</sup> As his career drew to a close, he came to rely on the established mechanisms of a publishing process designed to reconcile the making of money with the idiosyncratic needs of a distinguished (and never very profitable) Nobel Prize winner.

He had long thought of his work in terms of collected editions, and these he saw as canon-forming, even if by definition, no lifetime iteration of such an edition could ever stabilize or complete the canon. Consequent upon canon-formation were acts of relegation. Certain poems, plays, and other writings fell from time to time into a deuterocanon, or were consigned—as he hoped—to oblivion.<sup>16</sup> He was firm (and not always popular with his older readers), and suppressed numerous early poems, such as ‘How Ferencz Renyi kept Silent’ which George Russell kept reprinting against Yeats’s wishes, whilst remaining more ambivalent with works such as with *John Sherman AND Dhoya*.<sup>17</sup> On other occasions he would rewrite rapidly and so transformingly that older texts in all genres were supplanted (*The Golden Helmet* comes to mind as a limit case, a work in all likelihood prematurely published so as to assist in balancing the volume length of the various volumes of the 1908 *Collected Works in Verse and Prose*, and then entirely recast in verse two years later as *The Green Helmet*). New texts constantly drove out the old, perturbing—even confounding—the possibility of completeness. Writings such as reviews and numerous pieces of journalism were left in the limbo or oblivion of periodical archives. Beyond the deuterocanon, too, there are the lectures, the earlier writings published since his death, abandoned pieces such as *Autobiography—First Draft* and

<sup>14</sup> *CL IntelLex* 625; 6 July [1907] to A. H. Bullen, also *CL4* 690–91.

<sup>15</sup> For W. B. and George Yeats’s work with Thomas Mark, see Gould, ‘Resurrection’, ‘Prefatory Note’, ‘Editors’ Introduction’ and ‘Editorial Principles’, *Myth 2005* xxii–cv; and also Appendix Six: The Definitive Edition’ *YP*, 706–49.

<sup>16</sup> On canon-formation, see Gould, ‘Appendix 6’, *passim*, esp. 712 and ff.

<sup>17</sup> Yeats said he had been persuaded ‘[s]omewhat against my judgement’ to include the stories in the 1908 *Collected Works* but that they had come to ‘interest me very deeply’ (*CW12* 1; *CWVP7* [181]).

*The Speckled Bird*.<sup>18</sup> I refer to the relation between the canon, the deuterocanon, and the various categories of suppressed, abandoned, unpublished and unfinished writings as Yeats's textual hierarchy. It still presents challenges for editors.

Realism in respect of textual revision for new bibliographical occasions may be traced in the followings exchanges. In 1901, Lafcadio Hearn protested about the new version of 'The Host of the Air':

You have mangled it, maimed it, deformed it, extenuated it—destroyed it totally. ... you have really sinned a great sin! *Do* try to be sorry for it!—reprint the original version,—tell critics to go to perdition, if they don't like it,—and, above all things, *n'y touchez plus!*

Immediately after a (lost) temporizing reply, Yeats wrote to Thomas Hutchinson, defending himself against those who had not liked rewritten versions as found in *Poems* (1899 and after): 'One changes for the sake of new readers, not for the sake of old ones',<sup>19</sup> showing that audience was to the forefront in that constant reconstruction of books and texts consequent upon Yeats's continual self-construction. 'Whatever changes I have made are but an attempt to express better what I thought and felt when I was a young man' he said in 1925 (*VP* 842), fully aware of the attendant paradoxes. And again, in 1927,

this volume contains what is, I hope, the final text of the poems of my youth; and yet it may not be, seeing that in it are not only the revisions from my 'Early Poems and Stories', published last year, but quite new revisions on which my heart is greatly set. One is always cutting out the dead wood. (*VP* 848)

<sup>18</sup> More vexing are the elisions and unexplained absences from *The Collected Works* of such prose works as *Pages from a Diary written in Nineteen Thirty*, collected by Mrs Yeats in *Explorations* (1962), numerous pieces of journalism, interviews, table-talk, etc.

<sup>19</sup> *CL3* 101–02 and *CL InteLex* [unnumbered], August 1901. Thomas Hutchinson was a headmaster who wrote light verse and who wrote to poets on significant occasions: see also *CL1* 390. Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904) was born in Greece, emigrated to Ireland, and was widely travelled in the United States. By 1901, he was teaching at the Imperial University in Tokyo, where he was known as Koizumi Yakumo. He collected and published Japanese ghost stories and his writings were well-known to Yeats.

Yeats's shaping at every point offers a unified self-reconstruct with its own chronology. Its profile—the young man old or the old man young<sup>2</sup>—is where his reading, his anticipation of his audiences, their reading, and their feedback intersect, often in new revision.<sup>20</sup> Revision and new writing were not merely interdependent activities, revision of an old poem frequently made the next new poem possible.<sup>21</sup>

Such diachronic self-allusions show that his own text had a continuous simultaneity for him which makes oppressive the exclusion of such authorial commentary as I have just quoted. Above all, as he read his *Collected Works* when assembling the *Edition de Luxe* in the 1930s, he read it as a single work, cancelling, for example, one passage in *Autobiographies* which simply replicated another in 'Dust hath closed Helen's Eye' from *The Celtic Twilight*, and already in proof in *Mythologies AND The Irish Dramatic Movement*.<sup>22</sup> Such self-reading and creative economy silently challenges the editorial avarice of *The Poems: A New Edition* and its derivatives. These editions stripped out of the plays and the prose various verses never printed as 'poems' in their own right by Yeats himself. Adding them to the 'Additional Poems' section, which otherwise legitimately collected

<sup>20</sup> The theoretical framework of a 'communications circuit' between writer and reader, with its more speculative dotted line back from reader to writer was first drawn by Robert Darnton in his pioneering essay, 'What is the History of Books?' (1982) collected in Darnton's *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections on Cultural History* (London and Boston: Faber & Faber, 1990), 107–35 at fig. 7.1 ([112]). The model was improved upon by Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker in their 'A New Model for the Study of the Book', in Nicolas Barker ed., *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society* (London: British Library, 1993), 5–43 (7). The new diagram (14) earned Darnton's seal of approval in "'What is the History of Books?' Revisited', *Modern Intellectual History* 4. 3 (2007), 495–508.

<sup>21</sup> Here I draw loosely upon my "'Stitching and Unstitching": Yeats, Bibliographical Opportunity and the Life of the Text', in Brian G. Caraher and Robert Mahoney (eds.), *Ireland and Transatlantic Poetics: Essays in Honour of Denis Donoghue* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), where I discuss the rewriting of 'The Lamentation of the Old Pensioner' in the course of correcting the proofs of *Early Poems and Stories* in 1924; 129–56 at 140–41. Hereafter, Gould, "Stitching".

<sup>22</sup> See *Myth* 2005 xcii–xciii and 17. It was left to Thomas Mark to restore the passage to *Autobiographies* (1955), 561, published when it was far from clear that *Mythologies* would appear in the Macmillan Uniform Edition in 1959. *CW3* 411–12 retains the passage.

Yeats's abandoned poems was a decision widely criticized, but the enduring point here is not merely that by such means what Hugh Kenner called 'uncanonized scraps and three-line wonder[s]' were presented as poems, but also that they were thereby printed twice in the *Collected Works*.<sup>23</sup>

#### LE GRAND OEUVRE

Like Stéphane Mallarmé, in whose tradition he wrote,<sup>24</sup> Yeats was committed to the idea of the 'work' being externalized in a book, or several volumes of a book, with an overarching architecture. Mallarmé's 'tout, au monde, existe pour aboutir à un livre'<sup>25</sup> resonated with him via Arthur Symon's 'Stéphane Mallarmé, an essay Yeats read carefully and uses for quotes he attributes to Mallarmé. Symons had also alluded to Mallarmé's 'Le Livre, instrument spirituel' in his own words in that essay, catching Mallarmé's synaesthesia.

<sup>23</sup> See Michael J. Sidnell, 'The New Edition of Yeats's Poems and its Making', *YA3* 225–43 (228): 'This edition includes all the poems that Yeats published or approved for publication, a great many poems that he did not approve for publication and still more poems wrenched from their contexts in plays and stories—poems that Yeats, in an earlier marketing era, undoubtedly meant to be published in *those* contexts and deliberately omitted from his collected poems. By ignoring Yeats's views in a way that the poet's widow and his first editor were unwilling to do, the present editor and publisher have managed to give purchasers a BONUS of MORE THAN A HUNDRED EXTRA poems for little more than a REGULAR-SIZED edition would have cost. Was *PNE* conceived, perhaps, as THE SUPERMARKET EDITION?' See also Warwick Gould, 'Yeats Deregulated' *YA9* 356–72 (362–63), and Hugh Kenner, 'Whose Yeats is it, anyway', *New York Times Book Review*, 27 May 1990, 10–11.

<sup>24</sup> On Yeats and Symbolism, see Denis Donoghue, 'Yeats: The Question of Symbolism', in *The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of European Languages*, ed. by Anna Balakian (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1982), 279–83; Warwick Gould, 'Yeats and Symbolism', in Fran Brearton and Alan Gillis (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 20–41.

<sup>25</sup> See 'Le Livre, instrument spirituel', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. and ann. Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 378. Elsewhere, Mallarmé quoted himself to Jules Huret who reported 'Au fond, voyez vous, *me dite le maitre en me serrant la main*, le monde est fait aboutir à un beau livre': see *ibid* 672. '... The world was made in order to result in a beautiful book'. Huret published the interview in his *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* (1891). The translation is in Frederic Chase St. Aubyn, *Stéphane Mallarmé* (New York: Twayne, 1969), 23.



That we are now precisely at the moment of seeking, before that breaking up of the large rhythms of literature, and their scattering in articulate, almost instrumental, nervous waves, an art which shall complete the transposition, into the Book, of the symphony, or simply recapture our own: for, it is not in elementary sonorities of brass, strings, wood, unquestionably, but in the intellectual word at its utmost, that, fully and evidently, we should find, drawing to itself all the correspondences of the universe, the supreme Music.<sup>26</sup>

Many of Yeats's references to his 'work' catch the alchemical rapture implicit in Mallarmé's idea of the Great Work, whereby the artist is a spiritual alchemist and the book a vessel of God: thus Yeats's references to the 'supreme art' and the 'spiritual intellect's great work'.<sup>27</sup>

'... le Grand Oeuvre. Quoi? C'est difficile à dire: un livre, tout bonnement, en maints tomes, un livre qui soit un livre architectural et prémédité, et non un recueil des inspirations de hasard [sic], fussent-elles merveilleuses ... J'irai plus loin, je dirai: le Livre, persuadé qu'au fond il n'y en a qu'un, tenté à son insu par quiconque a écrit même les Génies. L'explication orphique de la Terre, qui est le seul devoir du poète et le jeu littéraire par excellence: car le rythme même du livre, alors impersonnel et vivant, jusque dans sa pagination, se juxtapose aux équations de ce rêve, ou Ode.'<sup>28</sup>

Barbara Johnson translates:

[T]he Great Work. What would it be? ... a book, quite simply, in several volumes, a book that would be a real book, architectural and premeditated, and not a collection of chance inspirations, however wonderful ... I would go even further and say *the* Book, convinced as I am that there is only one, unwittingly attempted by anyone who writes, even Geniuses. The orphic explanation of the Earth, which is the poet's only duty and the literary mechanism par excellence: for the rhythm of the book, then impersonal and

<sup>26</sup> *Fortnightly Review* 64, Nov. 1898, 677–85; quoted as republished in *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), 135–36.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, and *VP* 632.

<sup>28</sup> The passage comes from Mallarmé's celebrated 'Autobiographie' letter to Paul Verlaine, 15 Nov. 1885: see *Correspondance*, ed. and ann. by Henri Mondor and Lloyd James Austin (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), II, 299–304 (301).

alive, right down to its pagination, would line up with the equations of that dream, or Ode.<sup>29</sup>

Yeats also conjures out of Mallarmé's idea of the Book as Spiritual Instrument, a sense of the imminence of some new dispensation to be expressed in a new 'Sacred Book' of the Arts. *Rosa Alchemica* and *The Tables of the Law* are filled with the idea, and the latter ties the idea of a new aesthetic revival onto the coat-tails of Joachimist prophecy. Yeats's formulation (citing sometimes Mallarmé, sometimes attributing the idea vaguely to Verhaeren, or Nerval) that 'our whole age is seeking to bring forth a sacred book', is a catchphrase recalling a remark he accorded to Owen Aherne in that story, that 'world only exists to be a tale in the ears of the coming generations'.<sup>30</sup> 'Some of us thought that book near towards the end of last century, but the tide sank again', said Yeats of the *fin de siècle*.<sup>31</sup>

But while it is fair to say that Yeats's *Collected Works* was intended to be a 'Great Work ... a book, quite simply, in several volumes, a book that [is] a real book, architectural and premeditated', it was never envisaged as the Sacred Book of the *fin de siècle*. The Thirties offered more ample opportunities for fulfilment at life's end of that great self-embodiment, with Macmillan offering him a seven volume *Edition de Luxe*. When the *Edition de Luxe* had to be shelved during the Great Depression, Charles Scribner's Sons offered an American alternative, to be named the *Dublin Edition*, also to be sold in sets. These were, however, turbulent times for publishing, and both editions (the Macmillan *Edition de Luxe* having been renamed the *Coole Edition* after his death) were halted by the Second World War. Yeats, however, died with his work incomplete—his *oeuvre* shelved. Trusted delegates—his wife George, his agents at A. P. Watt, and

<sup>29</sup> See Stéphane Mallarmé, *Divagations*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>30</sup> *Au* 315; *Myth 2005* 196 and 415, n. 36. Sometimes Yeats attributes the idea of 'the new sacred book, of which all the arts are beginning to dream' to Gérard de Nerval or to Émile Verhaeren. See *EC&I* 162–63; 187. The *CW* editors pass the buck between *CW3* 243 & 475 n. 59; *CW4* 119–20 and 394 n. 17, 138 and 407 n. 45.

<sup>31</sup> *Au* 315.

above all his publisher's reader at Macmillan—were all in place for when the time came, as it did, but not until well after his death and the War. And when it did, publishing conditions, audience needs and audience expectations, had inevitably moved on.

In the 1970s the expiry of Yeats's European copyrights could be realistically envisaged, and academic pressure grew to re-edit his works on a grand scale. The re-establishment of texts is often thought to create new copyrights. Whether and, if so, to what extent such editing can have such an effect has never been legally tested, but commercial pressure from the Yeats Estate and Yeats's principal publishers, Macmillan (London) began to chime with academic ambition. What became the new *Collected Works* (projected as fourteen volumes) was commissioned in the 1976 and inaugurated with the publication of the first volume, *The Poems: A New Edition*, in 1983. Issued—as the six-volume *Collected Works* had been in the 1920s—in a series of books published as and when they became available, and as yet (2017) unfinished, the individual volumes of the new *Collected Works* have obscure and greatly divergent relations with the archival remains of Yeats's plans for collected editions of the 1930s. In other respects, too, it could not be said that they embody a sustained (or even a sustainable) editorial policy. They vary erratically in the style and quality of textual approaches, decisions and annotational policies.

#### VAIN GAIETY: LOST ALLUSIONS, BIOGRAPHICAL DELUSIONS, SPECIFIC CONFUSIONS

The current *Collected Works* (Macmillan and Charles Scribner's Sons), the Cornell Yeats Manuscripts Series (which would seem to have abandoned the idea of including the MSS of Yeats's Prose) and the *Collected Letters* (Clarendon Press) are all sufficiently far advanced for it to be apparent that the annotation for such series require continuous, essential maintenance.<sup>32</sup> While these projects

<sup>32</sup> The 'Research Updates' in *YZ20* and ff. as well as the 'Shorter Notes' sections in earlier volumes of that series seek to resolve questions left unsolved by—or arising from—previous annotation and its silences.

are all very different from each other, it is the difference in their respective annotational policies which is most immediately striking. By focusing below only on annotation of the *Poems*, it is possibly to get to the heart of these differences.

Since the concept of a reading edition will be increasingly important to what I have to say about both annotational and textual policy, let me say here that such an edition would be a point of entry for readers unfamiliar with the history of Yeats's texts. The *Variorum Edition* (1957 and later) with its collations of all previous published versions of texts against a 'final' text, is not that book, though the so-called 'difficulties' of using that edition have been absurdly overstated by those with interests vested in undervaluing the abilities of potential readers.<sup>33</sup> While a reading edition of Yeats's works will offer information about and possibly pathways to earlier and discarded versions of texts and the contexts of those texts—perhaps in appendices, notes, or commentary—it must be, in essence, a final text edition established according to patient understanding of the full, distributed publishers' archives (which in Yeats's case are very widely distributed), and of what they reveal about the author's intentions for such reading editions of the whole of his works. In all the turmoil of late twentieth century editorial theory, it was easy to be detained by the intricacies of 'versioning' theory, but one cannot lose sight of the necessity of having carefully-compiled, accurate reading editions of final texts, if only as a stable point of departure for more specialized varieties of reading and scholarship.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Promoting the virtues of electronic products in a keynote address 'Hypertext and Collage' at a conference, *Theory and Computing Culture*. Centre for English Studies, University of London, in January 1995 George P. Landow bafflingly claimed that no one could understand how to use the book. George Bornstein agreed, finding the *Variorum's* a 'confusing format ... almost no one other than scholarly editors themselves can construe such apparatus': see Bornstein's *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 53, 44. I cannot confirm these impressions from my own students' reportage.

<sup>34</sup> As a background to some of these theoretical crosscurrents, especially in American textual studies, see George Bornstein, 'What Is the Text of a Poem by Yeats?', in Bornstein and Ralph Williams (eds.), *Palimpsest: Editorial Theory in*

The three principal editors of such reading editions of Yeats's *Poems* as we have, Richard Finneran, A. Norman Jeffares and Daniel Albright, are all dead. All were intentionalists, though divided in their approach to usage and interpretation of the archives.<sup>35</sup> In annotational policies, they are just as sharply divided. In both texts and their annotation, readers are presented with qualitatively different experiences. Yeats's 'fullness' as a writer is at the heart of the problem which the Finneran edition throws onto its readers, while it offers to Jeffares and Albright the possibilities of vastly superior annotation. The late twentieth century editing of Yeats became something of a test bed for annotation policy, and it is there that we start.

The stated 'purpose' of the notes to *The Poems: A New Edition* was threefold:

1. to annotate all specific allusions in the poems.<sup>36</sup> Annotation of other kinds, as well as interpretive [*sic*] commentary, has been avoided. Thus, for example, information on Yeats's sources is given only when Yeats called attention to them (whether in the poem or in a note), as with 'Imitated from the Japanese'.
2. Cross-references to Yeats's other works or passages in his correspondence are not offered, except in some rare instances where such references provide the most concise annotation.

*the Humanities* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 167–93 (168–71).

<sup>35</sup> *The Poems: Second Edition* (New York: Scribner, 1997), ed. by Richard J. Finneran replaced *The Poems: Revised* (New York: Macmillan, 1989; London: Macmillan, 1989), *PR*, which replaced *The Poems: A New Edition* (New York: Macmillan, 1983; London: Macmillan, 1984), *PNE*, as the first volume of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (formerly *The Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*). *Yeats's Poems*, ed. and ann. by A. Norman Jeffares, with an Appendix by Warwick Gould (London: Macmillan, 1989, rev. 1991, is best cited from the 3rd, 1996 edition. W. B. Yeats, *The Poems* ed. by Daniel Albright (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.) followed in 1990. Jerome J. McGann's comparative review of the three editions, 'Which Yeats Edition?', *TLS* 11–17 May 1990, 9–10, offers a fair and succinct account of the differences.

<sup>36</sup> Thus the headnote to 'Explanatory Notes', *cf.*, the 'Preface' to *CW1*, which claims that the 'Explanatory Notes attempt to elucidate all *direct* allusions in the poems' [*sic*] whilst referring the reader to the 'principles of annotation' in the that headnote (*CW1* xxvi).

3. Unnamed individuals are normally not identified, except in poems explicitly presented as autobiographical statements, as with the work beginning 'Pardon, old fathers'. (*PNE* 613; *CW1* 623)

It seems that from the outset, little or no thought was given to the mysteries inherent in the concept of a 'specific allusion'—specific to whom and when, and if so, how was such a specificity to be preserved? Readers soon found that their superior knowledge and so confident perceptions of 'specific allusions' did not pass muster as 'specific' to the editor of *Collected Works 1*. A telling example is Yeats's hope to 'dine at journey's end | with Landor and with Donne' (*VP* 336). No reader looking across Yeats's repeated references to both poets could be expected to be satisfied by 'Walter Savage Landor (1775–1864), John Donne (1571 or 1572–1635) English authors' (*CL1* 641). From at least 1896, Yeats had known that 'I shall dine late; but the dining room will be well-lighted, the guests few and select' was a sentence from Landor's confession that 'Poetry was always my amusement; prose my study and business' in his late 'Imaginary Conversation' with Archdeacon Hare.<sup>37</sup>

Just when the context of Yeats's wider reading and lived life can be drawn upon to amplify meanings in the text, the interdiction against '[c]ross-references to Yeats's other works or to passages from his correspondence' confers authority solely on the Editor himself. This might account for the highly competitive, 'finger on the button', pub-quizz style of the annotation.<sup>38</sup>

It 'did not seem possible to assume a "common body of knowledge" which all readers' throughout the world 'would share', confides

<sup>37</sup> See *CL2* 165 n. 2 and 'Archdeacon Hare and Walter Landor', in Landor's *Imaginary Conversations*, ed. with biographical and explanatory notes by Charles G. Crump (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1891, 1909), IV, 427 (*YL* 1081). Yeats probably first encountered it in the final paragraph of Osman Edwards's 'Emile Verhaeren' in *The Savoy*, VII, November 1896, 76. The next fresh recto is the first page of Yeats's *The Tables of the Law*.

<sup>38</sup> Such a style of answer recalls 'Mr Memory' in the music-hall sequences of Alfred Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* (1935) when 'Mr. Memory' holds the stage with Gradgrindian factual knowledge which cannot be held to the question and is deeply indifferent to the audience's requirements.

Finneran.<sup>39</sup> By contrast, Michael Sidnell condemned *CWT*'s busy and inutile annotations as the 'dead mice in the bread' (*YA3* 229). While much was overly and yet inadequately annotated, more was mysteriously and deliberately not annotated at all. Richard Ellmann was always fascinated by the 'latent biography' as he put it to me, of poems and plays. Foreseeing the monopoly which the Finneran edition might come to hold in the US market, its annotation was, as he put it bleakly to me, 'a blight'.<sup>40</sup> Numerous samples of baffling notes are listed in my *TLS* review of *The Poems: A New Edition*.<sup>41</sup> And audiences who are challenged by the candour of 'untraced' face instead the smokescreen of knowingness, or what might be termed the wild goose chase after a red herring, as in the edition's account of 'Tulka' followed, inevitably, in current editions and student guides.<sup>42</sup>

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the stricture against identifying '[u]nnamed individuals'. Protesting his old New-Critical self-denial whilst in fact denying readers' needs, Finneran turns to 'Upon a Dying Lady' which omits Mabel Beardsley's name. Ernest Rhys asked Yeats in a letter of 1 June 1934 whether the Dying Lady in fact had been Mabel Beardsley. Yeats's reply

has not yet been traced, but if it is ever located, I suspect we will discover that Yeats answered, in effect, that although the poem may have been 'about' Mabel Beardsley, he preferred to present it as a universal statement about death and dying, much as he told Lady Gregory that 'To a Wealthy Man ...' was addressed to 'an imaginary person' (see note to 114.4).<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> See *CW1* 624.

<sup>40</sup> At New College, Oxford, 16 April 1984.

<sup>41</sup> See 'The Editor takes Possession', a review essay in the *Times Literary Supplement* on A. Norman Jeffares's *A New Commentary upon the Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London, 1984), Richard Finneran's *Editing Yeats's Poems* (London, 1983) and his *The Poems: A New Edition* (New York, 1983; London, 1984), 29 June 1984, 731–33.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, *CW1* 693 and in David A. Ross's *A Critical Companion to William Butler Yeats: A Literary Reference to his Life and Work* (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 281. For identification of the Tulka whom Yeats actually quotes in the headnote to *The Wanderings of Oisín (VP 1)*, see Geert Lernout, 'Yeats and Tukaram', *YA20* 287–92.

<sup>43</sup> *PNE* 613, corrected in *PR* and *CW1* to '... much as he told Hugh Lane ...' (*CW1* 623).

Yeats himself, of course, had profoundly seen that '[w]e may come at last to think that nothing exists but a stream of souls, that all knowledge is biography'.<sup>44</sup> It is alarming enough when an editor projects upon an author's intentions and sense of audience his own critical preconceptions.

But it is doubly disturbing that an editor should forswear what is out there in the textual pleroma because he declines to use cross references. Yeats had written to Lady Gregory before Mabel Beardsley was dead or even the sequence finished,

I have written three little lyrics about Mabel Beardsley dying but I will not send them till I have done a fourth to link them together. I think they are really quaint and touching.<sup>45</sup>

His letter to Thomas Sturge Moore of 17 November [1918] asks Sturge Moore to design the cover for *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), commenting that it contains 'all my recent poems, the Mabel Beardsley poems and so on' (*TSMC* 33). A copy of *The Wild Swans at Coole* (Cuala, 1917) was inscribed to James A. Healy in July 1938 'The poems headed "To a dying Lady" are about Mabel Beardsley' with a touching reminiscence of that 'heroic person' and her kindness to visitors when she was dying (*YAACTS* 8 252. Having edited that volume of *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies*, Finneran did not revise his passage.

Daniel Albright condemned with vigour what he called 'Professor Finneran's revulsion against biography'

The consequence of this policy is that the protagonist of 'An Irish Airman foresees his Death' is not identified as Major Robert Gregory; the statue discussed in 'A Bronze Head' is not identified as an image of Maud Gonnet; and so forth. Professor Finneran is right to note that Yeats had some purpose in omitting such names from the text of his poems, but if an annotator tells us anything, he should tell us those names. If one assumes that ignorance is helpful to interpretation, then any annotation whatsoever is harmful to the text. Professor Finneran's and Professor Jeffares's conflicting speculations on the identities of Yeats's remote ancestors, to whom Yeats dimly alludes in

<sup>44</sup> *Ex* 397; *CW* 2 725.

<sup>45</sup> *CL InteLex* 2070, [?21 January 1913].



'Pardon, old fathers', are of some interest; but the intimate, direct affiliation of the poems just mentioned with the lives of his friends is of much greater interest.

We all know that annotation requires such rigor of selection that one might say that to annotate is to omit. But I cannot approve of the tone that Professor Finneran takes when he says, at the beginning of his notes, that he is not going to mention that 'Upon a Dying Lady' was based on the death of Mabel Beardsley (p. 613). It is as if he were pleased to withhold a fact that most readers would consider relevant.<sup>46</sup>

Such annotational prejudices would have been slightly less inexcusable if *The Poems: A New Edition* had freely cross-referred its readers to Jeffares's *A Commentary on the Poems of Yeats*, or if Finneran had at least sought to co-ordinate newer issues and settings of his volume with Jeffares's *A New Commentary* which appeared a few months after his own book.<sup>47</sup> I recall Finneran's dismay, not only that the *Commentary* had been updated and expanded. He had, in fact, sought to supplant the *Commentary* with his own annotation, impoverished by the reasoning set out above. Worse, in his view, Jeffares, in keying it to the arrangement of *The Poems: A New Edition*, had publicly expressed in his preface his regret at what he saw as the flawed decisions over volume-arrangement and poem order in the Finneran edition.<sup>48</sup>

#### RECOVERIES: WIDER STILL, AND WIDER

Readers had proved quick to notice Yeats's patterns of cross-allusion throughout his works. When Allan Wade's edition of *The Letters of W. B. Yeats* appeared in 1954, after some of the letters to Sturge Moore,

<sup>46</sup> *The New York Review of Books*, 32. 12, July 18, 1985, in reply to 'Naming the Dying Lady', a letter by Karl Beckson protesting against Daniel Albright's review, 'The Magician', *NYRB* 31 January 1985.

<sup>47</sup> *A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1968), and reprinted four times before expansion into *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

<sup>48</sup> *NC* vii-x. Finneran's project began with the Yeats Estate's authorization of a new *Complete Poems* (*TLS* 10 September 1976, 1117). He initially defended his editorial achievement against contrary valuations of it (principally my own) in letters to the *TLS* on 3 August 1984 (811) and 31 August 1984 (969).

John O'Leary and Katharine Tynan had been separately published (all 1953), the field of reference widened, and it did so again when the Macmillan Uniform Edition of the prose works began to appear from 1955 onwards, and it deepened with the appearance of the two *Variorum Editions* (1957 and 1966).

In so far as Finneran's annotational policies applied to the other volumes of the *Collected Works* (of which he was co-general editor), the embarrassment multiplied. This is too large a question to illustrate here, but if contrasted with the annotation of the *Collected Letters*, certain conclusions can be drawn about the obligations on editors of works and life-documents in the case of a closely-documented life of reflection, writing, reading, travel in the service of a political and intellectual cause, and theatrical activity.

In 1994 Ronald Schuchard contrasted the work required of him as co-editor of Volumes 3–5 of the *Collected Letters* and the annotating he undertook for T. S. Eliot's *Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry: the Clark and Turnbull Lectures*.<sup>49</sup> Reviewing recent debates over annotation, and offering examples from the work of others and his own annotation (including exposure of his own occasional mistakes), Schuchard contrasted his two projects as follows: 'Yeats requires more notes of recovery, Eliot of explanation ... the virtue of brevity may be a dishonorable excuse for avoiding the detailed attention that the text requires'.<sup>50</sup> In this—a then challenging view—Schuchard followed the lead of Wilmarth Lewis, W. J. B. Owen and Donald H. Reiman, who had also bravely asserted against the conventional wisdom of the day, that annotation was 'commentary as a means to a knowledge of the poet's knowledge, so that we may the better understand his art and his wisdom' (Owen) and that the annotator's duty is 'to track down particular information that has eluded his predecessors but also to raise new questions and problems that, if solved by researchers in

<sup>49</sup> London: Faber & Faber, 1993. See Ronald Schuchard, 'Yeats's Letters, Eliot's Lectures: Towards a New Focus on Annotation', *Text: Transactions of the Society for Textual Scholarship*, 6 (1994), 287–306.

<sup>50</sup> Schuchard, *Yeats's Letters*, 288, 291–92.

the future, will result in fuller understanding not only of the *actions* of poets but also of their unstated reasonings as well' (Reiman).<sup>51</sup>

The contrast between the results of the 'recovery' approach and those found in the annotation of *The Poems: a New Edition* all too often resembles Lady Gregory's distinction between the candlestick-maker who 'holds up the light and hands it on from generation to generation, taking it from under the bushel that it may search the dark corners of the house', and the butcher, whose 'trade is in dead meat, it is to that his scales are adjusted, and the stirrings of life disturb his calculations; his business and his duty ... to destroy life wherever it appears'.<sup>52</sup> Questions which form themselves when we consult Finneran's annotation are choked off by the notes. (In some later volumes, such as *Later Essays*, one can be surprised by joy when reading the notes while some few editors chafe at the series policy.) But where annotation solidifies into factoids as illustrated above, a seeming knowingness can beguile some readers into an unquiet trust that the editor must know best. Such knowingness does not know—or pretends not to know—that it deprives readers of that which might help them as distinct from controlling them from a shop-worn postulate of the old New Criticism, bankrupted by the archives and records of lived lives and by historical bibliography.

#### THE WORD-HOARD, SELF-ANNOTATION, SELF-ALLUSION, COMMENTARY

Yeats's instinctive awareness of implied and diverse audiences—Elkin Mathews's Vigo Street poets and their readers was a 'special public I would be glad to get'<sup>53</sup>—ensured that he was a self-annotating writer. From *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics* (1892), Yeats had been predisposed to 'poems with notes' to help the reader,

<sup>51</sup> See Donald H. Reiman, *Romantic Texts and Contexts* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987), 22. The W. J. B. Owen quotation comes from his essay, 'Annotating Wordsworth', in John D. Baird, ed., *Editing Texts of the Romantic Period* (Toronto: A. M. Hakkert, 1972), 41–71 (71).

<sup>52</sup> See 'Editor's Note' to Lady Gregory ed., *Ideals in Ireland* (London: At the Unicorn [Press], 1901), 9–10.

<sup>53</sup> *CL1*, 400–1, 19 October [1894].

a practice which is at its most highly developed in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), i.e., nearly thirty years before Hope Mirrlees's *Paris* (1919) or Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), for which poem Yeats's volume had provided a clear exemplum. After Yeats's death, he was well served, too, by Jeffares's 1945 Trinity College thesis and later editions of its substance as *A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (1968) and *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats* (1984).<sup>54</sup> Jeffares was a classicist, and approached the writing of commentary very much as if he had been not merely an annotator of Catullus. A schoolboy-editor at Yeats's old school, he had even commissioned and published a poem from Yeats in 1937 in *The Erasmian*<sup>55</sup>, Jeffares had the unique opportunity to meet numerous of Yeats's friends, to collect the table-talk and anecdote, and to read the poems for their 'latent biography', to use Ellmann's phrase. But his task was deeply enriched by Yeats's own prefaces, and notes, and ranges widely into the hinterland of his plays and fiction, his critical and expository prose, and his letters, lectures, speeches, broadcasts, interviews and table-talk. Jeffares annotated Yeats by tracing the connexions between poems and other parts of the Yeats canon, from which connexions Yeats's strategies of self-allusion may be studied.<sup>56</sup>

The Jeffares commentaries thus read Yeats's poems by means of Yeats—his associated writings, such as notes, prefaces, passages from the speculative prose, offering a wonderfully implicit cross-referencing system. Let us, for the moment, try to hold all these writings as 'Yeats's word-hoard', with his *oeuvre* at its core. That word-hoard was in every sense, including Yeats's special sense, enunciated by a product of a voice, the 'speech of a man' during a lived life (YT 74).

<sup>54</sup> See Christopher Rush, 'Professor A. Norman Jeffares, 11 August 1920–1 June 2005', *YA18* 3–10, and on his Trinity career. On the basis of the *Commentary*, see esp. 4–5, and on its ongoing project, see also the opening pages of Warwick Gould, 'Lips and Ships, Peers and Tears: *Lacrimae Rerum* and Tragic Joy', *ibid.*, 15–55.

<sup>55</sup> 'What Then', *VP* 576–77vv.

<sup>56</sup> Scores of these exist in repeated keywords and catchphrases, such as 'the moods', 'terrible beauty', 'the deeps of the mind', 'friend by friend, lover by lover'. On the strategies of such self-allusions, see Gould, *ibid.*, *passim* and his 'The Mask before *The Mask*', *YA19* 3–48, *passim*, and the introductory note to the annotation of *Myth* 2005 209–10.

Then as now its mode of existence is in language housed in original print media—a negligible amount is also in recorded sound. When reproduced in new paper and digital forms, attempts must be made to respect the means by which Yeats allowed the part to be read by the whole, the new by the old.

By contrast, the critical tradition following after that ‘Death of the Author’ popularized in French theory by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault (of whom more below) implicitly discouraged the readers it claimed to empower from considering an author’s self-expository writing. In terms analogous to the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ popularized after Paul Ricoeur’s account of suspicion as a defining characteristic of the ‘school’ of Marx, Freud and Nietzsche,<sup>57</sup> such writings are not to be trusted to provide another text with elucidation. Instead, meanings are to be decoded from within the confines of each play, poem, or novel. This has grievous results for such writers as Yeats who ask that their works be considered ‘in the mass’ rather than in ‘fragments’. In his case, ‘reader empowerment’ provided by such a critical approach would implicitly disavow the poet’s own strategies of self-allusion across ‘the mass’ of his work, whilst further discouraging readers from reflecting on the undeniable and extensive record of authorial change, authorial intention, and authorial meditation upon the very distinction between the author himself and his implied author. To follow this line of thought would be to discountenance the whole genre of authorly commentary, from *obiter dicta* to *autobiographia literaria*.

#### VAIN BATTLE: COLLECTED EDITIONS, INTENTION AS EXPECTATION

The editorial approach most suited to this author’s work is that refined intentionalism which grasps the individualities and particularities of authors as found in their publishing archives. In Yeats’s case, the scattered A. P. Watt, Macmillan and Scribner archives of proofs, correspondence, TSS and MSS towards published and unpublished

<sup>57</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 26, 32–35. See also Rita Felski, ‘Critique and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion’, *M/C Journal* 15. 1 (2012).

books offer traceable details of acts done through authorial delegation which, over the years of association between a writer and a trusted delegate, fall into patterns of 'authorial expectation'.<sup>58</sup> An intentionalist writer, then, ought to present no general challenge to intentionalist editorial theory, and Yeats only began to be cited as a 'notorious' case when Anglo-American intentionalist editing found itself challenged by influential Franco-German editorial approaches in the last three decades of the twentieth century. What had brought Yeats into editorial problematics was not the quality of the editing of his emerging *Collected Works*, but turbulence within the world of textual editorial theory itself, to which the editing of Yeats became something of a test case, barely understood if frequently cited by those who sought to generalize.<sup>59</sup> I turn now to that turbulence.

#### BLOWING THE DOORS OFF

Prefiguring (and in a sense instigating) the crisis in editorial theory of the 1980s, Roland Barthes had pondered the general problem of *oeuvre* in 1971 thus

... l'œuvre est un fragment en substance, elle occupe une portion de l'espace des livres (par exemple dans une bibliothèque.) Le Texte, lui, est un champ méthodologique ... l'œuvre se voit (chez les libraires, dans les fichiers, dans les programmes d'examen), le texte se démontre, se parle selon certaines règles (ou contre certaines règles) ; l'œuvre se tient dans la main, le Texte tient dans le langage : il n'existe que pris dans un discours (ou plutôt il est Texte par cela même qu'il le sait) ; le Texte n'est pas la décomposition de l'œuvre, c'est l'œuvre qui est la queue imaginaire du Texte. Ou encore: *le Texte ne s'éprouve que dans un travail, une production*. Il s'ensuit que le Texte ne peut s'arrêter (par exemple, à un rayon de bibliothèque); son mouvement

<sup>58</sup> See G. Thomas Tanselle, 'Issues in Bibliographical Studies since 1942', in Peter Davison ed., *The Book Encompassed: Studies in Twentieth-Century Bibliography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 24–40 (33–34). See also Gould, 'Resurrection', 105.

<sup>59</sup> Jerome J. McGann refers to 'the notorious case of Yeats in the second chapter of his *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 62. This matter is developed below with reference to the writings of such theorists as Jerome J. McGann and Paul Eggert, and the Yeats editor, George Bornstein.

constitutif est la *traversée* (il peut notamment traverser l'œuvre, plusieurs œuvres).<sup>60</sup>

The Barthes distinction between *l'oeuvre* and *le Texte* seems adequately to theorize two ways of thinking about the work, depending on what one is doing with it. There can be little to quarrel over in a generalization so very abstract, but then Barthes, as Italo Calvino is reported to have commented, was a pretty plausible generalizer, in the 'science of the single object'.<sup>61</sup>

Editorial commentary is not itself *le Texte*, through it nourishes and directs the tasks of experiencing *le Texte* in Barthes's term. In uncomplicatedly annotating allusions to penumbral writings outside an author's own 'word hoard' as well as those within it, editorial commentary also accounts for events, images, music, and individuals in history and myth, as well as images. But the methodology of commentary must do justice not merely to *l'oeuvre* and *le Texte*, but also account for how the work stands, in any particular textual instantiation, in the book or books which it occupies, has occupied, and will occupy (to pick up Barthes's point about the 'traversability' of text). For the text is experienced not merely in language, discourse, activity or production, it is experienced in books and was designed by an author to be experienced in the context of a book or books. It is frequently said that Barthes's theories stand in a tradition which

<sup>60</sup> See Barthes's essay 'De l'oeuvre au texte' was first published in *Revue d'esthétique* 3 (1971), 225–32. Stephen Heath translates this as '... the work is a fragment of substance, it occupies a portion of the spaces of books (for example, in a library). The Text is a methodological field ... the work is seen (in bookstores, in card catalogues, on examination syllabuses), the Text is demonstrated, is spoken according to certain rules (or against certain rules); the work is held in the hand, the Text is held in language: it exists only when caught up in a discourse (or rather it is Text for the very reason that it knows itself to be so); the Text is not the decomposition of the work, it is the work that is the imaginary tail of the Text; or again *the Text is experienced only in an activity, in a production*. It follows that the Text cannot stop (for example, at a library shelf); its constitutive moment is *traversal* (notably, it can traverse the work, several works)'. See 'From Work to Text', in Barthes's *Image Music Text* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1977), 155–64 (156–57), <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Barthes-Work-to-Text.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> See Michael Wood, 'On his Trapeze': A Review of Tiphaine Samoyault, *Barthes: A Biography* (London: Polity, 2016) in the *London Review of Books*, 17 November 2016, 17.

stems from Mallarmé.<sup>62</sup> It is not always remembered by theoreticians that for Mallarmé, ‘... tout, au monde, existe pour aboutir à un livre’.<sup>63</sup>

Michel Foucault, with whom Barthes had, I think, an uneasy relationship, had also pondered the mode of existence of works in language. ‘A theory of the work does not exist, and the empirical task of those who naively undertake the editing of works often suffers in the absence of such a theory’, he claimed. The immediate context of the remark (a hypothetical edition of Nietzsche’s notebooks, with the untidy intrusion of references, diary jottings, or a laundry list) troubled him in a manner that seems captious, and for a reason.

Mais quand, à l’intérieur d’un carnet rempli d’aphorismes, on trouve une référence, l’indication d’un rendez-vous ou d’une adresse, une note de blanchisserie: oeuvre, ou pas oeuvre? Mais pourquoi pas? Et cela indéfiniment. Parmi les millions de traces laissées par quelqu’un après sa mort, comment peut-on définir une oeuvre? La théorie de l’oeuvre n’existe pas, et ceux qui, ingénument, entreprennent d’éditer des oeuvres manquent d’une telle théorie et leur travail empirique s’en trouve bien vite paralysé.<sup>64</sup>

The question itself had followed logically enough from Foucault’s starting point, but is a wilful (or self-serving) failure of critical

<sup>62</sup> ‘It was largely by learning the lesson of Mallarmé that critics like Roland Barthes came to speak of “the death of the author” in the making of literature. Rather than seeing the text as the emanation of an individual author’s intentions, structuralists and deconstructors followed the paths and patterns of the linguistic signifier, paying new attention to syntax, spacing, intertextuality, sound, semantics, etymology, and even individual letters. The theoretical styles of Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Maurice Blanchot, and especially Jacques Lacan also owe a great deal to Mallarmé’s “critical poem”. See Johnson, ‘Translator’s Note’, 301.

<sup>63</sup> From *Le Livre, Instrument Spirituel*, a meditation in Stéphane Mallarmé’s *Divagations*, [273]. Barbara Johnson translates it in its context: ‘A proposition said to emanate from me, cited in my praise or dispraise—but I claim it here, along with others that will gather around—says, briefly, that everything in the world exists to end up as a book’: see Johnson, ‘Translator’s Note’, 226.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?’, at <http://libertaire.free.fr/MFoucault349.html>. As translated, it reads ‘What if, within a workbook filled with aphorisms, one finds a reference, the notation of a meeting, or an address, or a laundry list: is it a work, or not? Why not? And so on, ad infinitum. How can one define a work amid the millions of traces left by someone after his death? A theory of the work does not exist, and the empirical task of those who naively undertake the editing of works often suffers in the absence of such a theory’. See ‘What Is an Author?’, in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. by Josué V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 141–60 (143–44).



imagination. The Author was dead—for Foucault’s purposes he or she had died in 1967, when Roland Barthes had published *La Mort de l’auteur*.<sup>65</sup> Foucault felt able to go further. ‘Writing’, he claimed, ‘was now

effacement volontaire qui n’a pas à être représenté dans les livres, puisqu’il est accompli dans l’existence même de l’écrivain. L’oeuvre qui avait le devoir d’apporter l’immortalité a reçu maintenant le droit de tuer, d’être meurtrière de son auteur. Voyez Flaubert, Proust, Kafka. Mais il y a autre chose : ce rapport de l’écriture à la mort se manifeste aussi dans l’effacement des caractères individuels du sujet écrivant ; par toutes les chicanes qu’il établit entre lui et ce qu’il écrit, le sujet écrivant dérouté tous les signes de son individualité particulière ; la marque de l’écrivain n’est plus que la singularité de son absence ; il lui faut tenir le rôle du mort dans le jeu de l’écriture. Tout cela est connu ; et il y a beau temps que la critique et la philosophie ont pris acte de cette disparition ou de cette mort de l’auteur.<sup>66</sup>

Here I cheerfully confess to losing Foucault and his meaning in that rapture with which his paradox had evidently seized him. The writer’s disappearance into ‘le sujet écrivant’, the writing subject or ‘the subject writing’: ‘[u]sing all the contrivances that he sets up between himself and what he writes, the writing subject cancels out the signs of his particular individuality’ strikes me as legerdemain, which incidentally renders invisible the author’s book as well. To try

<sup>65</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘La mort de l’auteur’, *Manteia* 5 (1968), 12–17. In an essay I cannot praise too highly, Sir Brian Vickers ponders ‘Abolishing the Author? Theory versus History’ see his *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Appendix II, 506–41.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Writing ... is now a voluntary effacement that does not need to be represented in books, since it is brought about in the writer’s very existence. The work, which once had the duty of providing immortality, now possesses the right to kill, to be its author’s murderer, as in the cases of Flaubert, Proust, and Kafka. ... this relationship between writing and death is also manifested in the effacement of the writing subject’s individual characteristics. Using all the contrivances that he sets up between himself and what he writes, the writing subject cancels out the signs of his particular individuality. As a result, the mark of the writer is reduced to nothing more than the singularity of his absence; he must assume the role of the dead man in the game of writing’, Harari, 142–43.

to explain how the Author has been dehumanized and yet become his own 'writing subject', it is necessary to backtrack to Barthes's 1967 lecture, because the critical tradition which ensued pressed heavily upon editors, the gatekeepers who negotiate between authors and their future audiences.

Barthes had sought determinedly to liberate French pedagogy by 'blowing the doors off' the Lansonian life-and-work approach, what Auden had called the 'shilling life' approach to teaching literature, by emphasizing that

L'œuvre, la méthode, l'esprit de Lanson, lui-même prototype du professeur français, règle depuis une cinquantaine d'années, à travers d'innombrables épigones, toute la critique universitaire. Comme les principes de cette critique, du moins déclarativement, sont ceux de la rigueur et de l'objectivité dans l'établissement des faits, on pourrait croire qu'il n'y a aucune incompatibilité entre le lansonisme et les critiques idéologiques, qui sont toutes des critiques d'interprétation. Cependant ... il y a une certaine tension entre la critique d'interprétation et la critique positiviste (universitaire). C'est qu'en fait, le lansonisme est lui-même une idéologie ; il ne se contente pas d'exiger l'application des règles objectives de toute recherche scientifique, il implique des convictions générales sur l'homme, l'histoire, la littérature, les rapports de l'auteur et de l'œuvre ; par exemple, la psychologie du lansonisme est parfaitement datée, consistant essentiellement en une sorte de déterminisme analogique, selon lequel les détails d'une œuvre doivent ressembler aux détails d'une vie, l'âme d'un personnage à l'âme de l'auteur, etc., idéologie très particulière puisque précisément depuis, la psychanalyse, par exemple, a imaginé des rapports contraires de dénégation entre une œuvre et son auteur. En fait, bien sûr, les postulats philosophiques sont inevitables; ce ne sont donc pas ses partis pris que l'on peut reprocher au lansonisme, c'est de les taire, de les couvrir du drapé moral de la rigueur et de l'objectivité : l'idéologie est ici glissée, comme une marchandise de contrebande, dans les bagages du scientisme.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Qu'est-ce que la critique?', in Roland Barthes, *Essais critiques* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, [1964]), 252–57 (253–54). 'The work, method, and spirit of [Gustave] Lanson, himself a prototype of the French professor, has controlled, through countless epigones, the whole of academic criticism for fifty years. Since the (avowed) principles of this criticism are rigor and objectivity in the establishment of facts, one might suppose that there is no incompatibility between Lansonism

The French insistence on what Roland Barthes called *La mort de l'auteur* was said by both Roland Barthes and, after him, Michel Foucault (who claimed that 'La disparition de l'auteur, qui depuis Mallarmé est un événement qui ne cesse pas ...'<sup>68</sup>), to take its origins in Mallarmé's work quoted above. Barthes's concluding words rousinglly insisted 'nous savons que, pour rendre a l'écriture son avenir, il faut en renverser le mythe: la naissance du lecteur doit se payer de la mort de l'Auteur'.<sup>69</sup> With the author safely killed off and the reader thereby empowered by Barthes, Michel Foucault's lecture at the Collège de France on 22 February 1969, *Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?* proposed to *replace* the dead, external author with the implied, internal 'la fonction

and the ideological criticisms, which are all criticisms of interpretation. However, ... there is a certain tension between interpretive criticism and positivist (academic) criticism. This is because Lansonism is itself an ideology; not content to demand the application of the objective rules of all scientific investigation, it implies certain general convictions about man, history, literature, and the relations between author and work; for example, the psychology of Lansonism is utterly dated, consisting essentially of a kind of analogical determinism, according to which the details of a work must resemble the details of a life, the soul of a character must resemble the soul of the author, etc.—a very special ideology, since it is precisely in the years following its formulation that psychoanalysis, for example, has posited contrary relations of denial, between a work and its author. Indeed, philosophical postulates are inevitable; Lansonism is not to be blamed for its prejudices but for the fact that it conceals them: ideology is smuggled into the baggage of scientism like contraband merchandise'. See Roland Barthes, 'What is Criticism?' (1963) in *Critical Essays*, translated from the French by Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern, 1972), 255–60 at 256–57.

<sup>68</sup> 'The author's disappearance ... since Mallarmé, has been a constantly recurring event ...': see 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?', at <http://1libertaire.free.fr/MFoucault349.html>

<sup>69</sup> See 'La mort de l'auteur', *Manteia* 5 (1968). 'The reader has never been the concern of classical criticism; for it, there is no other man in literature but the one who writes. We are now beginning to be the dupes no longer of such antiphrasis, by which our society proudly champions precisely what it dismisses, ignores, smothers or destroys; we know that to restore to writing its future, we must reverse its myth: the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author'. See 'The Death of the Author' tr. Richard Howard, *Aspen*, 5–6 (1967), [n.p.] (*Aspen*, 'the multimedia magazine in a box' initiated by Phyllis Johnson in Aspen, CO, is most easily found now at <http://www.ubu.com/aspen/> and the particular double issue at <http://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/threeEssays.html#barthes>) The essay later appeared in Barthes's *Image Music Text* available at <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Barthes-Work-to-Text.pdf>. (see above 502 n.60. See also Barthes's 'From Work to Text', 155–64).

«auteur» which, I suppose, is the ‘writing subject’.<sup>70</sup> His endorsement by allusion to and rather envious qualification of Barthes’s (uncited) essay concludes:

l’auteur ... est un certain principe fonctionnel par lequel, dans notre culture, on délimite, on exclut, on sélectionne ... L’auteur est donc la figure idéologique par laquelle on conjure la prolifération du sens.<sup>71</sup>

‘Tout cela est connu’ Foucault claimed in the lecture, ‘il y a beau temps que la critique et la philosophie ont pris acte de cette disparition ou de cette mort de l’auteur’.<sup>72</sup>

On peut dire d’abord que l’écriture d’aujourd’hui s’est affranchie du thème de l’expression : elle n’est référée qu’à elle-même, et pourtant, elle n’est pas prise dans la forme de l’intériorité; elle s’identifie à sa propre extériorité déployée.<sup>73</sup>

Remarkably, just as Foucault sought to contract ‘la fonction «auteur»’ to the limits of the text itself, so the text was limited to ‘poetic or fictional texts’<sup>74</sup>—an even deeper subversion than Barthes’. Happy to see what he called ‘cette catégorie fondamentale de la critique

<sup>70</sup> *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 63. 3 (juillet-septembre 1969), 73–104: see e.g., 83. See also <http://1libertaire.free.fr/MFoucault319.html>

<sup>71</sup> ‘Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?’, at <http://1libertaire.free.fr/MFoucault349.html>. ‘The Author ... is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes and chooses: [...] The author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning’. See ‘What Is an Author?’, in Harari, 141–16 (159). Hereafter Harari.

<sup>72</sup> <http://1libertaire.free.fr/MFoucault349.html>. ‘None of this is recent; criticism and philosophy took note of the disappearance—or death—of the author some time ago’. See Harari, 143.

<sup>73</sup> <http://1libertaire.free.fr/MFoucault319.html>. ‘First of all, we can say that today’s writing has freed itself from the dimension of expression. Referring only to itself; but without being restricted to the confines of its interiority, writing is identified with its own unfolded exteriority’. See Harari, 142.

<sup>74</sup> <http://1libertaire.free.fr/MFoucault319.html>. *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie*, 63. 3 (juillet-septembre 1969), 73–104 at 85. ‘[L]iterary discourses came to be accepted only when endowed with the author function. We now ask of each poetic or fictional text: From where does it come, who wrote it, when, under what circumstances, or beginning with what design? The meaning ascribed to it and the status or value accorded it depend on the manner in which we answer these questions’ (Harari, 149). One wonders what would Foucault have made of autobiographical writings and other texts supportive of an *oeuvre*?

«l'homme-et-l'oeuvre»<sup>75</sup> (i.e., of the Lansonian approach) blown away, he also triumphantly claimed that '[a] theory of the work does not exist'. From the perspective offered by authors such as Eliot and Yeats, who themselves had a sense of their 'work' as larger than their 'works', and who wrote intimately about their own relation with their 'author-function', Foucault's theorizing seems not engage with the record. It is still something of a surprise that neither Foucault nor those who immediately took him up paused to test the newly-minted distinction between author and author function against the record left by authors themselves. As Sean Burke remarked 'one must be deeply *auteurist* to call for the "Death of the Author"'.<sup>76</sup>

#### LIVING TESTIMONIES FROM DEAD AUTHORS

Some hardy perennials from Yeats, T. S. Eliot and Seamus Heaney stand in contrast to the once fashionable and now distinctly *passé* news from France. Eliot and Heaney followed Yeats in discussing their own intentions in the light of their own *praxis*, and did so in numerous contexts conscious of those they saw as their forerunners. In 1919, T. S. Eliot had offered perhaps the most precisely-thought and impersonally expressed account of the poet's relationship with his implied author. 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' starts by considering the relation to the tradition into which new work interposes itself. Eliot finds both what we might call his 'poet' and his 'implied poet' when he insists that

[n]o poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead

<sup>75</sup> I.e., the 'fundamental category of "the-man-and-his-work criticism"'. See 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?', *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie*, 63. 3 (juillet-septembre 1969), 73-104 (77).

<sup>76</sup> Sean Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 27. This outstanding book is one of the very few theoretical rebuttals of the post-structuralist attempt to 'disappear' the author.

poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead.<sup>77</sup>

If '[h]onest criticism and sensitive appreciation' are to be 'directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry', the activity demands the widest of contexts. The 'importance of the relation of the poem to other poems by other authors' is well-nigh limitless. Its scope, Eliot declared, is 'the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written'. Eliot might be thought to have been very much on the side of what I have called the 'empowered reader', but his thought is in fact focused on that 'aspect of this Impersonal theory of poetry ... the relation of the poem to its author' and so the gravity of his discourse is addressed to poets rather than to readers.

Within this suddenly enlarged field, the poet must strike a startling posture, the very opposite of self-assertion: '[t]he progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality' and in setting himself or herself as an artist in 'relation to the sense of tradition', the poet is engaged in a 'process of depersonalization' even when he or she 'exclusively operate(s) upon personal experience.

... the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material ... Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.<sup>78</sup>

Halting at that frontier of metaphysics or mysticism (Yeats's point of departure in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* [1918], which almost wholly baffled Eliot when he reviewed it, twice), Eliot confines himself to the 'practical conclusions as can be applied by the responsible person

<sup>77</sup> See T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber & Faber, 3rd enlarged ed., 1951), 13–22 (15). See also *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, ed. Anthony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 106, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/32768>. Hereafter *Perfect Critic*.

<sup>78</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 17–21, *Perfect Critic*, 111.

interested in poetry'. To 'divert interest from the poet to the poetry is a laudable aim', he thought, but

very few know when there is expression of significant emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet. The emotion of art is impersonal.<sup>79</sup>

Behind this insistent remark, I detect that approval which Eliot had given to the 'wholly delightful' sentence he had found (one of three) in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* when he had reviewed it for *The Egoist*:

It is not permitted to a man, who takes up pen or chisel, to seek originality, for passion is his only business.<sup>80</sup>

Drawing what he called a 'suggestive analogy' from the operation of a catalyst in a chemical process<sup>81</sup> Eliot saw 'the mind of the poet' as

... the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, *the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which*

<sup>79</sup> *Selected Essays*, 22, *Perfect Critic*, 112. The formula overstates its case in its design to repulse prospective biography (a reasonable hostility for an author in his very early thirties): the pain in its last sentence has become easier to understand with posthumous biographies of Eliot and his wife. Yeats's suppression of biography was rather less fierce. When Austin Clarke sought to probe the basis in Yeats's emotional history of the triangle behind the love poems of *The Wind Among the Reeds* (and thus learn the identity of Olivia Shakespear) in the early 1930s, Yeats reacted with "Sir, are you trying to pry into my private life?" ... Then, seeing my startled expression, he must have felt he had gone too far for, in a trice, he had become confidential and, smiling pleasantly, continued with a vague wave of the hand, "Of course, if you wish to suggest something in your biography, you may do so, provided that you do not write anything that would give offense to any persons living". (*IC&R*, 2, 352).

<sup>80</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'Unsigned Reviews of Poetry and Prose by James Joyce, Clive Bell, T. Sturge Moore, and William Butler Yeats' *The Egoist*, 5 (June-July 1918), 87 *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905-1918*, ed. by Jewel Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2014), 106, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/32768>, 724-25, hereafter *Apprentice Years*.

<sup>81</sup> The example suggested is the role of 'finely filiated platinum' in the production of sulphurous acid from oxygen and sulphur dioxide.

creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.<sup>82</sup>

This catalytic operation allows Eliot to understand just how ‘the mind of the mature poet differs from that of the immature one not precisely in any valuation of “personality”, not being necessarily more interesting, or having “more to say”, but rather by being a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations’.

And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.<sup>83</sup>

We have already seen that Yeats’s intentions cover all aspects of his work, and that the ‘intended, complete’ work comes from his profound consciousness of the doubleness of writer who sits down to breakfast and the ‘secret working mind’ (*VP* 639) within the text, the self ‘reborn as an idea, something intended, complete’ (*E&I* 509).<sup>84</sup> Both Yeats and Eliot had pondered rather profoundly the difference between the author and his or her ‘author-function’ well before Foucault came up with that repugnant abstraction, beguiling as it has proved as a point of reference in modern editorial theory. Each took particular interest in the presence and the limitations of his implied author in the act of revision. For Eliot:

There are two reasons why the writer of poetry must not be thought to have any great advantage. One is that a discussion of poetry such as this takes us far outside the limits within which a poet may speak with authority; the other is that the poet does many things upon instinct, for which he can give no better account than anybody else. A poet can try, of course, to give an honest report of the way in which he himself writes: the result may, if he is a good observer, be illuminating. And in one sense, but a very limited one, he

<sup>82</sup> See ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, *Selected Essays*, 18; *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition The Perfect Critic*, 130, emphasis added.

<sup>83</sup> Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 22; *The Perfect Critic* (as above), 112.

<sup>84</sup> *E&I* 509–10, emphasis added.



knows better what his poems ‘mean’ than can anyone else; he may know the history of their composition, the material which has gone in and come out in an unrecognisable form, and he knows what he was trying to do and what he was meaning to mean. But what a poem means is as much what it means to others as what it means to the author; and indeed, in the course of time a poet may become merely a reader in respect to his own works, forgetting his original meaning—or without forgetting, merely changing.<sup>85</sup>

Authors, says Seamus Heaney, are ‘rewarded by authority’—and not just in the civic sense, although authorship, to a writer such as Yeats, Eliot, or Heaney is accorded fame and public respect of a kind acknowledged in the Nobel Prize, by no means limited to writing, does impose the civic burdens of a pressing world. Yeats had acknowledged this when he wrote ‘In dreams begins responsibility’ (*VP* 269). Heaney’s thinking in *Stepping Stones* (1908—five years before his death—and made up of generous written responses to exhaustive questionnaire-interviews), shows that at every level his ‘authoriality’ (and so his authority) is enriched by the thinking of Yeats and Eliot as quoted above. Passages including the very ones I have quoted from Yeats’s ‘General Introduction’ and Eliot’s ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ are, for him, touchstones.<sup>86</sup> He writes with authority about his poetic intentions, sometimes in the sense of foreconceits. Heaney and his ‘implied author’ stood in conscious friendly partnership. Foucault’s boast that ‘today’s writing has freed itself from the theme of expression’ was triumphant, but it simply isn’t true. In providing all the raw materials for an *Autobiographia Literaria*, *Stepping Stones* epitomized, five years before Heaney’s death, the scandal which the facts of Authorship offer to ‘the death

<sup>85</sup> T. S. Eliot, ‘The Modern Mind’, in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), 130; *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition; English Lion, 1930–1933*, ed. by Jason Harding and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), 673. For the curious encounter between Eliot and Paul Valéry on the subject of authorial intention and rewriting, see Gould, “‘Stitching’”, 130 and n. 7.

<sup>86</sup> Reiterations of, e.g., Yeats’s distinction between the ‘bundle of accident and incoherence’ and the poet ‘reborn as an idea, something intended, complete’ may be traced through Denis O’Driscoll, *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008): see e.g., pp. 197, 465.

of the Author' and all 'Theory'—including editorial theory—which claims kinship with it.

#### WINDS OF CHANGE: 'THINGS THOUGHT TOO LONG'

Once one concedes that writing is also about something other than itself, it becomes easier to see that when new ideas have been imported without context from other cultures their fashionable dominance has been enlarged by their having been reduced to slogans.<sup>87</sup> Barthesian and Foucauldian rhetoric dominated Anglo-American critical thinking for a certain season in the assertive and confused *mêlée* of late twentieth century Anglo-American 'Theory', and in that context, the 'Death of the Author', offering 'empowerment' to all those committed to the beholder's share in critical thinking, was, for a season, well-nigh irresistible.

A good example would be found in Michel Foucault's intervention which deliberately shifted attention from 'livre' and 'oeuvre' to 'texte' and 'textualité'. It suddenly became fashionable for students to pick up the idiolect. Theory-speak insisted on 'texts' when such terms as 'poem', 'story', 'novel', 'play', 'essay' or 'book' were demanded by the context of their remarks: 'text' replaced 'work' with little sense that to do thus was as much an evasion as a deliberate choice.

In the same way, the Anglo-American *editorial* flirtation with the 'Death of the Author' emerged in a partial eclipse of authorial intention, even though neither Barthes nor Foucault seems to have envisaged or encouraged an editorial (rather than a readerly/critical) outcome for their theories. After Foucault, the emerging Franco-American critical tradition chose to forget that both theorists had claimed Mallarmé as their chief precursor, ignoring that the same Mallarmé had idealized the Book, *Le livre: instrument spirituel*. And

<sup>87</sup> I adopt the word from Hans Gabler whilst disagreeing with his overall point that 'If it can be said that Roland Barthes's 'death of the author' (1967) has, as a slogan, generally tended to overshadow Michel Foucault's significant elucidation of the 'author function' (1969), it would probably also be true that textual critics, and editors in particular, must be counted among those who still hold both tenets in scorn'. See his 'Beyond Author-Centricity in Scholarly Editing', *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 1. 1 (2012), 15–35 (22).

if books were an early casualty of the Barthesian-Foucauldian critical tradition, it is fair to ask how Historical Bibliography and ‘Theory’—that critical tradition in which I include the editorial thinking and practice of textual theorists who invoke the names of Barthes and Foucault—now stand in relation to each other, especially regarding the case of Yeats?

The rethinking of Anglo-American editorial theory had gone in parallel with the dominance of Foucault and Barthes in French critical theory. Within Anglo-American editorial practice, the eclectic tradition of W. W. Greg and Fredson Bowers had had an iron grip, but ‘things thought too long’ could be ‘no longer thought’ (*VP* 564). Editors and bibliographers such as G. Thomas Tanselle, James Thorpe, Philip Gaskell, D. F. McKenzie and Jerome J. McGann formulated editorial approaches as Historical Bibliography was being restructured as the History of the Book. Some of their most profound thought was given over to the problem of authorial intention and the imperatives it raises for practising editors working with modern authors, for whom extensive author/publisher archives are extant and the evidence points to the ‘social text’.<sup>88</sup> In such cases, verifiable evidence of the interconnexions between writers, literary agents, publishers (and above all, publishers’ readers), printers, is recoverable in the form of contracts, costings, letters between the various parties, proofs, book designs and samples of book production, all of which demonstrate how intention is ‘socialized’ in the publishing process. Intention as authorial delegation and authorial expectation<sup>89</sup> offers trails of supporting evidence to show the academic editor just how the texts in printed editions and the forms of the books in which they

<sup>88</sup> See G. Thomas Tanselle, ‘Issues in Bibliographical Studies since 1942’, in Peter Davison (ed.), *The Book Encompassed: Studies in Twentieth-Century Bibliography* (Cambridge, 1992), 24–40; James Thorpe’s *Principles of Textual Criticism* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1972); D. F. McKenzie’s ground-breaking Panizzi Lectures at the British Library (1985), later published as *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (London: British Library, 1986; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); Philip Gaskell, *From Writer to Reader: Studies in Editorial Method* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

<sup>89</sup> On editorial expectation, see G. Thomas Tanselle’s important summary in ‘Issues in Bibliographical Studies since 1942’, cited in previous note, at 33–34.

appear had been arrived at. Above all, the pragmatism of the new Anglo-American editorial theorists appears unchallengeable.

[T]he editor should not base his work on *any* predetermined rule or theory. In general he will try to produce an edited text that is free from accidental error and from unauthorized alteration, and is presented in a way that is convenient for its intended readers. Beyond this every case is unique and must be approached with an open mind.<sup>90</sup>

G. Thomas Tanselle widens this pragmatism:

Failure to recognize that different kinds of edition may be required to satisfy different historical interests has weakened many of the editorial debates of the past half-century.<sup>91</sup>

It is here that the case of Yeats enters into the theoretical debate. The case is that of Yeats's *The Poems: A New Edition*, commissioned in 1976 and published in 1983–1984. Richard J. Finneran had edited it on an avowedly intentionalist set of principles as the first volume of a new 'final text', annotated, *Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*. In deciding on the overall arrangement and major copy-text for that volume, and setting a textual blue-print for the series, Finneran argued that the *two* competing arrangements of the poems sanctioned by Yeats in the Thirties offered

not merely two different 'arrangements', but two different incarnations of the archetypal 'Sacred Book' of the poems, thus two different experiences of reading Yeats and of attempting to come to terms with his massive achievement. Which plan is in fact Yeats's 'final intention'?<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup> See Gaskell's series of detailed case studies *From Writer to Reader: Studies in Editorial Method* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), vii.

<sup>91</sup> See G. Thomas Tanselle's summary in 'Issues in Bibliographical Studies since 1942', cited above, at 33–34.

<sup>92</sup> See Finneran, *Editing Yeats's Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 15. Fredson Bowers extended Greg's classic endorsement of editorial judgement and eclectic practice from 'The Rationale of Copytext' (1949): see Greg's *Collected Papers*, ed. by J. C. Maxwell (Oxford, 1966), 374–91. Bowers established 'final intention' (or its nearest approximation) as the editorial goal of the Center for Editions of American Authors: see 'Some Principles for Scholarly Editions of Nineteenth-Century American Authors', *Studies in Bibliography*, 17 (1964), 223–28. See also G. Thomas Tanselle's 'The Editorial Problem of Final Intention' *Studies*

We will return below to that so-called ‘archetypal “Sacred Book”’ below.<sup>93</sup> Finneran’s reading of the Archive was challenged by my argument that he had not fully considered its evidences and had made the wrong choice of copytext for the bulk of the task, a challenge which set off a ten-year controversy.<sup>94</sup> That controversy was cited rather more often than discussed with reference to the relevant literature. In *A Critique of Textual Criticism* (1983) Jerome McGann had offered various qualifications to the ‘ideology’ of an ‘author’s final intentions’ in the general business of establishing copytext. Gesturing to ‘a storm of scholarly dispute’ after the appearance of *The Poems: a New Edition* (1983), McGann devoted a couple of pages of *The Textual Condition* (1991) to the ‘notorious case of Yeats’ as an example to ‘indicate how and why to concept “author’s (final) intentions)” cannot be used to determine copytext’, concluding ‘Suffice it to say that no one editing Yeats, given the state of the archive as it is presently known, could use “author’s (final) intentions” as the determinative criterion for deciding on copytext for many, perhaps most, of the poems, and especially the so-called *Last Poems*’, says McGann, warily gesturing to Richard Finneran’s accompanying volume, *Editing Yeats’s Poems*.<sup>95</sup>

*in Bibliography*, 29 (1976), 167–21r. Some editors still consider this essay the definitive analysis of the subject: see T. H. Howard-Hill, ‘Theory and Praxis in the Social Approach to Editing’, *Text* 5 (1991), 31–46 (40).

<sup>93</sup> Yeats’s catchphrase ‘Sacred Book’ is glossed in his work neither by Finneran in *Editing Yeats’s Poems* nor by the authority from whom he borrows it, Hugh Kenner, in his ‘The Sacred Book of the Arts’, *Irish Writing* (W. B. Yeats: A Special Number), 31 (Summer 1955), 24–35. Kenner applies it to his interpretation of Yeats’s poem ordering in certain of his books: see 521–23 and Gould, ‘Resurrection’, 105–08.

<sup>94</sup> See ‘The Editor Takes Possession’, *The Times Literary Supplement* 4239 (29 June 1984), 731–33. This review of Richard J. Finneran (ed.), *The Poems of W. B. Yeats: A New Edition* (London: Macmillan; New York: The Macmillan Press 1984); Richard J. Finneran, *Editing Yeats’s Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1983); A. Norman Jeffares, *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1984) led to numerous letters and responses in the *TLS* (e.g., 4345, 10 August 1984, 893, concluding 21 September 1984, 1055. For a bibliography of the entire controversy to 1994 see Gould, ‘Resurrection’, 133–34.

<sup>95</sup> Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition*, 62–63.

‘Final intention’—rightly in my view—had been Finneran’s criterion in his choice of principal copy-text, even if—disastrously—he had failed to see that the *Collected Poems* was a stop-gap, a ‘radial development’ (to use McGann’s term<sup>96</sup>) of Yeats’s larger publishing programme during the Depression. Mrs Yeats and Thomas Mark had left plenty of evidence that the decision to end the *Last Poems* volume-unit with ‘Under Ben Bulben’ was her decision on his suggestion, despite Yeats’s placement of the poem at the beginning of *Last Poems and Two Plays*. Mrs Yeats and the publisher’s reader were following the convention of placing a funerary poem or an epitaph at the end of a collected edition. I return to this matter below, and mark here only her candour.

There is, by contrast, absolutely no evidence that Yeats’s views were not followed in the preferral of the lifetime array of volume units for the postponed *Edition de Luxe* seven-volume project over the two-part (‘Lyrical’ and ‘Narrative and Dramatic’) arrangement of 1933. In the court-room drama conjured by Richard Finneran, the ‘onus of proof’ must lie with those who prefer the arrangement of the two part ‘radial development’ and thereby imply that Mrs Yeats and Thomas Mark did not carry through Yeats’s wishes.<sup>97</sup>

The sub-title of the ‘Prologomena’ to both *Editing Yeats’s Poems* and *Editing Yeats’s Poems: a Reconsideration* is ‘The Myth of the Definitive Edition’. The argument there is that the so-called ‘Definitive Edition’ of 1949 was not definitive because of the posthumous work on text and poem order by Yeats’s delegates, George Yeats and Thomas Mark. Both *Editing Yeats’s Poems* and *Editing Yeats’s Poems: a Reconsideration* warm to this theme.

Yeats died on January 28, 1939. He had not been long in his temporary resting-place at Roquebrune before the process began of—not to put too fine a point on it—corrupting the texts which he had worked so hard to perfect.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>97</sup> See ‘Appendix Six’, *passim* but esp. 735–36, and ‘Resurrection’, esp. 126–28.

<sup>98</sup> Richard Finneran, *Editing Yeats’s Poems*, 30; *Editing Yeats’s Poems: A Reconsideration*, 39.

Avoiding the names of the agents who set such a process in motion is a sign not of delicacy but of the ‘othering’ of Yeats’s wife, executrix and publisher’s reader in this Gothic sentence. Elsewhere<sup>99</sup> I have suggested that there are only two possible scenarii, a comic one in which the incompetent executrix and publisher get everything wrong, and a gothic one in which they work to undermine Yeats’s intentions, but, from the above, the latter would seem the stuff of Professor Finneran’s conclusions. There can be little point in defending the term ‘Definitive Edition’, but once one begins to investigate *why* its dislodgement had seemed to symbolise for Richard Finneran something larger, one is filled with dismay at his isolationist lack of empathy with the world of European publishing before, during, and after the War, and the predicament in which Mrs Yeats found herself.

By the time the controversy had been running for six years, *Editing Yeats’s Poems: A Reconsideration* (1990) had erased the passage, substituting a new angry chapter (7), ‘The Order of the Poems’, which descends to a coarsely-drafted letter as if from Yeats himself, to represent the ‘quasi-chronologists’,<sup>100</sup> in an attempt to obliterate the criterion of ‘final intention’.<sup>101</sup> Looking no further than the American theorists McGann and Hershel Parker, and finding that they ‘agree that the concepts of “final intentions” and “definitive edition” are no longer telling’, Finneran proceeds to undercut the entire reasoning behind his own choice of principal copy-text. No published or proposed edition of the Thirties he avers,

can be said to be ‘definitive’ or to represent ‘[Yeats’s] final intentions’. Even were we to replace ‘final intentions’ by ‘last known intentions’, and even if we somehow could resolve the question of documentary versus non-documentary evidence, those intentions are not necessarily identical with whatever Yeats might have desired in a Platonic world where the Sacred Book of his poems could be inscribed [*sic*] without mortal interference.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Gould, ‘Resurrection’, 126–28.

<sup>100</sup> See *Editing Yeats’s Poems: A Reconsideration* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 155.

<sup>101</sup> For a comprehensive review of the differences between these two versions of the same book, see my own ‘Yeats Deregulated’, *YA* 356–72.

<sup>102</sup> In *Editing Yeats’s Poems: A Reconsideration* (London: Macmillan, 1990), Finneran re-engages in the controversy, conflating volume arrangement with what he calls poem order, see e.g., 152–59.

The full (and ‘vexatious’) history of the use of the word ‘definitive’ in relation to projects and published volumes of Yeats’s works could have been traced in ‘Appendix Six’ of the Jeffares edition, *Yeats’s Poems* (1989), though to have done so would have been to recognize that there was a powerful countervailing argument.<sup>103</sup> The term ‘complete and definitive’ was first used in a letter from Harold Macmillan to Mrs Yeats of 8 February 1939, and the words were also used in a ‘Preliminary Notice’<sup>104</sup> headed ‘The Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats’ which was released to the trade press before April 4, 1939.<sup>105</sup> Thereafter ‘A DEFINITIVE EDITION’ was used in the published prospectus for *The Poems* (1949) but not in the volumes themselves. It would seem that the application of the phrase ‘The Definitive Edition’ to those volumes did not begin until they were thus described in the 1951 first edition of Allan Wade’s *Bibliography*.<sup>106</sup>

#### SACRED WRIT

What was, however, disturbing, is that this second reference to the ‘Sacred Book’ apparently promotes it from loosely ‘archetypal’ (in the casual, modern sense) into the ‘Platonic’ world of pure forms. This would be simply rather silly (no one who queried Finneran’s choices of copy texts based any of their arguments upon any such ‘Platonic world’ or upon immortal inscription) were it not inbred and confused. For the archetypal “Sacred Book” invoked here does not refer to the Mallarméan thinking of Yeats, which—I reiterate—he never applied to his own poems, but reserved for ‘the new sacred

<sup>103</sup> Appendix Six: The Definitive Edition: a History of the Final Arrangement of Yeats’s Work’, in Jeffares’s *Yeats’s Poems* (1989, 3rd rev. ed., 1996), 706–49.

<sup>104</sup> The copy sent to John Hall Wheelock by Charles Kingsley together with a clipping from *The Bookseller* (30 March 1939, 501) is filed in the Scribner Archive at Princeton, 4 April 1939. An early proof of this prospectus, leaving a blank space where the word ‘Collected’ would appear, was sent to George Yeats on 28 February 1939 (BL Add. MS 55820 ff. 203–05), and returned with her annotations and is now filed at BL Add. MS 55890.

<sup>105</sup> *NLI* 30248; *BL Add MS*. 55819 ff. 189–90.

<sup>106</sup> Allan Wade, *A Bibliography of the Writings of W. B. Yeats* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1951), Items 209–10 (2094–05). See also ‘Appendix Six’, 732–38.



book, of which all the arts are beginning to dream'.<sup>107</sup> Instead, it is the opportunistic title of an essay (1955 and much reprinted) by Hugh Kenner. Without bothering to cite Yeats's prose works and thus recover the contexts wherein Yeats used the phrase, Kenner simply took the phrase on trust from the table-talk of Ezra Pound.

Against the poet as force of nature [Yeats] placed of course the poet as deliberate personality, and correspondingly against the usual 'Collected Poems' (arranged in the order of composition) he placed the *oeuvre*, the deliberated artistic Testament, a division of that new Sacred Book of the Arts of which, Mr. Pound has recalled, he used to talk.<sup>108</sup>

Further to my discussion of this essay, its premiss and its self-subversion in my 'Resurrection' essay,<sup>109</sup> I reread it here from Kenner's opening 'Catechism', a faux-Socratic dialogue between Q, a patronizing professor, and A, a student of some promise. The student is sent away, peremptorily, to write an essay ('And please refrain from putting in many footnotes that tire the eyes', 577), which duly follows in two further parts. Either the student wishes merely to tickle the professor's vanity, or Kenner is unable to maintain the student's independence. Critics write 'bastard biography' and a 'Pécuchet's industry' is the command economy of 'exegetes' who copy 'parallel passages from *A Vision* (first and second versions), from letters and diaries, from unpublished drafts, and occasionally from other poems' (577), Kenner's contempt is for biography (especially the work of Jeffares) and exegesis (Jeffares's again) other than his own.

With admirable economy, the student then suggests that 'the place to look for light on any poem is in the adjacent poems, which

<sup>107</sup> See *E&I* 162–63, 187.

<sup>108</sup> 'The Sacred Book of the Arts', *Irish Writing* (W. B. Yeats: A Special Number) 31 (Summer 1955), 24–35 (32); *Sewanee Review* 64. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 1956), 574–90; collected in Kenner's *Gnomon: Essays on Contemporary Literature* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1958), 9–29; in John Unterecker ed., *Yeats: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), 10–22; in Richard J. Finneran ed., *Critical Essays on W. B. Yeats* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1986), 9–19; and in David Pierce ed., *W. B. Yeats: Critical Assessments* (Mountfield, Robertsbridge: Helm Information, 2000), II, 545–55. Except where otherwise indicated, quotations are taken from the *Sewanee Review* version, as here (585).

<sup>109</sup> See Gould, 'Resurrection', 'Hugh Kenner's Apocalypse', 105–8.

Yeats placed adjacent to it because they belonged there', *The Tower* offering the evidence that 'Yeats was an architect, not a decorator; he didn't accumulate poems, he wrote books' (578). Kenner—his pretence of a student cannot sustain itself—then claims that, at least from *Responsibilities* to *A Full Moon in March* the individual volume rather than the poem or the sequence is the unit 'in which to inspect and discuss his development' (578). Through brief discussions of poem order in other collections, Kenner extrapolated to the overall 'life-time arrangement' of the 1949 'definitive edition' which begins with *The Wanderings of Oisín* of 1889 and ends with Yeats's epitaph, seeing it as a biblical structure where the various books offer a

dramatic revelation ... Each volume of his verse, in fact, is a large-scale work, like a book of the Bible. And as the Bible was once treated by exegetists as the self-sufficient divine book mirroring the other divine book, Nature, but possessing vitality independent of natural experience, so Yeats considered his Sacred Book as similar to 'life' but radically separated from it, 'mirror on mirror mirroring all the show' (588).

What *we* might call the volume's 'closure' Kenner inflated into 'an apocalypse':

The last division of his Sacred Book closes with an apocalypse, superhuman forms riding the wintry dawn, Michaelangelo electrifying travellers with his Creation of Adam, painters revealing heavens that opened. (587)

In the *Irish Writing* and *Sewanee Review* versions, Kenner's sentence quoted above about the volumes 'at least from *Responsibilities* to *A Full Moon in March*' had subtended to it a bashful footnote reading 'It isn't clear how much, if any, of *Last Poems* was arranged by Yeats *himself*, except that he wanted "Under Ben Bulben" to go at the end'.<sup>110</sup> Nobody seemed to notice that the note had begun to undermine the epic Hollywood 'apocalyptic' argument of the essay. Worse was to follow, when in, complimenting Kenner on his essay in 1956, George Yeats told Kenner that it was not in fact the case that Yeats had wanted 'Under Ben Bulben' to appear as the final poem

<sup>110</sup> *Sewanee Review* 578. In the *Irish Writing* version '*himself*' is stressed, in italics (27).

in his collected *Poems*. Kenner remained troubled enough to modify that note in reprintings. In the *Gnomon* (1958) and the Unterecker reprintings it is shortened to 'It isn't clear how much, if any, of *Last Poems* was arranged by Yeats himself'.<sup>111</sup> If this had not been enough to startle even tired eyes, that footnote itself had a further nervous history. In Finneran's *Critical Essays on W. B. Yeats* the note had praised the volume's editor:

In *Editing Yeats's Poems* ... 65, Richard J. Finneran has offered conclusive evidence supporting Curtis Bradford's conjecture that Yeats was not responsible for the contents or order of *Last Poems* & Plays (1940).<sup>112</sup>

By 1990, in *Editing Yeats's Poems: A Reconsideration*, a letter of Kenner's of 1984 is quoted, offering his memories of what Mrs Yeats had said in 1956:

But I had incautiously said that WBY wanted 'Under Ben Bulben' to come at the end, and that, she stated, was not so ... [S]he gave no further details, and I was insufficiently informed to know what to ask'.<sup>113</sup>

In perhaps the most reductive document in the entire controversy, Hugh Kenner's 'Whose Yeats is it, anyway?', it becomes apparent that Kenner had indeed consulted the *Yeats's Poems* appendix from December 1989, before concluding that the 'Jeffares edition is chronological, the Finneran is not. I find it's not something I can get agitated about', a remark which deflates the rapture of 'The Sacred Book of the Arts'.<sup>114</sup> By 2000, the note to the essay had been expanded again; its second sentence an ill-fit with the first:

It isn't clear how much, if any, of *Last Poems* was arranged by Yeats *himself* except that he wanted 'Under Ben Bulben' to go at the end. I learned many years ago that this was untrue. Yeats wanted 'Under Ben Bulben' at the beginning of *Last Poems*, where the Finneran edition has placed it. HK, 1999]. [*sic*].<sup>115</sup>

<sup>111</sup> *Gnomon*, *op. cit.*, 14; John Unterecker ed., *Yeats: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 13.

<sup>112</sup> See Finneran ed., *Critical Essays on W. B. Yeats*, 20.

<sup>113</sup> Kenner's letter to Richard Finneran, 2 August 1984, is quoted in *Editing Yeats's Poems: A Reconsideration*, at 165–66.

<sup>114</sup> *New York Times Book Review* 27 May 1990, 10.

<sup>115</sup> David Pierce ed., *W. B. Yeats: Critical Assessments*, II, 555.

Neither the Jeffares edition nor the Albright edition is cited; all the more regrettable in that the former of these includes Mrs. Yeats's reply of 14 June 1939 to a suggestion of Thomas Mark's is given:

Certainly put 'Under Ben Bulben' at the end of the volume. Its present position was WBY's, but I t[h]ink now it should undoubtedly be at the end as you suggest.<sup>116</sup>

Above all, the misapplied 'Sacred Book' in Kenner's title seems designed to confer the authority of a *fin-de-siècle* concept of Yeats's upon Kenner's own thinking. The resulting implication is false coin: to Yeats, his own writing and shaping of his assembled poems were never intended to realise a new 'Sacred Book' of his own. But Kenner's misapplication of a leading *fin de siècle* concept of Yeats's own has been influential: indeed, for Finneran, Kenner's essay *itself* is 'sacred writ' for some inner order whom Finneran calls 'Yeatsians', at a fourth remove from the poet's words in context.<sup>117</sup> The resultant rhetorical appeal to 'Yeatsians', couched in 'Yeatsese' is an appeal not to Holy Writ, but to the Dictionary of Received Ideas.

Given such a clarion, it is puzzling that the editors of the new *Collected Works* have applied the thinking behind a Mallarméan 'book' so patchily in regard to annotational policy. To grapple textually with such a 'Great Work' requires interpretation without hostility to the record of acts and decisions of previous editors working in very different circumstances. The recovery of 'intention as expectation' demands patience and resists adversarial inquisition. It is unrecognizable in the courtroom drama inflicted upon Yeats's widow and publisher's reader in, e.g., Finneran's 'The Order of Yeats's Poems'.<sup>118</sup> The archive considered as a whole is only 'patient of interpretation' (to use A. N.

<sup>116</sup> NLI 30248. See Jeffares's edition of *Yeats's Poems*, Appendix 6, 737–38 and *passim* for the archival history. Jeffares's volume had been published in 1989, but had little or no impact in America, where the debate remained resolutely isolationist.

<sup>117</sup> See Richard J. Finneran "From Things Becoming to the Thing Become": The Construction of W. B. Yeats's "The Tower", *South Atlantic Review* 63.1 (Winter, 1998), 35–55 (35–37) where an attempt is made to qualify the idea by a review of Yeats's range of orderings for *The Tower*, but the authority of 'sacred writ' and 'sacred doctrine' itself is unquestioned.

<sup>118</sup> *Irish University Review* 14.2 (Autumn 1984), 165–76. The essay conflates 'poem order' with 'volume arrangement'.

Whitehead's remark as adapted by Frank Kermode<sup>119</sup>) if its scholars are as patient in acknowledgement of the circumstances of acts done in a publishing house in the 1930s and 40s under circumstances vastly different from those which obtained in academic debate fifty years later. Unless the reality of those circumstances is acknowledged, then the textual theory brought to bear upon those acts and decisions is inadequate to the thinking of which it seeks to take account. When the theory of expectation is itself tolerant (and able to account for occasional silences in the record), interpretation of the case of Yeats's texts points only in one direction.

Shrewdly or evasively, McGann found the controversy 'moot' while reviewing the two editions in 1990.<sup>120</sup> 'Moot' or mute, he adroitly avoided a summer's wrangle in the correspondence columns of the *TLS*. He conceded that Yeats's own statements had valid borne out his theories of his works as his 'permanent self', but his mind was really running on his own preoccupation, the solution he at the time felt that hypermedia archives offered for editorial dilemmas. For

'writers who exhibit not merely an extreme interest in finished forms ... but who obsessively rework their texts in an effort to arrive at their impossible (and changing) dreams' an electronic edition would try 'to co-ordinate and therefore go beyond all the scattered texts that have descended to us, or that might be (but are not yet) constructed.'<sup>121</sup>

Short-circuiting the debate over final intention and to create access to all textual states, including manuscripts, McGann proposed a 'reading text', 'either the Finneran or the Jeffares/Gould constructions would do', combined with a disk-borne hypermedia archive of all states of Yeats's texts including Yeats's abandoned texts. This would be

<sup>119</sup> '... Nature is patient of interpretation in terms of Laws which happen to interest us in A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* London: Penguin, 1933 (1943 ed.), 134; also slightly misquoted in Frank Kermode, *Puzzles and Epiphanies, Essays and Reviews, 1958-1961* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 50. I am grateful to Colin McDowell for tracking Kermode's remark to Whitehead's exact context.

<sup>120</sup> Jerome J. 'Which Yeats edition?', *TLS* 2, 17 May 1990, 493-49.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

one image of Yeats's desire for what Gould names the definitive edition ... [I]t would stand more as an arbitrary point of departure than as a fixed point of reference: a certain place from which the reading and study of the Yeatsian texts might (but need not) begin.<sup>122</sup>

Finneran responded that:

In a future electronic edition ... no doubt ... the reader [will] ... toggle between ... competing formats. But even then, one version will presumably have to be the default arrangement ... yes, Virginia, short of the discovery of a lost codicil to Yeats's will or the reappearance of his supernatural Instructors, readers-and editors-must make such a choice ... our choice of formats has significant consequence for interpretation (*TI* 28–29).

Addressed to the University of Virginia at large with the Christmas cliché, an appeal to the Spirit World or a lost Will—I would have more sympathy with the argument but for this angry fancy. However regrettable his own choice had been, Finneran at least understood the responsibility to choose. McGann did not consider that the canon of poems is in fact a canon-within-an *oeuvre* within an *oeuvre*. Some texts have multiple existences at every level. While it is necessary that a variorum or hypermedia edition should include all abandoned versions, it would be hard to argue that this should happen in a *Collected Edition of the Works* which would elsewhere print lyrics rather pointedly never removed from the plays by Yeats himself, in their rightful contexts.

#### VAIN REPOSE

Twenty-five and more years on, it is no longer possible to kick an editorial problem into the digital future. Those—such as Jerome McGann—who have plausibly argued for digital solutions now have a more realistic sense of the present impracticality and inaccessibility of digital platforms, particularly those carried on CDs, for the common reader, and so a renewed understanding of why the reading of literature in print form is not going to wither away, and of the

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

necessity to reach those ‘common readers’ who will increasingly absorb books in e-book form, and who at present struggle with, for example, Kindle texts which for all the ease of reading footnotes and of looking up unfamiliar terms, convenient portability, and lower cost, suffer from very poor bibliographical standards.<sup>123</sup> Hugh Kenner had warned in 1955 against what is now the entry-level encounter with Yeats’s poems, ‘out of the context Yeats carefully provided’. Kenner’s ‘Anthology Appointed to be Taught in Colleges’ (577) has now been Nortonized, but even—perhaps especially—if a first reading of a poem has been googled from some stray website, fresh readers can be expected to require access to context and referral to cognate texts in the *oeuvre*.

For all the publicity given to it, the ‘notoriety’ of Yeats had surprisingly little impact among textual theorists, Paul Eggert has rightly welcomed the exemplary record of the archive found in James Pethica’s Cornell volume on the manuscripts of the *Last Poems*, observing how Pethica’s volume thus stands out from the others in that series.<sup>124</sup> Beyond Eggert, however, few who cite the case of Yeats seem to have conducted any independent review of the documentary record, nor even of the literature it has generated.

Among the Yeats scholars, Hazard Adams, the well-known critical theorist, published *The Book of Yeats’s Poems* in 1990, perhaps the first full-length study to apply the Kennerian paradigm of reading to Yeats’s poems after the appearance of *The Poems: A New Edition*. A critical study of the various volume units of Yeats’s poems, it offers a brief portentous survey, ‘Critical Constitution of the Book’. It then offers summaries of the opposed positions, based—it would seem—on the Finneran summaries in *Editing Yeats’s Poems* and a draft of part of *Editing Yeats’s Poems: A Reconsideration*, not at the time, yet published. Adams’s summaries seriously misapprehend the opposing arguments, even suggesting, for instance that those who supported the chronologically arranged volume-sequence had in fact wished

<sup>123</sup> I am deeply grateful to Professor W. H. O’Donnell for suggesting this to me, and much else, in his thoughtful reading of this essay in draft form.

<sup>124</sup> Paul Eggert, *Securing the Past: Conservation in Art, Architecture and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 205–6.

for a chronological arrangement of all poems according to date of composition.<sup>125</sup>

Adams loftily announced that the 'Book of Yeats's Poems' as he conceived it did not exist. He had evidently not looked at the Jeffares edition of 1989 which fulfils his demands for such an edition to the letter. Though careful with those trigger-happiest when reaching for 'smoking guns',<sup>126</sup> Adams in effect said 'a plague on both your houses', before opting for the lifetime chronological arrangement as the basis for his critical endeavour exactly. In acting so fully in character, he delighted those of us who then knew him, including his former Cornell colleague, the late Stephen Parrish, the co-general editor of the Cornell Yeats Manuscripts Series.<sup>127</sup>

The Yeats editor George Bornstein has written more widely upon editing and conceptualizing the texts of Yeats's poems, and is far happier than Finneran when it comes to bringing original contexts and materialities of publication to bear upon the interpretations of textual history.<sup>128</sup> In an essay entitled 'Constructing Literature: Empiricism, Romanticism, and Textual Theory', Bornstein admirably sought to apply 'traditional empirical standards' to 'different constructions' of literary traditions (such as Romanticism). His method was to 'ask how well each view fits the evidence, how much evidence contradicts each

<sup>125</sup> Hazard Adams, *The Book of Yeats's Poems* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1990), 15t.

<sup>126</sup> See Finneran, *Editing Yeats's Poems: A Reconsideration*, 152–53 and "From Things Becoming to the Thing Become", *op. cit.*, 49.

<sup>127</sup> For a more extended review, see my 'Yeats Deregulated', *YA9* 356–72. At the time, a copy of *Yeats's Poems* would have had to be purchased from the UK, Viacom/Paramount then (as Scribner, subsequently) denying easy access to American markets for Macmillan (London) books which had hitherto had virtually automatic co-publication in the States through Macmillan Inc.

<sup>128</sup> See, e.g., George Bornstein's chapters, 'Yeats and Textual Reincarnation: "When You Are Old" and "September 1913"' and 'Building Yeats's Tower / building modernism' in his *Material Modernism*, 46–64 and 65–82. The first of these chapters is also found in George Bornstein and Theresa Tinkle (eds.) *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), 223–48. Brendan MacNamee trudges in Bornstein's footsteps in "What then": Poststructuralism, Authorial Intention and W. B. Yeats' in *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 18 (2005), 215–26 has read few of the competing editions, and little of the accumulated literature.



view, and how internally consistent is each theory',<sup>129</sup> a procedure of exemplary reaction from such theoretical stances of the time as that of Frank Lentricchia, who 'conceive[d] of theory as a type of rhetoric' and sought 'not to find the foundation and the conditions of truth but to exercise power for the purpose of social change' claiming 'there is no such thing as eternally "true" theory'.<sup>130</sup>

Inconsistently, Bornstein seems content that what was at issue in the Yeats controversy was adequately summed up in the title of the Prologomena to both *Editing Yeats's Poems* and *Editing Yeats's Poems: a Reconsideration*, 'The Myth of the Definitive Edition',<sup>131</sup> and draws back from speculating where such thinking leaves Mrs Yeats and Thomas Mark. His co-edition (with Richard Finneran) of *Early Essays* takes as its copy-text the relevant part of *Essays* (1924), and the Editors' introduction claims

As with other volumes in the series, we have honored Yeats's final intentions as expressed by the written record. We thus use as copy-text the final versions of the essays as contained in *Essays* (1924).<sup>132</sup>

With this as their chief criterion in the choice of copy-text, Bornstein and Finneran fudge the issue by their own choice of words. That 'written record' which sounds so impressive is in fact meaningless, the archive, though recorded, is disavowed, so that the 'written record' is in fact 'the as-last-published-by-Yeats-himself record'. The 'final intentions' thus 'honoured' by their choice of copy-text is Yeats's 'last-published intention', the 'final versions of the essays as contained in *Essays* [1924]'.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>129</sup> George Bornstein, 'Constructing Literature: Empiricism, Romanticism, and Textual Theory' in Paul R. Gross, Norman Levitt, and Martin W. Lewis, *The Flight from Science and Reason* (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, distr. by The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 459–69 (160–61).

<sup>130</sup> Frank Lentricchia, *Criticism and Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 12, quoted in Bornstein 'Constructing Literature', 461.

<sup>131</sup> In his *Material Modernism*, Bornstein follows the Finneran debunking of the idea of one arrangement's being 'definitive' (38–39) without attempting to review the consequences, except in literary-critical terms.

<sup>132</sup> *CW4* 1.

Elsewhere *Early Essays* is said to ‘follow the principle of final *and expressed* authorial intention common to the collected edition’,<sup>133</sup> but even this is not accurate. Key volumes in the series were edited upon entirely different principles. *Autobiographies*, for instance, takes the 1955 Macmillan edition as its copy-text, and that includes ‘lifetime’ authorial delegation as well as posthumous work by Mrs Yeats and Thomas Mark. The point of departure for William H. O’Donnell’s textual introduction to the 1999 volume is the 1932–1936 proofs of the *Edition de Luxe*, worked on by Yeats, Mrs Yeats, and Thomas Mark, and the corrected page proofs of *Dramatis Personae* (1936)

that WBY did not himself see, but which he and Mrs Yeats authorized Thomas Mark to correct on his behalf. ... The editorial changes introduced in *Autobiographies* (1955) thus can be regarded as a continuation of the correction process evident on the 1932/1936 proofs for Volume VI of the *Edition de Luxe* ... *Autobiographies* (1955) thus is the best available basis for a text of *Autobiographies*. The practical result has been that this edition uses the text of *Autobiographies* (1955) with only thirteen emendations to the 156,000 words of text and three emendations to WBY’s notes.<sup>134</sup>

By contrast, Bornstein and Finneran’s copy-text choice for *Early Essays* would have us believe that that after 1924 Yeats did no work on the text of his essays and that all work delegated by him to Mrs Yeats, Thomas Mark is to be discounted. The introduction offers a brisk chronological guide to the various archives, ranging warily beyond the necessary history of Yeats’s *Essays*, but selectively omitting any evidence from parallel editions of the prose works, which does not support their case, including that of *Autobiographies* and *Mythologies* (2005, and published outside the *Collected Works* so as to be free from onerous and inappropriate editorial policies).

The ‘Note on the Text’ to *Early Essays* is even more suppressive, and the relevant paragraph concludes ‘We have not accepted the weak argument of posthumous delegated authority’.<sup>135</sup> But as we’ve seen, this is not, a matter of ‘*posthumous* delegated authority’ but of

<sup>133</sup> *CW4* 325, emphasis added.

<sup>134</sup> *CW3* 13–14.

<sup>135</sup> *CW4* 323–34.

lifetime actions by an author. Yeats delegated increasingly as his trust in Thomas Mark ('that admirable scholar' was Yeats term for him in a covering letter to Harold Macmillan and in the now lost letter offered Mark, as Mark claimed when he wrote to thank Yeats for his trust 'a free hand with the punctuation'. The whole correspondence can be followed in the 'Editorial Principles' section of the Introduction to *Mythologies* (2005) and there is little point in repeating the evidence here.<sup>136</sup>

Had the textual history of *Early Essays* been less selective, the comprehension of Yeats's working methods might well have been greater and the engagement with the work of delegates a little less cursory. Briefly, Yeats was content to leave to Thomas Mark the proposing of such textual emendations as his work across the full range of his work might suggest if uniformity between volumes were to be a consideration—as it was—to Yeats. The 1931–1932 proofs of *Mythologies AND The Irish Dramatic Movement* offer scores of examples of Yeats's marginal replies to Thomas Mark's suggestions. Here are a couple. Mark had questioned on the half-title of the volume whether before quoted speech the "He said" etc.' phrase should be followed

by either a comma or a colon in the text of this volume. Is it worth while to aim at any uniformity in this detail, as suggested, in the margins?

Yeats replied

I leave this to Macmillan's reader. I have accepted his suggestions where ever he has made the correction but I am a babe in such things. Some printers reader put in those colons W. B. Y.

This is but one of the many evidences of a textually embedded history of working with the publishing process itself in matters of prose punctuation. It stands as a rebuke to the imposed 'belief' of the editors of *Early Essays* (adopted from Curtis Bradford's *Yeats at Work*) that 'Yeats often followed "rhetorical as opposed to grammatical

<sup>136</sup> *Myth 2005* lxxxvii–cx, esp. at lxx, xciv–xcv.

punctuation”<sup>137</sup> and their consequent practice of an ahistorically ‘light’ punctuation. Under the intense pressure of new work in poor health, Yeats was clear about his reliance on Mark to ‘get his work into the final form he wished’. As Mrs Yeats on 17 April 1939 reminded Mark,

WBY wrote to you in September (or October) 1932 about punctuation and generally asking your help, *without which he knew he could never get his work into the final form he wished* [emphasis added]. There are, however, a few metrical ‘tricks’ as he called them, and tricks of repetition of words and phrases, deliberately used, which we should, I think, carefully preserve.<sup>138</sup>

Again, when Mark sought guidance on the spelling and hyphenization of Irish names such as ‘Knock-na-gur’ (or ‘Knocknagur’) and asked in the margin of *The Celtic Twilight* ‘One word? Like Knocknarea Knockfein in Vol. I’. Yeats first replied ‘Yes. W. B. Y’ before adding in a long dependant bubble,

It is difficult to decide on uniform usage. The ^ familiar words above are always written without hyphens. On the other hand the names of woods in Vol I 167 seem to require hyphens to help pronunciation & to mark the words they are compounded from. I would be glad if Macmillan’s reader would decide for me.<sup>139</sup>

The ‘Prefatory Note’ to and the ‘Editorial Principles and Note on the Text’ of the 2005 edition of *Mythologies* summarizes the evidence of Yeats’s delegation both in correspondence and in working practices for *Mythologies AND The Irish Dramatic Movement*. Calling for a

<sup>137</sup> CW4 324, quoting Curtis Bradford, *Yeats at Work* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), 14; cf., Yeats, who knew he needed help and was grateful to get it: ‘The correction of prose, because it has no fixed laws, is endless, a poem comes right with a click like a closing box’ (letter to Dorothy Wellesley, 8 September [1935] *CL IntelLex* 6335).

<sup>138</sup> NLI 30248. The letter about his ‘metrical tricks’ had been enclosed in one to Harold Macmillan of 8 September 1932 (BL Add. MS 55003, f. 136). See also *VSR2* xxii–xxiii on the late Jon Stallworthy’s report of a sight of this letter, subsequently lost. Mrs Yeats knew of it only through what is now *CL IntelLex* 5371, WB Y’s covering letter to Harold Macmillan.

<sup>139</sup> *Myth 2005* Plates 8 and 9.

revise of other volumes in the series on 5 July 1932, Yeats wrote to Harold Macmillan,

The volume called 'Mythologies' I need not see again. You reader can complete the revision better than I could.<sup>140</sup>

By selectively omitting evidence such as this, the chronological overview of the archive in *Early Essays* not only evades the issue of intention as expectation, but fails to understand Yeats's working methods with his prose in the creative economy forced upon a poet in unpropitious times, one near the end of his energies, 'old and ill' and yet summoning 'an old man's frenzy'.<sup>141</sup> In addition to prose requiring to be written (the general introduction and two others), there was prose to be rewritten or augmented, prose to be rationalized to avoid repetition, as we have seen with a passage common to *Autobiographies* and 'Dust hath closed Helen's Eye', and there was prose 'finished' in the sense only of being ready to be tidied up by delegates. *Early Essays* and *Mythologies* are in that category and were to be left safely to the publisher's reader. An excellent example comes, again on the fly title of the 1931/32 proofs of *Mythologies* where Mark offers Yeats the opportunity to regularize the usage of the title 'Saint' throughout, offering the choices 'S.', 'St.' or 'Saint' and Yeats replies 'use S.' How does such an instruction weigh up against Finneran's gothic charge that the delegates worked to undo Yeats's final intentions, 'corrupting the texts which he had worked so hard to perfect'?<sup>142</sup> My reply would be that Yeats delegated, and only wish to depart from delegated decisions when he sought to rewrite as distinct from correct.

#### LE DICTIONNAIRE DES IDÉES REÇUES

Barthes's 1967 polemic was a joyous piece of sixties antinomianism, designed to shake up a pedagogical system stifled by Lansonism.

<sup>140</sup> *Myth 2005* xxii and lxxxvii-cx, esp. xcii. These remarks should be read in the context of Mark's reply to Yeats's letter about his 'metrical tricks'.

<sup>141</sup> *VP* 632, 576.

<sup>142</sup> Richard Finneran, *Editing Yeats's Poems*, 30; *Editing Yeats's Poems: A Reconsideration*, 39.

Now that iconoclasm which ‘the age demanded’, has dwindled to a drollerie inscribed in the corner of the illuminated page of twentieth century literary history. One catch-cry remains arresting in retrospect. ‘A theory of the work does not exist, and the empirical task of those who naively undertake the editing of works often suffers in the absence of such a theory’, Barthes had warned, thinking of course of *oeuvre*.<sup>143</sup> Lacking any such theory, Yeats’s editors in the 1980s and later had no unified approach to the entire *Collected Works*, and their ‘empirical task’ certainly suffered from the ‘naivete’ of their undertaking. I well remember the earliest discussions of the project with Richard Finneran in the early 1970s, in London. Volumetrics seemed easy enough, Finneran was cheerfully Bowersite in his kneejerk preference for ‘last-published-in-the-author’s lifetime’ texts (which privileged the *Collected Poems* and *Collected Plays*), and told me that he thought little of the ‘Narrative and Dramatic’ poems anyway.

Very little at the time was known of the Macmillan Archive, and much that was not yet in the British Library was in an apple-barn at Birch Grove House in Sussex, the residence at the time of Harold Macmillan, later Lord Stockton. I was working there amongst the papers in order to finish my work on what became *The Secret Rose, Stories by Yeats: a Variorum Edition*, and interviewed him about his work and that of his publisher’s reader, Thomas Mark, with Yeats in the thirties. As my perspective on the value of the archive to editors grew, I think Finneran’s resolve to defy it only hardened. In *Editing Yeats’s Poems*, he projected his own critical doubts about the narrative and dramatic poems into an unconvincing little drama of what he thought Yeats’s own views of them might have been.

Moreover, it may well be that both Yeats and his publishers recognised that—with the arguable exceptions of ‘The Wanderings of Oisín’ and ‘The Shadowy Waters’—the narrative and dramatic poems were not among Yeats’s best and should be placed so as not to distract from his essentially

<sup>143</sup> See above 502 n. 60. When Barthes distinguished between ‘work’ and ‘text’ the manner in which he did so was remarkably at odds with the conclusions which anti-intentionalist theorists claimed to have drawn from the Barthesian/Foucauldian *fiat*. Perhaps his abstraction was lost upon those who sought to invoke that *fiat* in support of their bibliographical or editorial theory or practice.

lyrical achievement. It might also be suggested that the twofold division ... accords with Yeats's sense of antithesis as the dominant characteristic of reality'.<sup>144</sup>

Fifteen years later, Finneran was far readier to concede the subjectivity of editorial decision-making,<sup>145</sup> but even then, with numerous editors working away in comparative solitude, with never so much as an editorial conference, the enterprise was a world away from 'The Death of the Author'. The General Editors' ukase against intention-as expectation, their relegation of delegation, one might say, had yet the effect of downgrading the author to an 'author-function' without even the *esprit de corps* that a theory, any theory, might have brought to their work.

And yet, 'The Death of the Author' was so pre-disposed to power over those readers whom it actually impoverished in the name of self-empowerment, that it took no account whatsoever of authors' testimonies, and testaments. Neither Barthes nor Foucault could be said to have had editorial practice to the forefront of his mind. For Barthes 'the true locus of writing is reading' while Foucault did not even glance at international developments.<sup>146</sup> Both had played to the gallery of 'disempowered' readers in France: *la nouvelle critique* was to energize readers at the expense of writers. A mere critical constraint, Foucault banished authorial intention from scholarly attention And yet, for all that reader empowerment, the 'Death of the Author' itself died during the slow detumescence of 'Theory'.

<sup>144</sup> *Editing Yeats's Poems*, 15–16; see also 'Resurrection', 113–14, 121–22.

<sup>145</sup> Finneran remarks 'Only those who have not done any deny the subjective component of editorial practice' in his essay "From Things Becoming to the Thing Become": The Construction of W. B. Yeats's "The Tower", *op. cit.*, 49.

<sup>146</sup> Barthes wrote dismissively of New Criticism '... it is scarcely surprising not only that, historically, the reign of the Author should also have been that of the Critic ... criticism (even "new criticism") should be overthrown along with the Author'. See 'The Death of the Author', *Aspen*, 5–6, <http://www.ubu.com/aspn> and the particular double issue at <http://www.ubu.com/aspn/aspn5and6/threeEssays.html#barthes>. Foucault's 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?' does not invoke the problem of the 'intentional fallacy' in Anglo-American 'New Criticism'. See William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley 'The Intentional Fallacy', *The Sewanee Review* 54 (Summer 1946), 468–88, collected in *The Verbal Icon* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 2–18

Or so it had seemed. 'The Death of the Author' became a slogan in very different schools of thought in very different places. In France, poststructuralists of various allegiances used the term as shorthand for the limitations of the Lansonian view they sought to overturn. In as much as invocation of the names of Barthes and Foucault is still a preliminary rite in the writings of certain editorial theorists, it could be said that editorial theory remains an echo-chamber for increasingly distant signals. The slow tocsin from the funeral of the Author also rang for 'Authorial Intention' in Anglo-American editorial theory. Editors working in the tradition of Greg and Bowers clutched at its ramifications when seeking liberation from the obligations intention imposed in that tradition of editorial duty.<sup>147</sup> The reduction of the author to 'la fonction «auteur»'<sup>148</sup> enhanced the professional 'authority' of the editorial enterprise largely because it seemed to allow for the possibility of eliminating intention as a central problem of textual editing. American editorial thinking, traditionally in search of the professionalization of its business, easily adopted such ideas via the new Society for Textual Scholarship (1979-). Professionalism furthered editors' authority over texts, and many unhesitatingly unfurled their sails on the Foucauldian wind of change even as it ruffled the very idea of 'authority', 'authoriality' or 'authorialism'.<sup>149</sup> Richard Finneran, heavily embattled in 1991, reported back that 'final intentions ... a term once widely venerated'

<sup>147</sup> In an age of still expensive and inconvenient travel, the dispersed archive presented editors committed to critical consideration of authorial intention with onerous obligations. The 'loose echoes' of Barthes's formula were eagerly heard by those who sought editorial imperatives other than those imposed by the intricacies of archives. See Gould, 'Resurrection' 104.

<sup>148</sup> *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 63. 3 (juillet-septembre 1969), 73-104 (83).

<sup>149</sup> There were notable exceptions, such as G. Thomas Tanselle. See, e.g., his *Textual Criticism since Greg: A Chronicle 1950-1985* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987). In 1976 he wrote: 'Scholarly editors ... are in general agreement that their goal is to discover exactly what an author wrote and to determine what form of his work he wished the public to have ... the goal itself must involve the author's "intention"'. See 'The Editorial Problem of Final Intention' *Studies in Bibliography* 29 (1976), 167-211. Some editors still consider this essay the definitive analysis of the subject: see T. H. Howard-Hill, 'Theory and Praxis in the Social Approach to Editing', *Text* 5 (1991), 31-46 (40).



was ‘now at meetings of the Society for Textual Scholarship barely whispered in dark corners’.<sup>150</sup> As with Kenner, it was no longer something he could ‘get agitated about’.

With the Author officially dead, Finneran thus felt free to undermine his own editorial rationale. And yet, Yeats’s avowed intentionalism had indeed been the correct—indeed—the only—principled point of departure for the editing of his works. The General Editor’s abandonment of intention-as-expectation and preference for an older ‘last-in-print equals best copy-text’ approach remains a profound riddle. It was not the result of French theory applied or misapplied. Was it, perhaps, the result of a critical distaste for the narrative and dramatic poems, or of *déformation professionnelle*—an envious or possessive attitude towards authorship, even to the extent—as we have seen—of frank personation of the author, and of an envy of and so hostility to the lifetime editors’ access to an author? Theory-driven, textual annotation might have limbered up, and cross references flourished. Expectation and delegation would have still been blighted. But the constrictions of the Yeats *Collected Works* policies prompt one to ask what it means for editors to deprive their author of authorial agency against the evidence of the archive and thereby to reduce the author to an ‘author-function’?

The answers include the following:-

- such a top-down policy reduces the humanity of the author in its rejection of history and context as found in written records of a past reality, and in its rejection of the evidence of the work done by the author’s delegates in the publishing process.
- Under the pretence of clearing rubbish from the mouth of the sibyl’s cave, it accords to an intending editor more elbow-room to ‘find the author-in-the text according to the editor’s subjectivities, and so
- increases the risk of the editor’s subjectivities coming to dominate the editorial procedures.
- It disempowers readers by rejection the author’s own strategies of self-allusion across the *oeuvre*.

<sup>150</sup> Richard J. Finneran’s ‘Text and Interpretation in the Poems of W. B. Yeats’ in George Bornstein ed., *Representing Modernist Texts: Editing as Interpretation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 17–47 (34).

Long after ‘The Death of the Author’ had itself apparently expired, faint signals of its lingering after-life have recently been discernible in Anglo-American criticism.<sup>151</sup> As Historical Bibliographers and Book Historians have been fully engaged for so many years in addressing the wider implications of the materiality of the text, such approaches seem unlikely to stir beyond ‘theory-nostalgia’.

#### LA CRITIQUE GÉNÉTIQUE

So far as editorial theory is concerned, there remains the standing challenge to intentionality associated with genetic editing which has grown from and is therefore shaped by, the study of modern manuscripts. The Institut des textes et manuscrits modernes<sup>152</sup> has provided a home for this emergent discipline for many years. Various CNRS-funded ‘equipes’ for intensive single author and comparative study flourish at the intersection of European and international digital developments and provide a powerful theoretical basis for demonstrating the ‘author-function’ in manuscripts and proofs. Genetic techniques have proved at their most rewarding when focused upon ‘avant-texte’ and the stages of composition which precede publication, and can be applied to the puzzles left by the many different hands that have shaped the published (and republished) works, when such evidences are admitted to the field of study.

More generally, as the move to digital ‘knowledge sites’ has gathered pace, Hans Gabler has sought to theorize digital scholarly editions. In 2010 he moved to concede a strictly limited role to authorial intention, whilst asserting the professional independence of the editor.

<sup>151</sup> Jeffrey R. Di Leo, a vigorous proponent of ‘Theory’ (see his edited collection *Dead Theory: Derrida, Death, and the Afterlife of Theory* [London: Bloomsbury, 2016]), takes little or no interest in the impact of ‘Theory’ either in its ‘lifetime’ or its ‘afterlife’ on textual and editorial studies. See also Juliet Fleming, *Cultural Graphology: Writing after Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017). More generally, see John Harwood’s *Eliot to Derrida: The Poverty of Interpretation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), *passim*.

<sup>152</sup> See <http://www.item.ens.fr/>

... [A]uthority, say (where determinable), or intention (where inferable, or actually evidenced, as may exceptionally be the case) are categories that the editor, in constructing the edition text, will ascertain, register and record. Yet the autonomy postulated for the edition text as the editor's text will put them in a new perspective. They will cease to be an edition's *a priori* determinants. Instead they will function as an edition's potential regulatives, to be actualized or not according to the editorial rationale. Whether they are chosen or not, that is, to regulate the edition, will be subject to critical reflection and decision. In terms of editorial procedure, this means that it will be deemed acceptable and sound to mark 'authority' or 'intention' out as criteria or establishing an edition text, as it will be legitimate not to tie the editing to them.<sup>153</sup>

Which, one might agree, is a rigorous but entirely accurate statement of the case. However, more recently (and not without the reflex genuflexion to Michel Foucault), Professor Gabler 'fundamentally questions' the usefulness for editing of the 'cluster of notions' to be found in 'Authorship—authority—authorisation—the author—the author's will—the author's intention'. His argument is conducted from the history of editorial praxis, from stemmatics to present-day 'author-orientation'. As he himself abstracts his case,

What textual scholarship engages with, directly and tangibly, is not authors but texts (and equally not works but texts), materially inscribed in transmissions. In the materiality and artifice of texts, 'authoriality' is accessible conceptually only, in a manner analogous to the Foucauldian 'author function'. Under such premises, as well, 'authority', 'authorisation' and 'authorial intention' become recognisable as exogenous to texts, not integral to them.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Hans-Walter Gabler, 'Theorizing the Digital Scholarly Edition', *Literature Compass* 7.2 (2010) (special issue *Scholarly Editing in the Twenty-First Century*), 43–56 (47). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2009.00675.x>. Republished in Hans Walter Gabler, *Text Genetics in Literary Modernism and Other Essays*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0120>

<sup>154</sup> See 'Gabler's 'Beyond Author-Centricity in Scholarly Editing', *op. cit.*, 15–35. The references to Foucault will be found in the opening abstract (15) and at 22. His abstract continues 'Consequently, I propose to abandon "authority", "authorisation" and "authorial intention" as overriding principles and arbiters in editorial scholarship. Scholarly editing instead should re-situate itself in relation to texts, to textual criticism, to literary criticism and to literary theory alike, and do

This approach evaluates only the documents in a textual progression with cheerful confidence. As such, it is an editorial procedure defined—and perhaps punished—by its refusals. It is reluctant to admit into the editorial horizon another and much wider range of human documents, such as the archive of correspondence between author, agent, publisher, and printer, although it does upon occasion resort to the archive for a critical consideration of definable authorial intention. This having been determined might be allowed in individual instances to establish readings for a critical text. Nevertheless, as Professor Gabler put it in a recent private message to me

to edit a text to authorial intention, let alone to do so in an attitude of fulfilling authorial intention is untenable as an editorial principle.

And yet, in his view, these editorial procedures, tenable or untenable, have nothing to do with ‘the distinction between the real author in real life and the author function in relation to the text’. Rather, for Professor Gabler, just as one speaks of ‘the implied reader’ as a structural dimension or function of a text, so it makes heuristical sense in terms of text analysis to posit the ‘implied author’. So, when he and other editorial theorists have invoked the Foucauldian distinction, it has been in the attempt to envisage that ‘implied author’ as a ‘function’, and this is ‘what the real author constantly is up against in generating texts through creative acts of writing/reading in the course of composing a text’.<sup>155</sup>

Gabler proposes that

If it can be said that Roland Barthes’s ‘death of the author’ (1967) has, as a slogan, generally tended to overshadow Michel Foucault’s significant elucidation of the ‘author function’ (1969), it would probably be also true

so by re-focussing the methodology of its own practice. It should relinquish the external props termed “authorised document”, “textual authority”, or “authorial intention” hitherto deferred to. Instead, it should revitalise skills fundamental to inherited editorial scholarship, namely those of critically assessing, and of editorially realising, textual validity. To re-embed editorial scholarship in literary criticism and theory, moreover, the interpretative and hermeneutic dimensions of textual criticism and scholarly editing will need to be freshly mapped’.

<sup>155</sup> I am grateful to Professor Gabler for a series of helpful email explanations, and quote one of 10 February 2017.

that textual critics and editors in particular, must be counted among those who still hold both tenets in scorn. (They will insist: ‘The author is real: look, these manuscripts are incontrovertible proof that the author is not dead—or was not when he wrote them!’).

Thus arraigned, I would offer a different defence. I would say ‘Look at all the penumbral documents which confirm the *co-identity* of the “real-life author” and the “author-function” of this document, and restores to it its humanity’. Gabler, however, continues:

Seen with *a colder eye*, however, the proof of the author that manuscripts provide in truth only evidences (alike to footprints in the sand) that an author once (or, as the case may be, repeatedly) traced his or her hand and writing implement over the manuscript page. The real-life author, consequently, cannot honestly be conceded more—though also no less—than an empirical and legal authority over the documents carrying the texts of his works. To concede him or her an overriding authority over those texts, and on top of that to consider those texts, as texts, themselves invested with an innate authority, amounts to performing an argumentative leap akin to what psychology terms a displacement. It is this that constitutes the fallacy suggested. [emphasis added].

That ‘colder eye’ is unfortunate. A ‘cold eye’ was enough for Yeats’s epitaph; but it wasn’t enough for Hugh Kenner, whose *A Colder Eye* betrayed in its whole approach an envy of Yeats’s precursive authoriality.<sup>156</sup> But perhaps that is just the point. For Gabler’s argument stands only if we can find a way to keep at bay the ‘real-life author’. We can try to reduce his or her ‘works’ until we are left merely with ‘texts’. The ‘textuality’ we have then created however, pretends that we can exclude all that of which the materiality of the text demands we take account. What we sought to repress, returns. The reality of the author is pressingly found in *the book*, as well as in its attendant documents. Genetic methods have yet to be attuned to the full record of published and revised books, whereas manuscript

<sup>156</sup> See Hugh Kenner, *A Colder Eye: The Modern Irish Writers* (New York: Knopf and London: Allen Lane, 1983), a book of Stage Irishry: see my ‘Editorial Miscellany, YA3 285–87.

documents can be deemed—inadequately as it seems to me—to show authorship as ‘écriture’, pure and simple.<sup>157</sup>

#### I ADD IN COMMENTARY

Modern authorship and its archival remains, are neither so pure, nor so simple. Theory-driven editorial techniques attuned to the digital age can be challenged by the sheer range of traces of authors’ activities. Textual restlessness is occasioned by a fresh authorial critique which determines that the written did not fulfil what is now seen ‘to have been’ authorial intention, and the relation between (say) poems and their notes offers a case in point. I pursue this question in a forthcoming essay, but for the moment it is enough to say that the author’s zestful engagement in book-making, including symbolic book-design and its polarity for text-assemblage, authorial compromise with and active participation in the means of publishing and with publishing’s human agents, established and demonstrable patterns of authorial delegation to trusted agents such as publishers’ readers, authorial engagement in promotion, sales and marketing, including interviews, lectures, book-launches with their speeches and signings, the bibliographical opportunism attendant on post-publication revision and republication—all of these leave evidence of intentions and confirm or qualify those found in the ‘texts’; themselves, as well as in other works in an author’s *oeuvre*, including autobiographical and ‘required’ writing. The wider reader as well as the sceptical thinker remain restlessly aware that the editorial tradition after Barthes and Foucault might itself be too doctrinaire, too ‘top down’. All of which makes biblio-biography urgently necessary,<sup>158</sup> to make the theory-driven editor’s job harder, with a pragmatic insistence on proceeding on a case-by-case basis. It will come as no surprise that I continue to work in this field myself.

<sup>157</sup> Hence its interest in the unfinished or *inachevé*.

<sup>158</sup> The contrary term ‘bio-bibliography’ has been used by David Greetham in his self-study, *Textual Transgressions: Essays towards the Construction of a Biobibliography* (New York and London: Garland, 1998).



## REVIEW ESSAYS AND REVIEWS





## ‘Both Beautiful, One a Gazelle’: A Review Essay<sup>1</sup>

Deirdre Toomey

Sonja Tiernan, *Eva Gore-Booth: An Image of Such Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. xviii, 277. ISBN 97800719082320.

Lauren Arrington, *Revolutionary Lives: Constance and Casimir Markievicz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 312. ISBN 9780691161242 15 halftones; e-book ISBN 9781400874187.

When I first saw a reference to Sonja Tiernan’s life of Eva Gore-Booth, I thought that the biography must be a case of bricks without straw, as there was so little material relating to Eva, in contrast to her more prominent sister. How mistaken I was. Using the extensive material relating to the Gore-Booth family in the Northern Ireland PRO, newspapers of the time, and documentation relating to the suffragettes, Tiernan has produced a vivid picture of an independent spirit, who found personal happiness and a political programme in her relationship with another woman, Esther Roper.

It is clear from many photographs of the sisters as young women that Eva, whom Yeats recalled as having a ‘delicate gazelle-like beauty’, was not as robust as Constance, although, like Constance, she was an excellent horsewoman. While in London in 1888, she became seriously ill

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [yeatsresearch@sas.ac.uk](mailto:yeatsresearch@sas.ac.uk)? Quite apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

with scarlet fever, then endemic in urban areas. She was very ill and the only treatment for this agonising condition before antibiotics was careful nursing. Eva recovered, but possibly remained debilitated by the illness. She is said to have suffered from respiratory illness from childhood, and the dust-jacket image of her, from an oil painting by Constance Markievicz now in the Lissadell Collection, confirms the impression. A visit to the writer George Macdonald's villa, Casa Corragio, in Bordighera in Italy was for her health, but it also was to transform her life. Here she met Esther Roper, the great love of her life, a young political radical from a working class Irish background in Manchester. She was only two years older than Gore-Booth, but had already attended Owens College Manchester, one of the first women to do so, receiving a first class result in Latin and English Literature, while simultaneously running the family household after the premature death of her mother. This strain caused a breakdown in health which took her to Bordighera and to Eva Gore-Booth.



Plate 42. Constance and Eva Gore-Booth at the opening of the Drumcliffe Co-Operative Creamery c. 1895. Image Courtesy Sligo County Museum and Library.

Gore-Booth's poem about their meeting, 'The Travellers' (not published until 1904) opens 'Was it not strange that by that tideless sea | The jar and hurry of our lives should cease?', which expresses what the meeting meant to her. Eva returned to Lissadell, where inspired by Esther Roper's suffrage work, she immediately organised a local branch of the women's suffrage campaign. This indicated her first stirrings of independence. The first meeting of the Sligo branch was held in Drumcliffe with a packed audience, mainly male objectors. Constance opened the meeting. Despite robust

objections to 'petticoat government', Eva Gore-Booth then took the chair to applause and carefully analysed the issues. The meeting was noticed—not very sympathetically—in the Sligo Champion the local Nationalist paper. To its contributors, the Gore-Booths were simply Ascendency landowners.

No material covering the Gore-Booth family's reaction to Eva Gore-Booth's decision in 1897 to move to Manchester in order to unite her life with Esther Roper seems to have survived; but Eva was of age and presumably had demonstrated her aversion to marriage. Her extraordinary youthful beauty and grand family background would have made her a very attractive catch for a young man; indeed it had already caught the fancy of the young Yeats, who moved by Eva's sympathy on hearing his account of his love for Maud Gonne, adding that their friendship became so close that he 'nearly said to her, as William Blake said to Catherine Boucher, "You pity me, therefore I love you"'. He reflected that he was too poor a suitor for that great house. He gave Eva a set of his three-volume *Works of William Blake* (1893) co-edited with Edwin Ellis, later in Alan Clodd's collection, a lavish gift from a poor young man.

The Gore-Booths with their interest in spiritualism were possibly more tolerant than the typical aristocratic household. They had already accepted Constance's decision to move to London, to study at the Slade School of Art, so perhaps Eva's move was not so shocking to them as it would have been to a more conventional aristocratic family. However, one hears the voice of Lady Bracknell: 'You intend to live in Salford with a working-class suffragist whom you met in Bordighera?'. Constance had already left the family home, and was by now studying art in Paris, a very daring move, even for such a strong personality. She probably broke Eva's fences for her.

Eva must have been conscious of the risk which she was taking in moving to industrial, heavily-polluted Salford, especially given her respiratory problems. On the first of March 1900, she made a lucid will, leaving her entire estate to Esther Roper. Yet, paradoxically, a happy same sex relationship saved her from the fate of many upper class young women, death in child birth: the possibility of death in childbirth from puerperal pyrexia, even for a strong, healthy young woman, was very real. As soon as Eva settled in Manchester in a very ordinary red brick house, a great contrast to Lissadell, she began work on her first book of poems which was published by Longmans, to a modestly favourable reception, although Yeats in a letter warned her against 'rhetoric' (advice which she ignored).

Then she threw her energies into suffragist activity, as well as work to improve the conditions of Manchester working women. She was genuinely popular with the young working-class women whom she met, her Irish accent must have helped in an area with many Irish immigrants. By 1901 she

is described as being the Secretary of a women's suffrage organisation. She still took her holidays in Lissadell and on one visit wrote her most popular poem 'The Little Waves of Breffney', which George Russell published in 'Celtic Christmas (1903)', a special number of the *Irish Homestead*. Russell also collected this poem in an anthology, *New Songs* (1904), which collected work by younger writers. *Unseen Kings*, her first play on an Irish mythological theme, was published in 1904, again by Longmans, but it was found unsuitable then for production by the Abbey Theatre, although it was later produced by her sister's venture, the Independent Theatre Company, and by the Abbey Theatre in January 1912. Despite her physical frailty, she became a successful public speaker, arguing that lack of the franchise contributed to the low wages paid to women. She firmly rejected the violent tactics espoused by Christabel Pankhurst, her pacifism guiding her response to this issue. She wrote a severe letter to Millicent Fawcett condemning educated and upper-class women who 'kick, shriek and kick' and who thus alienated working-class women, who had a greater sense of dignity.

In 1907 Constance Markievicz joined Eva at a suffrage meeting. This, paradoxically, was Constance's first political venture, and she was attracted by its radicalism. An unwise heckler asked her if she could cook a dinner, she replied that she could do that and also drive a four in hand, the most highly skilled form of carriage driving. A photograph survives of her doing just that with Eva as her passenger. This experience of political activity with her sister seems to have spurred her to join Irish political organisations, such as Maud Gonne's *Inghinidhe na hEireann*. It was now clear to Constance that political activism was fun. She had driven a coach and four white horses in support of the campaign.

Eva continued to work to support working women whose employability was being eroded, such as barmaids. Their pressure group resulted in a Bill's being defeated in the Commons and Eva Gore-Booth and Esther Roper wrote to the *Times* to thank formally those who had supported their campaign. Eva also helped a group of waitresses to form a union, which improved their working conditions. She also worked for several days at the pit brow in a mine, to establish what working conditions were for women in the mines. This was an astonishing act for a 'delicate' aristocrat with a history of respiratory illness. The progress towards suffrage stalled and Roper and Gore-Booth put their energies into an organisation which sought to reject sex difference called the Aethnic Union. Both were aware that moves to protect women in employment on spurious health grounds often disguised a wish to bar women from a range of occupations. The move to block women from work as barmaids had been presented as an attempt to improve their moral health and physical well-being. Those who opposed

bicycle riding by women, often produced fanciful ‘medical evidence’ that such an activity would damage women’s reproductive powers. And this had a popular element, the first woman to ride a bicycle in London, was greeted with a hail of bricks and stones.

Lauren Arrington’s life of Constance and Casimir Markievicz follows in the wake of many less serious and scholarly attempts at a life of Constance. She opens with a discussion of the delightful c1895 photograph of Constance Gore-Booth entertaining Althea Gyles in her Chelsea studio, an enchanting *tableau* of female liberation, exiles from Ireland, now two bad girls from the Slade. Althea Gyles was also trying to make her way as an independent book designer. In discussing Althea Gyles’s links with Yeats, however, Arrington follows numerous previous scholars into that great Bog of Cloone, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Gyles was never a member, as R. A. Gilbert’s definitive list of members makes clear.<sup>2</sup> (This mistake has been made regularly, but Gilbert does authoritatively reproduce the details of the original documents.) Symbolism from the Rosicrucian Inner Order of the G.D. is indeed found in Gyles’s cover designs for Yeats, but their symbolic programmes came from Yeats himself. The nearest she got to the Order was her friendship with Yeats and a possible encounter with Moina Mathers, who was prepared to cast horoscopes for young women, if they thought that their lives were at a crisis. Both Gore-Booth sisters had an interest in spiritualism, shared by their entire family. Both sisters’ horoscopes survive in the Gore-Booth papers in the PRO for Northern Ireland. Yeats, no mean astrologer, seems to have cast these horoscopes. Arrington sees in this activity an attempt to draw Constance into the Golden Dawn, but I think this unlikely.

At the conclusion of her time at the Slade, Constance decided to study painting at Julian’s academy in Paris, which admitted women. Arrington quotes a very telling excerpt from Constance’s 1892 diary of a desire to have ‘something to live for, something to die for’. This might be a man or a cause. She found the man in Paris. Casimir Markievicz had come to Julian’s to study, but not alone, his wife gave birth to their son Stanislaus in Paris, 1896. Casimir, who lived on an allowance from his landed family, separated from his wife in 1898. His wife and their second child died *en route* to her parents in what is now the Ukraine. Stanislaus was taken over by his grandmother. When Constance met Casimir at a fancy-dress party, he was effectively a single man. A mutual friend introduced him to Constance,

<sup>2</sup> See *The Golden Dawn Companion: A Guide to the History, Structure, and Workings of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, comp and intr. by R. A. Gilbert (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1986).

describing her as a 'living Rossetti or Burne-Jones'. From that moment she told her brother they were 'great pals and comrades ever since', which suggests a cause rather than infatuation. By now Constance was known as 'teuf-teuf' by fellow students, which translates as 'party-party'.

Her father was dead and her brother became the custodian of Gore-Booth family honour; Josslyn Gore-Booth tried to discover whether or not Markievicz really was a Count. She pleaded with her brother to the effect that Casimir was 'not like a frenchman' and really more Irish than otherwise. She told Josslyn that Casimir was not a Polish nationalist, so ran no risks from Russia, the ruler of 'Congress Poland'. After interminable wrangling from both families and countries they married three times, at the Russian legation in London, at Marylebone Registry Office and at St Mary's Church, Marylebone with Eva in attendance. Much attention was given to the massive pearl necklace which Constance wore, as well as a diamond pendant, a gift from Lady Gore-Booth. 'Obey' was omitted from the marriage service. Their only daughter, Maeve was born at Lissadell in 1901 and later lived there with her grandmother and uncle and aunt.

Constance's assertion of Casimir's likeness to Irish people was proved on his introduction to Irish society, participating happily in upper-class society as well as the *avant-garde*. He and Constance contributed to George Russell's exhibition of 'Young Irish Artists' (Casimir becoming 'Irish' by marriage). In Dublin he also moved away from a Russian identification to a Polish identity. Constance had also exploited this change of heart: on a visit to his family estate at Zywtowka, she painted a melancholy study of a young peasant being conscripted into the Russian army, a work which had powerful resonance for Irish Nationalists, who could identify with the parents' evident despair. The couple's love of the theatrical expanded from attendance at costume balls at Dublin Castle to the formation of an 'Independent Theatrical Company', in obvious rivalry to the Abbey Theatre. This company used the same premises as did the secessionist 'Theatre of Ireland', formed by former Abbey players. This splitting of theatrical energies in a very small capital caused much ill-feeling. Yeats was understandably hostile.

Although Casimir increasingly moved in Nationalist circles, as did Constance, he was not interested in staging patriotic plays. Constance collaborated in an unusual peasant drama with Seamus O'Kelly, *Lustre*, set in the West of Ireland and essentially an attack on materialism and Industrialisation.

By 1908 Constance had joined the Irish Nationalist women's organisation *Inghinidhe na hEireann*, arrived for her first meeting straight from a ball in a blue velvet gown with diamonds in her hair, but her sincerity and her knowledge of Suffrage campaigns in Manchester impressed her fellow members, who could then overlook the diamonds. After all, one of the founders, Maud Gonne had campaigned in the West during a local famine wearing a sable coat, worth many thousands.

The process of Constance's radicalisation had probably begun while helping her sister's suffrage campaign in Manchester. Irish Nationalists in Sinn Fein had little time for such campaigns, the implication being that women would (perhaps) get a vote when Ireland was liberated. As usual women were sent to the back of the queue, a common phenomenon in radical movements, which tend towards both overt and covert anti-feminism. Constance was prepared to accommodate herself to this position, although by 1909 her position shifted once more to an insistence that National Sovereignty and female emancipation went hand in hand.

In this she was out of step with most Nationals who viewed women's role in conventional and secondary terms. Her training of 'Fianna Scouts', however, was acceptable to the majority. All the couple's mixed agendas were unified in Casimir's '98' play *The Memory of the Dead*, in which Constance starred as a cross dressing revolutionary wife who joins the uprising. This melodrama was popular in Nationalist circles as a physical force corrective to the widely maligned *Playboy of the Western World*. Casimir, it was assumed in one review was thinking also of Poland as one favourable notice put it. In fact, in 1918–1919, there was to be a successful Polish uprising after the abdication of the Kaiser. Casimir gradually removed himself from Irish politics while his wife's militancy increased, especially during the Royal visit, when flag burning and other demonstrations rejecting an alien monarchy were common. She was charged with assault on a policeman during a riot, much to her brother's distress. After this fiasco she and other Nationalists tried to establish a commune in a house in Lower Mount Street; visitors, even those broadly sympathetic to the cause, were astonished by the commune's bohemian style. Yet one visitor insisted that Casimir didn't bother about Ireland at all, but was quite happy to attend parties with his wife. The 'teuf-teuf' side of Constance was evidently not subdued by radicalism. She still performed in plays at the Independent Dramatic Company and a hostile interpretation of this period in her life might see all her political engagement as acting. Indeed, her performance as an ancient Irish Queen in a pageant at the 1911 Oireachtas, in a glamorous blue velvet



gown might reinforce this criticism. The sky darkened in 1913 with the Dublin lock-out; Jim Larkin, the labour leader hid from the police at the Markievicz's house. In subsequent disturbances she was knocked about by the police 'who smelled strongly of stout'. This career of assorted political activism, interspersed with theatre inevitably recalls Vanessa Redgrave and the Workers Revolutionary Party, not least in Constance's effective abandonment of her daughter, Maevie, to be brought up in Lissadell. There is one photograph of the children together, Constance in a beautiful white gown, holding the baby Maevie, with Stanislaus by her side. Of course, Maevie had a more stable home with her grandmother and uncle and aunt than in the unstable rickety life her parents enjoyed in Dublin.

In the wake of the shootings in Bachelors Walk, itself the subject of a powerful sombre painting by Jack Yeats, the Markievicz 'family' was briefly reunited in Dublin in Easter 1915, by 'family' Stanislaus referred to his half-sister Maevie. Casimir was in Poland, about to join the Russian army. His Polish loyalties were now thoroughly compromised. Meanwhile, in Dublin Constance more strongly emphasised the female contribution to revolution, not without interludes of drama, including playing Joan of Arc in full armour, another parallel with Vanessa Redgrave (who saw herself as Joan of Arc, according to her sister). However, Constance's advice to women activists was thoroughly practical—no jewellery, short skirts and strong boots, and no appeals to male chivalry, this very much on the advice of her sister Eva. In the run up to the Easter Rising, she endured raids on her house, which only contained a few Fianna scouts who treated the police to a rendition of 'The Peeler and the Goat'. She enthusiastically wandered around Dublin fully armed and when Eoin MacNeill tried to call off the rising, threatened to shoot him. In the chaos which ensued, she clearly felt in her element. Her green banner proclaiming the Irish Republic' flew over the Post Office. She shot and killed an unarmed policeman in Stephens Green. An eyewitness account identified her clearly, however she insisted to Eva Gore-Booth, a pacifist, that she did not shoot him. The policeman died in hospital, rather than on the site, which might explain her error. She holed up in the Royal College of Surgeons, overlooking the Green and helped with food supplies. Here she seems to have converted to Catholicism, with which increasingly Irish Nationalism became identified. She was surprised to see the order to surrender, but accepted it, saying, 'I trust Connolly'. She kissed her revolver when surrendering it.

When tried, her bravery vanished, and she begged for her life, pleading her status as a woman, 'I am only a woman': a plea not made by Edith Cavell (a nurse, not an armed revolutionary) in equally grim circumstances. Cavell admitted the charges of helping allied prisoners to escape and

calmly accepted her fate. In fact, it was probably Edith Cavell's execution in October 1915 and attendant international moral outrage which saved Constance's life. She was imprisoned in Kilmainham after her sentence was commuted. The leading men were executed under military orders. There was little sensitivity to Irish public opinion, given that the Easter Rising coincided with the mid-point of the siege of Verdun, Germany's attempt to 'bleed France white', which led to nearly a million deaths: this is to say nothing of the regular execution at dawn of shell-shocked under-age British soldiers for 'Cowardice'. Brigadier Blackadder, who presided at the trials had recently seen service in France at Neuve Chappell and Loos.

When Constance was transferred to Mountjoy prison, her sister was able to visit her. She asked for a photograph of her daughter, whom she thought too young to visit. Eva desperately pressed her sister's version of not shooting the policeman on Josslyn Gore-Booth. Eva and Esther Roper, both committed pacifists, remained loyal to her. Eva thought the Rising a tragedy. When transferred to an English prison Constance complained to Susan Mitchell of being forced to mix with prostitutes and 'baby killers', despite the Prison Governor's assurance to the Home Office that no woman prisoner had a record of prostitution. She became severely emaciated after apparently refusing to eat fish. She was released as part of the general amnesty in June 1917. Her return to Ireland accompanied by Eva was a triumph.

Meanwhile Casimir, who had rejoiced at Poland's brief independence, found himself on the wrong side of all politics when a provisional government of the Ukraine seized all landed property, something in which Constance tactlessly rejoiced when writing to Josslyn. Her survival raised Constance's status in Ireland: she retrospectively referred to her 'willingness to die' in 1916, a predictable revision of her actual stance. She, alongside other Sinn Fein leaders, was imprisoned as part of the 1918 fictitious 'German Plot'. She and Maud Gonne did not get on together as cell mates. Eva was able to visit her sister in Holloway, but only if they did not discuss politics, an impossible restriction at the time. Other republican women prisoners disliked Constance's sense of entitlement, however she was chosen to stand for Parliament for a Dublin ward in the 1918 election, despite the fact that her Connolly-influenced socialist conception of a future Ireland remained a minority position. She was elected with an impressive majority, but refused to take her seat. Nevertheless, she received a letter in prison, addressed 'Dear Sir' and inviting her to attend the state opening of Parliament.

With Russia undergoing a grand scale revolution, the position of both Casimir and Stanislaus was very difficult, the latter being imprisoned by the Bolsheviks. After some pressing, Casimir, briefly a film star in Warsaw, sent

a food parcel to his son, eventually freed by the influence of his mother's socialist friends. Constance's socialism rather than her republicanism was behind yet another arrest in 1919. She was prepared to endorse the terror under Lenin and the Cheka in the cause of socialism in Russia. But as Arrington makes clear, without guidance from Connolly her ideas remained undirected. In speeches made during her brief absences from Jail she envisaged a workers' republic in Ireland, on the assumed Bolshevik model. When she eventually took her seat in the new Dáil in April 1919 she was appointed secretary for Labour, from this position she lobbied for land reform and in late April 1919 she astonished her audience in Bray by arguing for Bolshevism and de-centralised government by 'soviets' as well as an economy based upon co-operative agriculture. Attempts to have her deported were complicated by uncertainty about her nationality, being by marriage a Russian subject. After a series of spirited public appearances, she was again sentenced to two years in Mountjoy in 1920. By now her socialism was being modified by a belief in 'spiritual forces' and a return to cultural Nationalism. She was released in 1921 in time to oppose partition. She continued her stubborn belief that the Bolsheviks were on the right path, something her stepson, living in Russia, then experiencing the first of a series of major famines, must have found tiresome. She was pulled up hard by the 1922 election in which she lost her seat and which the pro-Treaty side won. She became quite as bitter as Maud Gonne in her hatred of the Free State.

In her breezy and somewhat partisan account of the Civil War, Arrington avoids any mention of the destructive measures used by the Republicans, blowing up railway stations, and bridges making it difficult for farmers to get their goods to market as well as outright terror attacks, the aim was to cripple the new Free State, which it did, with £10 m. worth of damage.

In the aftermath of the Civil War Casimir turned up in Dublin, saw his daughter, to whom he tried to justify Constance's dedication to the cause of liberty: this fell on stony ground. He received a better reception in his favourite bar, Neary's. He saw Constance before returning to Poland where his politics shifted to the right, with anti-semitism (a commonplace in Poland) emerging. The ceasefire produced depression in Constance, strikingly pictured by Mary Colum who had not seen Constance for several years and had recalled her as a woman in 'vibrant maturity at the height of her beauty and courage'. Sitting in George Russell's salon was a faded emaciated figure, her vitality and beauty gone. Constance's loyalty to de Valera was shaken by his decision to found Fianna Fail and re-enter legitimate politics. She was now an isolated figure, with her contact with Eva her only link with her family. Constance at last made an effort with

Maeve, her long estranged daughter. Then Eva died, her closest friend and relation was gone, although she believed herself still in spiritual contact with her sister. Yet as Mary Colum said, Constance Markievicz was an extinct volcano. Her exhausting life and regular periods in prison took its toll and she was admitted to St Patrick Dun's hospital and died after seeing Casimir and Stanislaus. She was given a grand funeral, which involved lying in state at City Hall. De Valera gave the funeral oration, emphasising her love of the poor and (implicitly) her Republicanism.

After the funeral Maeve's anger at her distance from her mother caused her to destroy a cache of letters from Eva. Casimir and Maeve bitterly disputed the estate and the half-siblings also quarrelled but were reconciled at their father's deathbed in 1932. Arrington's account of the Markievicz side of the story is very impressive, including a letter from Stanislaus written on linen, smuggled out of a Russian prison, with a plea for a food parcel from his father. In an interesting final chapter on Constance's legacy, Arrington notes that 'On a Political Prisoner' might be read as being about Maud Gonne; this is a shrewd point as Yeats told Lady Gregory that he was writing about Constance to avoid writing about Maud Gonne, so the ambiguity was there in the conception (*CL IntelLex* 3562, 29 January 1919).

However, and this is a weakness in an otherwise excellent biography, Arrington asserts in an unsustainable generalisation that Yeats was 'moving towards fascism', although he strongly condemned both Fascism and Stalinism to Ethel Mannin: 'every nerve trembles with horror at what is happening in Europe "the ceremony of innocense is d[r]owned"' (*CL IntelLex* 6530, [6 April 1936]).

One other reservation in considering this outstanding biography filled with fascinating detail from family letters is Arrington's equivocation on the issue of William Wylie's first-hand account of her collapse during her trial and her pleas for mercy. She implicitly questions Leon O'Broin's use of this episode in his monograph on Wylie. Arrington evidently follows Brian Barton's assertion (quoted in a footnote) that this is a misogynist fiction. This seems unlikely: Wylie had insisted that secret trials were wrong and that the defendants needed a defence and had switched from prosecutor to *de facto* defence counsel in the case of several defendants, saving the lives of de Valera, Cosgrave and Willie Corrigan, by so doing. Some of his comments—'silly girls' of the female prisoners—seem misogynist now, but that does not invalidate his testimony, misogyny was commonplace at the time. We would have to assume that a barrister, who had gone out of his way to assist the prisoners, and who had insisted that he would do all he could to help them (not an easy thing to do faced with the wonderfully named Brigadier Blackadder, who presided over the trials), after doing his best

to help defendants, would then invent this scene. Wylie did not prosecute Connolly, saying that to try a wounded man was wrong. Barton suggests that Wylie's narrative, drafted in 1939, was the product of fading memory, yet an identical version of Wylie's narrative of Constance Markievicz's collapse was circulating in Dublin via Trinity table talk in 1916, even using the same words. I think that in both cases the reluctance to admit this evidence stems from its unpalatable nature and its destabilising of a myth. Constance Markievicz was heroic in prison, but she might not have been heroic throughout her trial.

Eva and Constance Gore-Booth have been very well served by these biographies, both of which make use of the extensive Gore-Booth family papers in the Northern Ireland PRO. Of the two, the life of Eva Gore-Booth is perhaps the more remarkable, raising her from a brief footnote in history to a vivid and well documented life. The life of her sister is also excellent, replacing a long series of ill-researched biographies and furthermore giving us an insight into the complex Polish side of her life.

W. B. Yeats, *On Baile's Strand: Manuscript Materials*, ed. by Jared Curtis and Declan Kiely (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp. lvii + 595.<sup>1</sup>

**Richard Allen Cave**

It is fitting that *On Baile's Strand*, the final volume of the Plays grouped in the Cornell *Yeats in Manuscript* series, should be dedicated to the memory of Stephen Maxfield Parrish, who presided with such kindness, generosity, dedication and insight over the whole project for so many years. Fitting too, that one of the collaborative editors of this volume is Jared Curtis, his one-time assistant, who increasingly took over the role of shaping how the individual volumes would appear to the reader. He deployed ever-subtler presentational devices to give transcriptions a distinctive look that reproduced to an astonishing degree the texture of the pages being interpreted. To compare a recto page with the opposed verso that it is transcribing is to marvel at the accuracy of the representation, while relishing a visual clarity that brings to scholarly reading an ease and immediacy. Our debt to both men is incalculable; the editions themselves are lasting testimony to the daring and brilliance of their achievement.

There is an appropriateness too in the fact that it is a relatively early play by Yeats that marks the conclusion of this grand enterprise, but one that carries a profound significance for the development of Yeats's career as playwright, for the gestation of *On Baile's Strand* brought Yeats to his

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [r.cave@rhu.ac.uk](mailto:r.cave@rhu.ac.uk)? Apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

maturity and shows him steadily gaining his distinctive voice. Through the years between 1901 and 1906, Yeats worked on the play, drafting, revising, testing as director and as audience-member the stage worthiness of his conception, re-writing, amplifying, cutting and condensing until he realised exactly the 'strong' play of his initial imagining. Some thirty-eight items of relevant manuscript or published materials survive, all presented here: there are no significant gaps in that evolutionary cycle, from two scenarios, through the scrapbook-like version presented to the Lord Chamberlain's Office to establish copyright and various publications of the play as a whole or excerpts from it, to the final text published in *Poems 1899–1905* (October 1906), a version which had been staged at the Abbey Theatre earlier that year in April. That only some fourteen substantive revisions (print variants or inked annotations) were made by Yeats to proofs or editions between 1906 and 1939, as listed by Curtis and Kiely after meticulous scrutiny of the evidence, shows how deeply satisfied the dramatist was with the 1906 text in *Poems* as the summation of a powerful creative drive. That drive had seen him transform a good, though confused play (his own term) into a superb tragedy. What the manuscripts and their transcription here allow us to trace, stage by meticulous stage, are the progress and the process of that trajectory. What we observe overall is Yeats gaining a critical intelligence and learning how to apply it rigorously to his ambitions as a dramatist. He discovered in himself the strength of will to curb or excise his seductively poetic imagination the better to further a more purposeful objective. Crucially, he saw the need to *simplify* so that what remained had the logic of necessity. (He removed the purely decorative to find a precise phrasing that brought depth of expression by exploiting resonance and inference.) What he was to realise later in his career was how that logic brings with it the implacability which he believed essential to great tragedy; and implacability is the hall mark of the finished *On Baile's Strand*.

Viewing a range of the earlier manuscripts suggests that Yeats had difficulty at first in establishing a suitable heroic environment for the action. He was deeply indebted for his plot to Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, which, though not published till 1902, he had read throughout the stages of its composition. References to Celtic myth abound (to Daire, Maeve and to Deirdre's curse on Conchubar and his kingdom), which might perplex the uninformed and certainly slow down the development of the main focus in the first half of the play: the uneasy relationship between Conchubar and Cuchulain. Realising that the latter's seeming childlessness is to afford a powerful irony to the climax, Yeats initially introduces Emer in the first substantial draft (here categorised as Berg B); but, since she is seen organising the chairs in her home to receive the king's court and council, she

is robbed of any stature and she disappears before the point of her inclusion is thematically established. It is only with the appearance of the Young Man (sometimes in later drafts called Connla) that this random quality in the organisation settles down and Yeats begins the process of simplification that will in time make his plot 'strong', the epithet he used confidently in writing of his play to Sturge Moore (11 August 1901).

To establish Cuchulain's untamed nature, his daring and flamboyance, Yeats had in the early drafts included dialogue between the hero and his young followers about his particular ideal of womanhood, but it is a type of feisty, rebellious, warrior-woman that is extolled rather than a specific, named individual. The Young Man's appearance from the land of Scotland brings memories of Cuchulain's stay there in his own youth to hone his martial skills, of the queens he encountered, the pallor of their skins and their abundant red hair. In time Yeats was to re-situate Cuchulain's talk of his ideal of femininity into his barely-contained quarrel with Conchubar to a degree where a particular woman, Aoife, is seen to haunt his imagination, though it is years since they parted. (By this stage of composition all reference to Emer has gone.) In its new placing, the ecstatic reverie intimates to the watchful and cunning Conchubar (shown as fearful that the hero will quit his role as the king's champion before he can secure his allegiance by oath) how powerful a hold Aoife still exerts over Cuchulain. Even details of the hair and skin colouring come in the revisions to have a telling dramatic relevance: Cuchulain is drawn instinctively to bond with the Young Man on his arrival, and that strange attraction is later explained when Cuchulain breaks off arming himself (he has been goaded by Conchubar and his court to fight with Connla) to muse on the similarity of the Young Man's features to Aoife's. Fighting is instantly forgotten as Cuchulain loads exotic gifts on Connla and imagines them facing the world in arms together ('We'll stand by one another from this out', 215). The play gains appreciably in tension and momentum as Yeats grasps the dramatic potential of building up the role of Aoife, as a dominant *unseen* presence in the action, so that the visibly desperate Conchubar, with his ceremonial oath-takings and his hysterical denunciations of witchcraft, does battle with the offstage but palpably menacing and vengeful Aoife for control of Cuchulain's destiny.

Yeats's very first scenario had outlined the psychological tensions between Conchubar and Cuchulain but, as one reads through the manuscripts, one finds with each revision their relationship deepening in terms of the differences between them. Both are in their middle years but, where Cuchulain still pursues the carefree life in quest of honour through the exercise of his martial brilliance, Conchubar wishes to settle and make his realm, family and possessions secure. Nostalgia for their shared roistering



past alone holds them together, if rather tenuously; and, realising this, Conchubar chooses to curb the very exuberance that gives Cuchulain's life meaning. Through the revisions the quarrel becomes a conflict of differing principles and political values, which the Young Man's arrival immediately throws into sharp relief again, coming as it does just as Cuchulain capitulates and agrees to participate in the oath-taking ceremony. Conchubar sees in Connla only danger, where Cuchulain knows him immediately as a fellow hero in the making and so a man worthy of his magnanimity (the image of the hawk that steadily comes to grace both men's speech subtly intimates to spectators the affinity between their values). In the carefully developed contrast between Conchubar's self-serving manipulations and Cuchulain's wealth of generosity, Yeats found the means to define the heroic world without resorting to the arcane references to myth and legend that cluttered his earliest drafts. The treatment of Connla and Aoife now gives the play the cohesive structure it lacked at first and too a sharpness of outline against which Yeats during future revisions might test the relevance of more localised sequences and individual lines.

It is characteristic of the experienced dramatist Yeats had become by 1904 and the opening of the Abbey Theatre that he was not to leave any part of his conception open to chance in the performing. The song of the Women proffering their bowl of fire before administering the oath-taking goes through several drafts: though much of what they sing is overlaid by Cuchulain's ardent ritualised speech of submission to Conchubar's will, the wording and the timing of the Women's choric utterance is written into the scene with a careful precision. Yeats does not risk inviting the actresses involved to extemporize, which could easily get out of control especially in terms of the balance between the two vocal levels and the volume each aims for and sustains. Nothing must detract an audience's attention here from the complexity of Cuchulain's situation: he has resisted Conchubar's values as demeaning of the heroic life, but has agreed finally to acquiesce almost on a whim shaped by his recognition of his and the king's shared past. However, even then his integrity acknowledges a fine distinction between himself and his king: 'Yet I had thought you were of those that ... held | That a free gift was better than a forced' (457). It is crucial that this is heard and appreciated, if Cuchulain's rapid change of tone and vocabulary, when the Young Man appears, is to be sensed as the bursting out of the cage that Conchubar has tried to prevent. Getting the right degree of balance in the ceremony requires meticulous direction in a staging and an exacting control from performers. Yeats worked hard in the drafts to find the means to impose the complexity of the moment and the seriousness of his invention on his cast.

Equally he did well virtually to excise the short sequence when, after Cuchulain has chased the Young Man out to fight on the strand, the courtiers (young and old kings) jostle in the doorway to go in pursuit: 'We'll be too late. | They are such a long time getting through the door ... He will have killed him' (219) later revised to '~~We'll be too late. Quicker! quicker!~~' (479) and then cut, as shown. Far from building tension, this inappropriately risks outright comedy. Ultimately Yeats was to keep some of this dialogue but required that it become lost in a cacophony of mounting sound with 'confused cries' and 'words one can hardly hear because of the noise', since 'their voices drown each other' (*VPI* 513). The implicit instruction is that the kings leave the stage as rapidly as possible. This sequence now provides a fitting contrast to the eerie silence that ensues, punctuated only by the distant clash of swords, which precedes the Women's oracular prophecy of an unspecified doom to beset Cuchulain. Throughout the turmoil, they have remained still and silent: statuesque observers of men's folly, which eventually moves them to despair. By the final version, Yeats's control of dramatic atmosphere throughout the sequence is superb.

The one aspect of the play that underwent little substantive change was the framing device of the Blind Man and the Fool: the two episodes at the beginning and the close of the play were part of the initial conception of the piece and, while they were expanded or refined as to details, the overall shape of these sequences was recognisably the same from the scenario dictated to Lady Gregory in 1901 to final publication in 1906. The need for a symbolic extension of Cuchulain and Conchubar's character and their conflict was a clear imperative for Yeats from the first: 'The relation between Cuchulain & Conchubar is emphasised by a fool & a blind man, who symbolise it' (9). A matter of weeks later in the letter to Sturge Moore in which he refers to the 'strong plot' of his new play (quoted above), Yeats refers also to its 'ironical humour'. This is interesting in light of how the stage time given to Blind Man and Fool was to develop, in that it seems to indicate how Yeats was already thinking of experimenting with what was later to become a distinctive feature of the dramaturgy in his later plays: the use of darkly comic, sardonic or nastily materialistic figures to offset the tragic experience of his nobler figures and enhance their isolation and passionate agony (the Old Man in *At The Hawk's Well*; Bricriu in *The Only Jealousy of Emer*; the Blind Man again in *The Death of Cuchulain*). Increasingly through the revisions the contrast between the characters of the Blind Man and the Fool is honed in its definition: the former shaped over time to be cunning, shrewdly intelligent, wholly amoral and obsessed with survival at any price, while the latter is shown lost frequently to a world of his own imagining till physical depredations and hunger bring his attention back to his physical

self and awareness of how he is continually tricked by his companion. It would be wrong to describe them, especially in their final form, as caricatures of Conchubar and Cuchulain respectively, since the dramaturgy even at first is never so crude. Rather they invite a more complex response where similarities and differences resist any strict and confining parallels. The couples shadow each other: Conchubar in the heroic pairing has all the qualities of the Blind Man but has in addition the depth brought by the responsibilities of kingship with its need to safeguard the realm and its inhabitants and look always to the future. Cuchulain has the Fool's lack of a sense of danger and consequent foolhardiness (till brought sharply to sense he is trapped by circumstances created by others), but the visionary qualities of the hero are tempered by reminiscence of lost realities and, always in his fearlessness, he abides resolutely and courageously by his decisions for action.

It was late in the creative process that Yeats made one final adjustment to the scene of Cuchulain's return from his fight with Connla (Berg H (1), 27r, 492), but it is a change that heralds his access to a true maturity as a playwright, where words alone are not enough to convey the depth of feeling being experienced and the dramatist begins to trust the power of visual effects and the dramatic impact of sound and silence. In earlier drafts Cuchulain pieces together the information he gleans from Fool and Blind Man and voices his tragic apprehension that it is his own son that he has killed. Revisions in 1905–1906 had evolved the image of the three men seated on a bench where they talk of Aoife, the Young Man and Cuchulain's time in Scotland, which culminates with the Blind Man sensing that someone is shaking their seat; the Fool informs him that it is Cuchulain who is causing the bench to shake and, as if to confirm the Fool's observation, Cuchulain voices his terrible realisation. Re-assigning Cuchulain's line to the Blind Man ('It is his own son he has slain') better affirms how that knowledge quite unmans the hero: how can he find words to express his inner torment, of which the shaking of the bench (and how that physically is accomplished by the actor) is now its only token? When Cuchulain does eventually speak, he has already embraced the madness that the torment pitches him into. Yeats trusts movement, the silence of compressed rage on Cuchulain's part, the terror of his companions on the bench suspecting he will inflict violence on them in retaliation for bringing him to this nightmare, to carry his audience to the heart of the hero's anguish. Words when they come are the meaningless ravings of a mad man, wildly brandishing his sword to no purpose. This is tragic dramaturgy of the highest calibre and it is remarkable that such a small correction to an apparently finished drama should achieve such momentous results.

W. David Soud, *Divine Cartographies: God, History and Poesis in W. B. Yeats, David Jones, and T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford English Monographs, 2016), pp. 246, £60; \$100; also available as an e-book and *via* Oxford Scholarship Online. ISBN 9780198777779.<sup>1</sup>

### Grevel Lindop

Religion is once more respectable, or at least discussable, as a constituent of serious literature. Despite taking J. Hillis Miller's classic study *The Disappearance of God* as a starting-point for his examination of the religious element central to the work of three poets, W. David Soud moves on at once to an investigation of the fact that, for all of them, 'even after the Great War, ... "theological experience" was often the overriding consideration, and it determined a great deal about some of their most important works'.

His General Introduction provides a historical context and theoretical framework for the debatable and shifting cluster of connected terms (theology, theodicy, religion, spirituality, mysticism, and others) which make up what Soud neatly calls 'a taxonomy of difficulty' in the midst of which these matters must be examined. Summarising recent work showing that a view of the past century and a half as characterised simply by a process of secularisation or 'disenchantment' would be seriously inaccurate, he goes on to point out (drawing on Charles Taylor's work) that disenchantment

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [GCGLindop@aol.com](mailto:GCGLindop@aol.com)? Quite apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

is in any case not the same thing as secularisation. Liberal Protestantism was every bit as keen to 'disenchant' the world as was scientism: in its Unitarian form, it was precisely the current of thought which T. S. Eliot found spiritually impoverished, and against which he reacted.

In the earlier twentieth century (as Alex Owen in *The Place of Enchantment* has shown), theosophy—and not only in the guise of the Theosophical Society—gained extensive ground, serving as a seedbed for many aspects of modernism. The creative roots of Kandinsky, Malevich, and Mondrian in theosophy are well known: Soud mentions a 'particularly striking convocation' in which A. R. Orage, Evelyn Underhill, Yeats, T. E. Hulme, and Jessie Weston 'regularly attended Quest Society gatherings at Kensington Town Hall'. Much of this had more to do with the status of the self than with a return of 'God', however understood. Freud, Jung, and the idea of a self in touch (however intermittently) with other realities and even other incarnations, past and future, merged easily with the idea of religion as quest rather than dogma. To hunt for traces of a missing deity is itself a religious act.

Nonetheless there remain great and obvious differences between the spiritual quests of Eliot and Jones, who sought understanding and solace within well-defined theological traditions, and Yeats, whose investigations and beliefs were essentially eclectic. Yeats needed to 'hammer [his] thoughts into unity' because they were gathered from diverse sources. For Jones and Eliot, whatever their personal responses, others had already done most of the hammering. Soud renders the notion of a 'theology' for Yeats less implausible by dealing only with the last decade of the poet's life, in which, with guidance from Shri Purohit Swami, he explored Indian religious texts, especially the *Yoga Sutras* of Patañjali, and the *Upanishads*. (Indeed, Soud's book as a whole is less comprehensive than its title seems to imply, dealing only, for Jones, with *The Anathema* and, for Eliot, with *Four Quartets*.) The great value of the chapter on Yeats is that Soud clearly knows far more about these Sanskrit texts and their translations than others who have written on the subject; nor is he tempted to use them to explain too much about the poet. Instead he focuses on the difficulties of interpretation faced by Yeats and his instructor, and the various misunderstandings which arose. Tellingly, these often centred on Yeats's reluctance to abandon the idea of the self. Indian thought posited a transcendent Self; but this Self lacked individual characteristics: it was divine and transcendent because it was, precisely, not the individual person we might each imagine ourselves to be. Yeats repeatedly manages not to understand this. Instead, his annotations to Hume's translation of the *Upanishads* show him, in Soud's words, 'attempt[ing] to locate between the individual self and the [divine]

Self a kind of happy medium called the “real self” ... that would allow him to attain emancipation without surrendering the individual will’. Such misunderstandings derive, Soud shows, from the discourse of the Theosophical Society, through which Yeats often interprets the texts.

The *Yoga Sutras*, with their highly technical discussion of contemplative states, were probably even more important than the *Upanishads* in their effect on Yeats’s thought and poetry. When he wrote (in his Introduction to Hamsa’s *The Holy Mountain*) ‘I know nothing but the novels of Balzac and the aphorisms of Patañjali’, he was indicating an important debt. He wrestled mightily with these notoriously compressed and enigmatic verses, and again misunderstandings were plentiful. Nonetheless, the creative results were splendid, and Soud is probably right to say of ‘Long-Legged Fly’ that ‘the poem’s form and content reflect his absorption in Yoga philosophy’. Soud also offers a judicious and knowledgeable guide through Yeats’s somewhat fragmentary investigations of Tantra (chiefly in the books of Sir John Woodroffe, *alias* ‘Arthur Avalon’), which provide a context for discussion of *A Vision B* and several of the later poems, including ‘Vacillation’, ‘Meru’, and ‘Lapis Lazuli’.<sup>2</sup> Though necessarily challenging to read, this part of Soud’s chapter offers valuable guidance on a subject too little understood.

<sup>2</sup> Editor’s Note: See Soud, 61 and ff., nn. 130 and ff. Naresh Guha was one of the earliest Indian Yeats scholars, and he provided an introduction to Yeats’s Tantric interests in his *W. B. Yeats: An Indian Approach* (Calcutta: Jadavpur University, 1968), 120 and ff. In his fifth chapter, ‘Patañjali, Tantra, and a Swami: figures in the carpet of modern poetry’ (100 and ff.), Guha traces what he believes had been the only seemingly ‘spasmodic’ history of Yeats’s interests in the *Upanishads* (100). In July 1962, Mrs Yeats showed him ‘an important small collection of books that once belonged to the poet. These books were kept in a small side room .... In reply to my query if W. B. Yeats ever became interested in the Tantras, Mrs. Yeats silently pointed to a complete set of these books neatly arranged on a shelf, and readily supplied the information that the poet did acquire the books as soon as they were published in London. No scholars or biographers have had the occasion as yet to mention this fact while writing on Yeats. I am happy that my conjecture, mainly from internal evidences, was amply supported by the evidence from Mrs. Yeats herself’ (121, n. 90, [144], emphasis added.). That ‘complete set’ can only have been some or all of the 21 volumes of Avalon’s series of editions of *Tantrik Texts* from 1913 to 1924. None is now in Yeats’s library, which includes only *Shiva Chandra Vidyārnavā Bhattāchāryya, Principles of Tantra*, ed. by Arthur Avalon, 2 vols. (London: Luzac, 1914–1916), *Tantra of the Great Liberation (Mahānirvāna tantra)*, trans. with commentary by Arthur Avalon (London: Luzac, 1913) and *Tantra. Hymns to the Goddess*, translated by Arthur and Ellen Avalon (London: Luzac & Co, 1913), see *YL* 2105, 162 and 943; and *YA* 289. Of the last, only the Preface and the Introduction are cut and these three are not in the *Tantrik Texts* series. Guha’s account strongly implies

Lacking such a clear and interesting relationship between little-understood sources and major creative outcomes, Soud's chapter on *The Anathemata* of David Jones is essentially a critical reading; or rather, perhaps, an adjudication amongst critics. He suggests that interpretations of this challenging text have been dominated by 'false dichotomies', in terms of meaning and of form, some critics seeing the work as an extreme example of 'the mythical method' and not essentially Christian at all, and others viewing it as largely an *apologia* for Catholic Christianity. At the same time, there are critics who see the work as having linear development, and others viewing it as a labyrinth—or taking literally Jones's own admission that it 'has no plan, or at least is not planned', so that, simply, 'one thing leads to another'. Soud comes down mainly on the 'Catholic' side (as indeed the general bearing of his book requires), whilst suggests that there is truth in all of these readings. He usefully brings to bear biographical information and the ideas of those who influenced Jones, from secular theorists (Clive Bell, Roger Fry) to Catholic thinkers (among them Eric Gill and Jacques Maritain), and recent critics including Geoffrey Hill and Thomas Dilworth. The result is a useful critical survey, reaching the unsurprising conclusion that 'As the expression of a theologically determined poetics, ... *The Anathemata* is a remarkable achievement'—with which few will disagree.

When it comes to Eliot, Soud is once more on his mettle. His chapter on *Four Quartets* focuses mainly on Eliot's debt to Karl Barth, reading the poems as, amongst other things, 'an evolving negotiation between the Christian mystics and Karl Barth'—for, though, as Soud points out, 'Barth was deeply suspicious of mysticism', his reflections on time (in his most

that Mrs Yeats did not normally encourage scholars to probe Yeats's Tantric interests, an impression reinforced by the opinion of Mr Roger Nyle Parisious, for some years Anne Yeats's archivist. He writes to me that Anne Yeats 'preferred [Yeats's Tantric books] not be discussed' (email, 21–10–17). The implication is clear: Yeats's Tantrik Texts were culled after 1962. On 30 October [1915] Yeats wrote to the reciter and actor Maud Mann, about coming to hear her music: 'I have thought a great deal over what you have told me & am looking up in my books on Tantra evocation of the Devas. The woman friend I propose to bring is M<sup>rs</sup> Shakespear, a fine musician & herself a most remarkable clairvoyant. I think some of her visions can only be explained by looking upon them as from the Deva world'. (*CL InteLex* 2790) He saw her on 28 November and again on 6 December 1915. The 'Avalons' were Sir John Woodroffe and his wife, Ellen Elizabeth, friends not only of the Tagore family, but also of Sir John Rothenstein: see his *Men and Memories* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), 249–50. See also Kathleen Taylor, *Sir John Woodroffe, Tantra and Bengal: 'an Indian soul in a European body?'* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001).

influential work, *The Epistle to the Romans*) are both quasi-mystical and very much akin to Eliot's poem:

this moment beyond all time, when men stand before God, ... is the Truth. All that is before and after this 'Moment of moments', everything which encircles, like a plane, this Point which cannot be reproduced,—is time ... And so, the time in which we live conceals and yet preserves Eternity within it[.]

Exploring the *Quartets*' debts to Dante and St John of the Cross as well as to the stringencies of Barth, Soud offers sensitive readings of important passages in the poems; though Yeatsians may be dismayed to read, in his discussion of 'Little Gidding', that 'For Eliot, [Yeats] is the epitome of mystical aspirations gone wrong', and that 'In his refusal to submit to, as Barth frames it, "the final negation of the man of the world and of all his possibilities", Yeats is an idolater of personality'. Soud does not fully explain how this squares with the apparent respect accorded to the advice proffered by this 'familiar compound ghost'; nor does he seem to attend the implications of that word 'compound'. (Reassuringly, Soud tells us that 'Whether Eliot regarded Yeats as damnable is open to question'.)

At the close of *Divine Cartographies*, Indian thought reappears in a useful discussion of the way in which Eliot manages to resolve the *Quartets* by integrating insights from the *Bhagavad Gītā* with elements from Christian mysticism as well as from the theology of Barth.

It is disappointing to find this expensive and generally well-produced book disfigured by many misprints. To take the material on Yeats alone, these include a quotation from 'The Second Coming' horribly mislineated as 'The best lack all conviction, | While the worst are full of passionate intensity' (4); Graham Hough appearing (20) as 'Graham Gough', and duly indexed under G—becoming two people, since his correct spelling also features; *The Thirteen Principle [sic] Upanishads* (51n.); 'no less a luminary Ramakrishna' (60); 'and [for "an"] energy which ...' (63); 'Ellman' for 'Ellmann' (69); 'Lapis Lazuli' misquoted ('a water-course or avalanche', 95); a poem mistitled ('Man and the Echo' rather than 'The Man ...' with initial capitals missed from 'O Rocky Voice' in the same poem (p. 96: odd given that Soud uses the *Variorum Edition*); and, in the bibliography, 'Shee Purohit Swami' (for 'Shree ...', 233. The main text's consistent spelling of his title as 'Shri' also goes unexplained.) Someone at Oxford University Press should have noticed.





*Yeats, Philosophy, and the Occult*, ed. by Matthew Gibson and Neil Mann (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Press, 2016). Hardcover, pp. 237, £75 [Distributed by Liverpool University Press, 4 Cambridge Street, Liverpool L69 7ZU]. ISBN 9781942954255.<sup>1</sup>

R. A. Gilbert

The editors' choice of a title for this collection is, perhaps, unfortunate, for it may lead readers to expect what they will not find. Philosophy is certainly present but 'the Occult', in the sense of discrete elements of Western Esotericism, is not. What they will find is rather comparative religion and aspects of parapsychology, and these as they relate especially to *A Vision*.

Indeed, the presence of *A Vision* permeates all of the seven essays (and one of the two appendices), which is unsurprising given that the book is a sequel to the previous collection of Yeats essays from Clemson UP—*Yeats's A Vision: Explications and Context* (2012, edited by Neil Mann, Matthew Gibson and Clare Nally)—which was concerned solely with that work. Three of the present essays are specifically devoted to *A Vision*, but they are of mixed merit and it will be as well to consider first the other contents, beginning with Wayne Chapman's splendid introductory chapter,

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [sacregis42@hotmail.com](mailto:sacregis42@hotmail.com)? Quite apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

“Something Intended, Complete”: Major Work on Yeats Past, Present, and Yet to Come’.

This essay is, in Chapman’s opening words, ‘a prelude to a body of new scholarship on W. B. Yeats’ and he reminds us, emphatically, that ‘Yeats is a very LARGE project, as well as a WORK IN PROGRESS’. That said he launches into a sweeping and comprehensive survey of the present and, hoped for, future state of Yeats studies. Chapman is sardonic but not cynical, incisive but always just short of being catty: a difficult balancing act given the current chaotic state of the academic publishing world.

He carefully lays out the labyrinthine processes and progress of (relatively) recent Yeats publishing with all of its intricacies, difficulties and often unresolved issues—and all under the shadow of an ominous future for academic publishing in general. But Chapman lightens the gloom by presenting the reader with facsimiles of hitherto overlooked annotations to ‘A Dream of Death’ in Yeats’s copy of *Poems* (1912). He further emphasises the need to revisit personal copies in his appendix to this volume, ‘Annotations in the Writings of Walter Savage Landor in the Yeateses’ Library’. In this Chapman provides an exhaustive catalogue of the check marks, strokes, brackets and other reference annotations in copies of Landor’s works in the library. These notes may, he writes, ‘be used to reconstruct one’s own picture of Yeats’s engagement with Landor’s texts’. (p. 289). The merit of this is apparent in the other significant element of Chapman’s essay, in which he sets out, *in extenso*, his ‘Case for the Origin of “The Phases of the Moon”’.

The essays that follow do not all, alas, live up to Chapman’s standard. The editors describe the second contribution—‘Ghost, Medium, Criminal, Genius: Lombrosian Types in Yeats’s Art and Philosophy’, by Katherine Ebury—as ‘highly original’ (which it is) and as an essay that ‘argues most convincingly for the influence of Cesare Lombroso in Yeats’s ideas’ (which it does not). It should be noted that their further claim of ‘the fact that Lombroso’s eugenics enthused the spiritualist movement’ is unsubstantiated and is, at best, highly debatable.

Ebury’s essay does not open well. She refers to Lombroso’s ‘occult researches’—by which she means his psychical investigations—and to ‘the mystical system of *A Vision*’: too loose a use, by far, of the word ‘mystical’. There is a further lack of precision in her reference to Yeats’s ‘occult interests’, in which she includes his engagement with psychical research. The terms are not interchangeable, and it must be noted that Havelock Ellis was in no sense an ‘occultist’ (unless engaging in the use of psychedelic drugs is thought to be confined to occultists).

It is also difficult to be convinced of the significance of Yeats’s appetite for detective fiction. In 1949 Arthur Hannah (actually ‘Hanna’, but

Ebury merely repeats an error from *Interviews and Recollections*, 324 & n.) recollected selling detective novels to Yeats but the anecdote serves only to show that Yeats preferred thrillers to cerebral detective stories. We do not know just which titles he read, or how bloodthirsty they may have been. What is more significant is that Yeats didn't retain the crime fiction that he read and it seems far more probable that he read it for relaxation; the 'four detective novels' that Yeats 'consumed' weekly seems to startle Ebury, but it is far from excessive (as I know from personal experience).

There is no question that Yeats did read books by Lombroso, and he may well have made use of Lombroso's ideas in constructing the vocabulary of *A Vision*, but borrowing does not constitute significant influence upon the borrower. Ebury draws together too many disparate strands without offering more than circumstantial evidence and guilt by association (as with chronological parallels between Lombroso's interest in spiritualism, in Italy, and Yeats's involvement with the Golden Dawn, in England). Her concluding suggestion that 'Yeats and George's shared admiring reading of Lombroso should be considered a central undercurrent to that occult work and to their courtship, marriage, and child-bearing' cannot stand up in the absence of direct and unequivocal evidence from primary sources of Lombroso's influence upon them.

With Charles I. Armstrong's "Born Anew": W. B. Yeats's "Eastern" Turn in the 1930s' we return to surer ground. His consideration of 'Yeats's engagement with Asian literature' is well constructed and convincing. Yeats's early fascination with Indian thought, in the 1880s, was continued with his promotion of Tagore, in 1912, and reinforced, with a deeper philosophical underpinning when, in 1932, he entered into a productive relationship with Shri Purohit Swami.

Yeats's 'search for a rebirth of a kind' (as Armstrong describes it) was not a rejection of the West in favour of the East, but an informed, creative association of both. For Yeats, what the East gives us is access to the sources of 'Unity of Being' and we have, in both art and spirituality, 'borrowed directly from the East and selected for admiration and repetition everything in our own past that is least European' (Introduction to Shri Purohit Swami, *An Indian Monk, His Life and Adventures*.1932; *ES&I* 433). Thus, as Armstrong points out, we see that 'Yeats's Eastern introductions are not in fact mere first encounters with writers from an alien culture, but rather the rediscovery of something uncannily familiar' (p. 103).

And, of course, Yeats did not reject western thought. In the year before he met Purohit, Yeats wrote an introduction to J. M. Hone and H. M. Rossi's *Bishop Berkeley*, on which foundation Colin McDowell builds his essay, 'Yeats and Abstraction: From Berkeley to Zen'. This is concerned as much, if not

more, with the conflicts among Berkeley scholars as to just what was his true philosophical position, as it is with the manner in which those same scholars (supplemented by the views of Yeats scholars) view Yeats's understanding of Berkeley's thought. As such the essay provides an admirable exposition of Berkeley's philosophy of mind as perceived by Yeats, Whitehead, Luce and others.

But Yeats's own developing views, as understood by Berkeley scholars, here play second fiddle to the internecine conflicts among those scholars as to the true nature of Berkeley's philosophy. McDowell notes that Yeats's position, on the side of common sense, is clearly stated in *On the Boiler*: 'No educated man to-day accepts the objective matter and space of popular science' (*Ex* 435–36). That his mature views are consonant with Berkeley's is pointed out by McDowell in one of the perceptive, detailed and invaluable footnotes that make up one third of his essay. He notes that, 'For Yeats, of course, as for Berkeley, the only way that such an absurd idea—materialism—could have emerged was because people indulged in illegitimate abstraction'. (n. 19, 282).

The one complaint I have about this excellent essay is that McDowell joins his fellow contributors in conflating 'occultists' with psychical researchers. Both J. W. Dunne and W. Whately Smith qualify for the latter title, but neither of them fall at all into the occultist camp where McDowell places them.

Here we may turn to the three chapters of the book that relate directly to *A Vision*. First comes Neil Mann's 'W. B. Yeats, Dream, Vision and the Dead', the longest, at 64pp, and probably the most important essay in this collection. It offers a carefully focused, detailed analysis of the aspects of Yeats's thought that provide us with a knowledge and understanding of Yeats's visionary processes, noting his distinction between dream and vision and between types of dream. He utilises intelligently a very wide range of sources—both within and without Yeats's texts—and provides, among much else, an excellent treatment of the magical attitudes, beliefs, practices and symbolism within the Golden Dawn.

The whole essay is carefully structured and usefully divided into complementary sections: 'Classifying Dream'; 'Engineering Vision'; 'Exploring Astral Light'; 'Lecturing on Ghosts' and 'Reading Voices'. This enables the reader to navigate among the dangerous shoals of Yeats's own and Maud Gonne's dreams; the sources, contents and development of *A Vision*; and Yeats's understanding of our relationship with the dead and our shared experiences with them.

Thus we are skilfully led through vision, dream and psychic experience (George's as well as WBY's) to Mann's conclusions. For Yeats, vision, when

properly utilised, can lead to truth—but not alone. Mann reminds us that ‘Yeats had used evocation and meditation, vision and dream to explore mind, his own and also the dimensions of mind as the animated universe’. Further, the degree of insight obtained from dreams depends upon their nature and their particular form and source. As to visionary experiences, Mann also notes that ‘Yeats was convinced that these visions gave access to other-wise hidden knowledge and guidance, though he was aware that the images could also become a maze’. (153) It is a tribute to Mann’s industry and skill that the reader can follow his path through the labyrinthine complexity of Yeats’s thought to his concluding comment that, for Yeats, ‘The dream is both poetic artifice and magical vision: the dead are the inspiration of the past and a community of spirits’. (154).

The second of what might be called these ‘*Vision* essays’ is Matthew Gibson’s exploration of ‘Yeats, the Great Year, and Pierre Duhem’, in which he sets out to trace ‘[t]he development of the concept of a “Great Year” in W. B. Yeats’s thought’, and its culmination ‘in his most macrocosmic application of the symbolism in *A Vision*’. (171). A difficult task, but Gibson largely accomplishes it by providing us with a detailed analysis of Yeats’s complex vision of ages, phases and calendrical time, supported by a kaleidoscope of sources—variously astronomical and philosophical, reliable and unreliable—with Pierre Duhem’s *Le Système du Monde* at the centre.

Gibson also guides the reader through the astrological and philosophical complexity of the text of *A Vision*, charting in depth the progress of Yeats’s textual changes and corrections from *AVA* to *AVB*, with the aid of a wealth of diagrams based on Yeats’s originals. In the course of this exercise Gibson analyses and expounds the purpose, content and method of *A Vision*, presenting the reader with a clear view of this most opaque of works.

There remains a caveat. Gibson is at pains to present Pierre Duhem as a decisive source for Yeats in his continuing search for a definitive understanding of the concept of the Great Year, but although Duhem’s work was valuable for Yeats he seems to be one source among many rather than a primary influence. In much the same way, in his appendix on ‘Yeats’s Notes on Leo Frobenius’s *The Voice of Africa* (1913)’, Gibson stresses the significance of the book for Yeats’s work on the Great Year. It does seem, however, more likely that Frobenius was yet another arrow in Yeats’s quiver, but Gibson deserves praise for faithfully transcribing the relevant pages from ‘Rapallo Notebook E’ and providing a detailed commentary upon them.

The final ‘*Vision*’ essay is even more speculative. In his essay, ‘The Morphological Interaction of the *Four Faculties* in the Historical System of W. B. Yeats’s *A Vision*’, Graham A. Dampier builds upon the parallels, or similarities, between Yeats’s and Spengler’s representations of history as a

circular, or cyclical, progression with recurring 'years of crisis'. Yeats himself pointed out the similarities and accepted also that this view of history is shared by many other scholars. But Dampier suggests that there is a previously unrecognised 'third conceptual connection between *A Vision* and *The Decline of the West*: what Yeats called the line of "interacting periods"'.

Dampier's aim is to 'explain what the line of interacting periods is; to illustrate its bearing on historical change; and to trace its movements in the historical gyres'. This he seeks to accomplish by examining Spengler's ideas in depth and by relating them to the appropriate concepts in *A Vision*. His analysis is detailed and impressive, and there may indeed be this previously un-noticed conceptual connection, but it is difficult to see that it is of any great significance or consequence.

What this essay—and, indeed, the whole collection—does demonstrate, however, is that the bones of *A Vision* are very far from being picked clean. We may not unreasonably expect a continuing flow of such essays from present and future generations of Yeats students, but on their potential quality it would be unwise to speculate.

Alexander Bubb, *Meeting Without Knowing It: Kipling and Yeats at the Fin de Siècle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 288. ISBN 9780198753872.<sup>1</sup>

Jad Adams

The relationship between Yeats and Kipling is such an obvious area of study it is surprising that no one has worked on it before. They were born in the same year (1865); had their first books published in 1886: *Departmental Ditties* for Kipling, *Mosada* for Yeats; arrived in London to begin literary careers in close proximity—1889 for Kipling, 1887 for Yeats; they became the first and second English language recipients of the Nobel Prize for Literature, 1907 in Kipling's case, 1923 in that of Yeats; and they died within three years of each other in 1936 and 1939.

However, as Alexander Bubb indicates in his title, the two poets did not know each other, and their presence in each other's lives and work was more like planetary influence than direct contact. We thus have this consideration of how the authors, in Foucault's phrase which Bubb borrows for his title, 'criticise one another, invalidate one another, pillage one another, meet without knowing it'.

Bubb refers to 'uncanny echoes' despite their apparent antipathy. Yeats tended not to make public pronouncements on living writers, waiting until

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [jadadams@btinternet.com](mailto:jadadams@btinternet.com)? Quite apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.



they 'had the goodness to die'. He did make one unguarded comment to an American reporter in 1903, 'Kipling had a soul to sell and he sold it to the devil ... Undoubtedly Kipling is a man of great genius. He has done a work of great beauty and of a new kind. But latterly he has turned himself into a kind of imperialist journalist in prose and verse, and with all that I have no sympathy'.

Over time the popular judgement has presented us with Kipling the imperialist and Yeats the Irish nationalist; Kipling the lyricist and Yeats the occultist. In such a presentation Kipling the modernist and Yeats the Victorian are erased from the canonical memory while at the same time their many similarities are glossed over. Alexander Bubb brings abundant evidence to emphasise the ways their work and their lives in fact reflected those of each other, while at the same time demonstrating the complexity of their literary development in terms of source material, national sentiment and artistic pose.

Several of us have questioned whether the early Kipling really deserves to be in the camp of his and Yeats' mutual friend W. E. Henley's imperialist 'hearties'. Bubb remarks that Kipling's 'cod-Rossetti juvenilia' is comparable to those of Ernest Dowson and early Yeats. Yet even later than juvenilia, in the early 1890s, Kipling's artistic heritage is demonstrably closer to that of the aesthetes Pater and Wilde and therefore closer to that of the Rhymers' Club with which Yeats was associated, than it is to the poets of empire. Both writers inherited from aestheticism and the pre-Raphaelites, Yeats from his father John Butler Yeats' studio and Kipling from that of his father Lockwood Kipling, and also from his uncle Edward Burne-Jones.

Bubb sees Ireland and India offering both men something similar in landscape and belonging with thoughtful transpositions of Yeats' and Kipling' work such as Yeats' being 'a boy with never a crack in my heart' and Kipling's 'life unaltered our childhood knew'. Both poets lament their losses, of Sligo and Bombay respectively,

Both writers experimented with forms and tropes in the context of *fin de siècle* London; both conducted experiments in modern mythology; both strove to express vernacular. Kipling did so with the common soldier's slang and use of Hindi in which he had been brought up. Yeats, who Bubb remarks 'would only ever possess a rudimentary grasp of Gaelic' aimed for 'an indefinable Irish quality of rhythm and style' and used vernacular idiom in his verse and drama.

In artistic dead ends there were also similarities: both wrote novels, a form in which neither was to excel: Yeats' *John Sherman* and Kipling's *The Light That Failed*, both published in 1891, both worked out, in less than satisfactory terms, questions relating to art and women. Bubb remarks that

‘Both concern heroes who are self-divided, vagrant and meandering, and who in their shiftless exile are tempted by female characters associated with a frivolous and rootless art .... This precipitates a crisis of identity, resolved by an awakening from troubled dreams that is consummated in a geographic homecoming’.

The comparisons can be pushed too far, however. By 1898 Kipling was one of the world’s wealthiest authors while Lady Gregory was still paying Yeats’ dental bills. Kipling’s talking-animal fantasy world in *The Jungle Book* was superlatively successful; Yeats’ occultism and folklore contributed to his poetic universe but he never took the public by storm with it, ‘Fairies are not popular this side of the water, are considered unscientific’, he remarked gloomily.

Bubb shows a wide reading of Victorian influences on, and contemporaries of, his chosen authors, most valuably in the chapter ‘Negotiating the Literary World of *Fin de Siècle* London’. In this chapter the poets do not quite meet at the dinner tables of W. E. Henley and Edmund Gosse. In the event, they were to meet only in cartoons and satirical gossip.

It is easy to recommend this painstaking analysis and detailed use of sources in pursuing the ‘submerged relationship’. Bubb considers that among Yeats’s contemporaries, perhaps only Kipling could rival him in the determination to seek poetic authority. With this in mind, he restores an understanding of their shared intellectual background which he finds in the mutually formative period he describes here before the Boer War, in which conflict they supported opposite sides and which, in Bubb’s words, ‘initiated their estrangement within the historical record’.



Emily C. Bloom, *The Wireless Past: Anglo-Irish Writers and the BBC, 1931–1968* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 224. ISBN 978019874961.<sup>1</sup>

### Emilie Morin

Emily Bloom's monograph is the first study to trace the involvement of Anglo-Irish writers at the BBC. It is a wonderfully rich and enlightening book—so much so that it is difficult to do justice to the depth and breadth of the research—and it is beautifully written. The central case studies are taken from the works of W. B. Yeats, Louis MacNeice, Elizabeth Bowen and Samuel Beckett (in that order). There are compelling grounds for this selection: all of them wrote programmes, talks and plays for the BBC, and experimented with voice and sound techniques as well as radiogenic themes and genres. 'Radiogenic'—the term that emerged in the 1920s to designate plays, poems and texts germane to broadcasting—is a concept central to the book, through which Bloom traces the legacies of figures as varied as Guglielmo Marconi, John Reith and Rudolf Arnheim, and discusses the processes through which literary broadcasts adapt, cite and reinterpret past literary works. The radiogenic tropes that Bloom discerns in the works of Anglo-Irish writers are numerous and include 'uncanny repetition'; the 'often melancholic pull of the literary past'; 'returns, echoes and hauntings';

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [emilie.morin@york.ac.uk](mailto:emilie.morin@york.ac.uk)? Quite apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

and 'tensions between the unknown future in the distant past, embodiment and disembodiment, communalism and individualism, and ephemerality and permanence' (3–4). For Bloom, it is especially important to investigate radio's capacity to generate radically new conceptions of literary publics. Drawing on little-known archival sources, she shows how Yeats's, MacNeice's, Bowen's and Beckett's radiogenic works impacted upon their perceptions of their publics, as well as on their broader careers and perspectives on literary forms beyond the studio. Each of the four chapters excavates intricate connections between the radiogenic texts that these writers wrote for the BBC and their non-radiophonic work.

The Introduction, 'Air-Borne Bards', borrows its title from *Autumn Sequel*, one of many texts in which MacNeice reflects on traditions of oral poetry and on the novel horizons opened up by radio broadcasting. Bloom gives a detailed overview of the political and cultural contexts that shaped the rise of broadcasting in the United Kingdom and the Irish Free State, showing how '[t]he bardic model of public poetry on air captured the imagination of broadcasters, writers, and theorists' and proved especially appealing 'to Irish writers who, like MacNeice, were steeped in the folklore and poetry popularised earlier in the century by the Irish Literary Revival' (1). As Bloom emphasises, radio offered 'an alternative at once exhilarating and frightening' to Anglo-Irish writers 'who were experiencing a sense of displacement and homelessness' and were 'increasingly alienated from existing models of Irish and British national literatures in the politicised contexts of post-independence Ireland and the Second World War' (21, 5). At the BBC, Yeats, MacNeice, Bowen and Beckett were in an unusual position, in that 'they could be seen as both insiders speaking from the centre of imperial power and also as outsiders talking back to the centre' (7).

Radio enabled Yeats to explore a new dimension of the spoken word and to craft a new audience—an 'intimate auditory audience for literature in an age of mass media' (28). Chapter 1, 'W. B. Yeats's Radiogenic Poetry', charts Yeats's keen reflection on radio as a public medium and its implications for poetic genres, offering some beautifully crafted close readings of the poetry as well as a valuable synthesis of formal and historicist traditions of scholarship through its focus on radiogenic forms. The chapter pays close attention to the poems that Yeats originally wrote for radio and discusses his evolving understanding of how information is disseminated through broadcasting. Bloom shows that 'radio played a pivotal role as a medium through which Yeats performed, publicised, and published poetry at the end of his life', and argues that 'his interpretation of this new entity, the broadcast audience, was an active influence in shaping the auditory poetics of his late lyrics' (29). Through his radiogenic poetry, Yeats 'not only redefined his publication

strategies but also reshaped the very substance of his poetry, blending oral traditions and print lyricism into radiogenic poetic forms' (29). 'Roger Casement', 'Sweet Dancer' and 'The Curse of Cromwell' carry Yeats's hopes for a new audience and relay his attempts to imagine spaces for radiogenic poetry, from the poet's pub to the poet's parlour. The oral traditions that influenced his broadcasts were heterogeneous, and encompassed classical drama, bardic poetry, Irish broadside ballads, modern oral performance, and working-class and middle-class traditions of social recitation. Ultimately, the Yeats who wrote poetry for the BBC 'was not the old man on the boiler, but rather an adventurous novice in a new medium, attempting to find the best reception for his new auditory publics', who 'went further than many of his contemporaries in incorporating these questions into the very texture of his poems' (63).

Chapter 2, entitled 'Louis MacNeice in the Echo Chamber: The Soundscapes of War', shows how MacNeice's twenty-two-year broadcasting career nourished his poetry during the war years and beyond. His deep interest in radio, ignited at an earlier point, also informed his broader political perspective as well as many of his reflections on the political lucidity of wireless listeners. Like Yeats, MacNeice could occasionally be ambivalent towards the BBC; nevertheless, he found radio work fascinating and unexpectedly challenging. Bloom traces numerous shifts in MacNeice's perspective, with radio initially operating as a 'consistently negative symbol for interpersonal disconnection' before becoming the source of many creative experiments with radiophonic voices and plotlines (68). The chapter explores the recurrence of echoes, which range from familiar tropes of poetic repetition and refrain, bolstered by poetic evocations of Circe, Echo and Narcissus, to the echo chamber sound effects embedded in plays such as *The Dark Tower*, *The Mad Islands* and *Persons from Porlock*.

Chapter 3, entitled 'Exorcising the Ghosts of Print: Elizabeth Bowen's Spectral Radio', shows that Bowen's involvement with broadcasting was more substantial than is commonly assumed. During the Second World War, radio became an important side-line in Bowen's career, at a moment when writing for radio also involved responding to a literary marketplace radically altered by shortages and bombings (103). Bowen's work for the BBC, which continued throughout the post-war years, remained marked by her awareness of radio's difficulties; 'Writing for the air frenzies me', was how she put it (97). Her earliest connection to the BBC goes back to 1934, when she published a short story in the BBC's periodical *The Listener*. She participated in a broadcast programme for the first time seven years later, and generally found radio extremely challenging due to her frequent stammer. The BBC only became willing to record Bowen

speaking for major broadcasts when magnetic tape became available for recording purposes, enabling staff to cut and edit broadcasts (95). Bowen had a deep interest in radio's perceived ties to the occult, and her wartime radio features, in which she summons the ghosts of Jane Austen, Anthony Trollope and Fanny Burney, reveal that she perceived radio as 'an irresistible opportunity to resurrect authorial spirits', by staging 'ghostly visitors who chastise, correct, or disrupt the expectations of their living readers' (96). Subsequently, Bowen's approach to literary history remained driven by a 'radiogenic approach'; Bloom shows how her experiences at the BBC inflected the Gothic themes of her later novels, *A World of Love*, *The Little Girls* and *Eva Trout*.

Chapter 4, 'Samuel Beckett's Sound Archives', associates the end of the golden era of radio with Beckett, showing how radio's gradual move towards the obsolete and retreat to the archive frames Beckett's work with sound. The chapter traces many twists and turns in Beckett's relation to the Third Programme, from the BBC's initial failure to recognise *Waiting for Godot* as an interesting radiophonic prospect (Val Gielgud deemed it 'phoney' (136)) to later wranglings over taped broadcasts. Particular attention is paid to the interplay between the archival and the ephemeral in *All That Fall*, a radio play commissioned by the BBC, and the stage play *Krapp's Last Tape*, which, for Bloom, was informed by 'the reception problems that plagued the live broadcast and the re-broadcast of *All That Fall* and *Molloy*', and by the difficulties Beckett encountered when requesting access to recordings of his broadcasts in the BBC Paris studio. For Bloom, Beckett remains 'an important critic of the assumptions underlying the arc of isolation of sound', someone 'whose voice still cogently addresses the changing sound archives of even this digital age' (160).

The conclusion, entitled 'Legacies of Radiogenic Aesthetics', offers broader considerations about the history of broadcasting as well as a thought-provoking account of cultural politics at the BBC. Bloom highlights the concealed hierarchies and biases framing the BBC's interests in Irish Protestant writers, who continued to serve as 'gatekeepers at the BBC' long after the Second World War (177). The BBC displayed a marked preference for 'beneficiaries of deeply ingrained privilege' such as Beckett, Bowen, Yeats and MacNeice, who also stood as members of 'model minorities who could access institutions of power while also, as outsiders, challenging these very institutions' (171). Others—Seán Ó Faoláin and Kate O'Brien in particular—were not quite as lucky. Likewise, Patrick Kavanagh found that 'the BBC citadel' was not ready to listen to his ideas (175–77). It seems that Yeats held much sway in the late 1930s: Bloom cites an internal BBC memo enquiring whether or not Ó Faoláin had been recommended by

Yeats, as a way of ascertaining whether or not the correspondence should be followed up (177). The conclusion also considers the contributions made by Anglo-Irish writers to the increasing multiculturalism of BBC programmes, presenting Yeats as a critical figure, eager to find allies among Indian, Irish and Egyptian broadcasters. For Bloom, Yeats remains one of a few artists who were, 'from an early point in the development of radio, interested in its potential as a medium through which artists from the peripheries could "talk back" to power' (179).

As Bloom notes at various points throughout, charting the history of radio broadcasting and radiogenic writing involves a delicate juggling act between print, recorded and archival sources, and the careful piecing together of archived textual fragments and recordings that are not easily accessible. Extant scholarship poses further challenges: the seminal studies dealing with radio modernism tend to focus on isolated contexts, and modernist studies has been slow to acknowledge the significance of radio broadcasting to modernist aesthetics. Transnational studies of radio aesthetics and techniques often focus on single writers, and few attempts have been made to consider the complex webs of influence and the conceptual and practical reflections generated by radio as a transnational phenomenon. Bloom, however, remains attentive to the transnational conceptions of radio that emerged after the 1920s and emphasises their reliance upon 'an elaborate pattern of exchange and cross-pollination' between institutions, writers, national broadcasting stations and national borders (8). As such, her book represents a major step forward in radio studies and in modernist studies, and it will be of great interest to many Yeats scholars.





Ezra Pound, *Posthumous Cantos*, ed. by Massimo Bacigalupo (Manchester: Fyfield Books, Carcanet Press, 2015), pp. 220. ISBN 9781784101206.<sup>1</sup>

### Stoddard Martin

At ‘Yeats’s Mother-Tongue’, a reading in 2013 at the Irish Embassy, London, Grey Gowrie broke the flow of recitation from the Irish bard to announce that he had come to the view that *The Pisan Cantos* was the greatest poem of the twentieth century. An intake of breath was apparent, and the Irish poet and peer hastened to contextualize his *faux pas* by reading one of these cantos’ fractured recollections of Pound’s period as the elder poet’s secretary at Stone Cottage in Sussex. When asked later why he had come to his view about Pound, Gowrie reported that he had once asked Robert Lowell who was the greatest poet of the twentieth century and, expecting the answer to be Eliot, was shocked when Lowell responded without hesitation, ‘There are two: Hardy and Pound’. When asked why, Lowell added, ‘Because of the heartbreak’.

Identifying what is of value among the scraps and fragments collected in *Posthumous Cantos* might entail similar explanation. The heart of the collection was drafted in Italy in Italian during World War II and contains parts of the ‘paradiso’ Pound intended to paint before fortune turned on him and he was trotted off by partisans from Olga Rudge’s eyrie in

<sup>1</sup> *Note*—Further information may have been gathered since this article was prepared for publication. If you would like to find out if any further information has been discovered that may help your own research, why not write to the author at [stoddardmartin@hotmail.com](mailto:stoddardmartin@hotmail.com)? Quite apart from anything else, feedback is always welcomed.

Sant' Ambrogio. Once in the cage at Pisa which would become his residence for six months, he had neither these working drafts nor little else to refer to. Thus came in a flow the cantos Gowrie extols, incorporating along with their reminiscences of Yeats and others phrases and tropes flashing up out of what we can now read here in lucid form, either in Pound's adopted language or the translations of it which editor Massimo Bacigalupo provides.

This book offers not so much 'posthumous' cantos as sketches mislaid, discarded, forgotten about and/or superseded. The sequence begins with the three so-called Ur-cantos which Pound published more than once in his lifetime. It is pleasant and edifying to read them again, but one may ask why they are here? A hypothesis might be that they help to fill out what is partly intended as a kind of shadow version of *The Cantos* at large, shorter and easier for non-initiates to digest. There may be need for that, but if so Pound answered it with the *Selected Cantos* he provided for Eliot at Faber in the early 1950s. Another hypothesis might be that Pound's heirs and editor thought it a good publishing wheeze to exploit the existence of little known material. There is nothing new or wholly unethical in such a practice: scholars have grown used to it at least since when Valerie Eliot published a facsimile of the *Ur-Waste Land*, an event which did much to enhance the reputation of Pound as editor, revealing how he had spared Eliot from exposure of some of his more repellent sexual and racial animadversions. Pound as editor of his own work often did himself less justice, especially in respect to the latter. Kind souls have frequently tried to perform editorial favours for him since.

Prominent among them is his nonagenarian daughter, Mary, whom one suspects to be an instigator of this book. Somewhat less devoted is Professor Bacigalupo, though one of his few remarks on Pound's anti-Semitism attributes crude caricature of a Jewish accent to 'stock identification of the usurer and the Jew, by which Pound, obsessed with his war against usury, is increasingly tempted'. So was Pound merely 'tempted' into Jew-baiting by a more high-minded motive—combating usury—and not at base prey to the kind of bigoted distaste that patrician Mr Eliot exposes in 'Burbank with a Baedecker, Bleistein with a Cigar'? Bacigalupo does not go on to state this, but elsewhere he pauses to point out how the young Pound praised the 'hilaritas' among Jews in a 'sinagogue' at Gibraltar where he landed when he first migrated to Europe in 1908. One detects subtle moves towards mitigation of the great obstacle to sympathetic reception of Pound. The notorious Rome broadcasts are mentioned only en passant, via a chronology of the poet's career.

Poverty-stricken, bombed-out Italians of the last days of war wander through drafts of the cantos at the heart of the book. Some are women, some





Adrian Frazier, *The Adulterous Muse: Maud Gonne, Lucien Millevoye and W. B. Yeats* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2016), pp. 322.

**Stoddard Martin**

This is a compulsively readable book. One would expect no less from the author of Yale University Press's definitive biography of George Moore (2000), who has subsequently written about 'the Hollywood Irish' among other subjects. Adrian Frazier is an experienced and assiduous collator of facts. In this outing he also flirts with a temptation to which biographers succumb at their peril: personal disdain. At a seminar in London presenting his book Frazier prefaced its main topic ironically with the Victorian maxim: 'It is ungentlemanly and ignoble to speak of a lady's private life'. In our era, one infers, not to do so would fly in the face of what audiences expect, or at least commercial publishers. Frazier's title declares what was not spoken of openly about Maud Gonne in her time. The book reveals as many details of it as its author can marshal—and not just adultery, but what he divines as the ugly undergarments of an icon's celebrated politics.

Frazier sets out elements of falsity behind Gonne's image as heroine of Irish nationalism, from her British origins to her 'hatred of England', her 'Joan of Arc' complex to her complicity with or manipulation by French right-wing ideologues—Boulangistes, anti-Semites, anti-Dreyfusards, anti-democrats, pre-fascists and so on. Contemporary political correctness is evident in this: we are in a realm recalling Anthony Julius's controversial 1995 study *T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism and Literary Form*; as that book cross-examined a literary reputation with lawyerly skill, so this one does a political, with collateral literary consequence. For it is not only Gonne's politician/journalist French lover who is put in the dock by Frazier, but also her Irish

poet lover, third person in a relationship which seems at times to resemble, in terms of sensation and self-promotion, the one which swirled around Princess Diana. Readers may take pleasure in feeling better or wiser than the characters they read about. An author may generate narrative pace by skewering hypocrisy and giving a wink at the 'unbelievable'. Frazier uses the word in specific and vernacular senses in regard to what he finds as *exaggeré* in the septuagenarian Gonne's autobiography *A Servant of the Queen* (1938); yet without her theatrical representations to undercut and lampoon, he would have less with which to entertain us. His picture of General Boulanger, for whom Millevoye (and thus at arm's length young Maud) worked, is deliciously Trumpian—demagogues and would-be tyrants seem to have a perennial homology—and it might not be entirely inapt to extend the analogy to describe Lucien Millevoye as an elegant version of Steve Bannon. Frazier would perhaps be amused by such a thought. Happily, he repeats one French historian's remark that 'you can find Millevoye on every page of the history of the radical right in France "whenever there is a disaster to organize"'.

But something is missing here. Gonne would recall Millevoye in her memoir as her main love in a career crowded with male admirers, and he was father to the first two of her three children. What was the basis of the attraction? Need for a father figure? hunger for political intrigue? an inexperienced young woman's yearning for a Svengali? simple narcissism? vanity? All of these Frazier touches on, but he offers no insight into any impulse more personal or romantic. Millevoye is seen from the outside, his background only vaguely sketched in, his charms unmentioned, his *nous* debunked. He is almost a comedic rogue or villain in this presentation, reminiscent of portraits of figures of the Irish Literary Renaissance which Frazier's erstwhile subject Moore painted in *Hail and Farewell*, assuring uproar in Dublin. Yeats was a major target for Moore, and the novelist's sly evocation of the pompous and credulous sides to the poet is not absent from Frazier's picture of a muse-addled young man whom a power-seeking female could lead on a merry dance. The approach may cause discomfort for those drawn to Yeats, or to Gonne or—heaven forbid!—the French 'cad', as Frazier brands Millevoye. It may also make for twitchy reading for those who long to get their history straight. There were just reasons for Gonne to feel hostile to Britain, British though she was, and sympathetic to Ireland, Irish though she was not. Frazier recounts them—George Moore clearly felt them at the time of the Boer War—but vanity and hypocrisy remain the sauce in which they are served. There may be just explanations for why political intrigue was rife in late nineteenth century France, nor were all anti-Semitism the same; but Frazier would be wading into deeper waters than he cares for to parse them. Perhaps in such connection, among others,

he could have told us more about Gonne's trip to Bayreuth in 1886—a moment when, as he points out, most of the impulses that would shape her adulthood were converging on a 'late adolescent'. Would not imperious, black-clad Cosima Liszt von Bülow Wagner have caught her eye as a role model? Adultery, secret children, muse-like attraction for a great man (now dead in her case, but there were numberless adulating 'pilgrims'), power, self-publicizing, political intrigue, anti-Semitism in high-minded guise—all were present. Might not they have coursed and sloshed through the reflections of a spellbound 'youthlet' shortly to lose her own beloved father as she sat in the Festspielhaus for a heady five hours of *Die Walküre*, drifting in and out of Wotan's and Brünnhilde's and the Volsungs' agonies over matters to do with adultery?

Gonne as Brünnhilde, ready to do a deed to redeem the human race—or at least her own people—is a kind of motivation Frazier loves to play with. Though he misses this possible version of it, he notes later on that 'both Gonne and Millevoye were [such] admirers of Wagner' that they named their second and sole surviving love-child Iseult after '*Tristan and Isolde*, the story of a magical romance between a French knight and a Celtic princess'. Here we may pause to assess use of words. Is *Tristan and Isolde* quite 'the story of a magical romance'? Few Wagnerites of the day, not even a satirizing Moore, would have been inclined to favour such a Mills & Boon description of what they took as a Schopenhauerian paean to the transcendental potency of love and death. 'French knight and a Celtic princess'? Tristan is Breton, which makes him Celtic too and, at the time of the legend, something other than French. And why is Isolde only Celtic and not specifically the 'Irische Kind'? Here we observe a biographer's deft use of word-as-implication. Contemporary audiences are winked at: the pretensions of these folks! the ludicrousness.

More of this is apparent in Frazier's romp through an epoch's fascination with the occult, shared in varying degree by all principals of his tale. Salons of theosophists, Rosicrucians and so on have long been a target for breezy debunking—the sheer silliness of internecine battles among warlocks like Aleister Crowley or Sâr Péladan! Frazier depends for his brief *tour d'horizon* on Christopher McIntosh's 1972, Éliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival, a source based on secondary materials questionable to some diligent scholars. Frazier properly locates Yeats's attendance with Gonne at a five hour performance of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's *Axël* in Paris in 1894 as central to the pair's excursions into Hermetic realms, but he dismisses *Axël's* occult idea of the superiority of spiritual intercourse to the physical kind as 'odd' and prefigures Yeats's later feeling of having 'made a fool of himself' for adhering to it with Gonne, though that is precisely what it would prove for the pair when they attempted to substitute the physical for



the spiritual in 1908. Prior to that, the poet's creation via muse might be taken as evidence that 'natural failure becomes a symbolist victory', to use Frazier's deft phrase. Yet the principal fruits of it, *The Wind among the Reeds* and *The Shadowy Waters*, move him in the first case to a Moore-ian verdict of doubtful or 'pathetic' achievement and in the second to no mention at all.

Moore had his own struggles over organized religion, evident in books such as *Sister Teresa* and *The Lake* written during the years surrounding his association with Yeats. A novelist's preoccupation with character and the material world held him back from a poet's urge to delve into metaphysical speculation; and when he came to write about Jesus in his next novel, *The Brook Kerith*, he would follow Renan and Nietzsche in depicting Jesus as a mere great individual. Constitutionally Moore was unable to join in a quest for post-Christian explanations to profound mysteries, the forces which drive the spheres and personalities of men or worlds-beyond-that-which-we-know, which would occupy Yeats all the way down to his late major work, *A Vision*; or his friend AE in excursions into the paranormal, or Gonne when dabbling in séances to assuage grief over having lost her first child. Frazier is with Moore in this bias. He offers no discussion about the hunger of an era to find new faiths or reason now that 'God is dead', as Nietzsche had written, 'but for millennia to come people will spy his shadow in their caves'. The attempt to spy shadows may seem pointless, even absurd, but the need for great answers may be genuine enough and viewed as more than 'Golden Dawn play acting' or an excuse for onanistic eroticism, as Frazier caricatures much of Yeats's and Gonne's correspondence re the symbolism of their dreams. Years ago in *George's Ghosts* Brenda Maddox saw Yeats's colloquies with his wife leading to *A Vision* in a similar light. If this is not misguided, it seems at the least exaggerated—or perhaps more precisely a distortion.

Moore, Joyce, Oliver St John Gogarty—there is a long Irish tradition of cocking a snook at the knight-in-swan-armour romanticism of the *fin-de-siècle*, and Frazier has affinity for this strain in his adopted culture. Scepticism about the romance of Irish republicanism may be related, and it is apparent in his account of Gonne's service to her great cause. An almost English public school or Home Counties variant of such attitudes inclines one to muse about Frazier's basic perspective. How might he have developed had he stayed in his own country as an American academic? He quotes the great Richard Ellmann who, despite being a Jew, was able to see this period and its themes with judicious objectivity. Can we perhaps observe something about generations here—Frazier *vs* Ellmann bearing analogy to, say, Anthony Julius *vs* John Gross? In any case, a tone is clear. Frazier is not writing to illuminate Yeats, Gonne or least of all Millevoeye from the inside, by their own lights, as flaming or guttering spirits burning within human

lives; he is as assessing them for our time and by its standards. The main problem in this is a reader's potential unease at being communicated with as what an author assumes to be 'we'.

Frazier's perceived audience of now is based on temporal values. These are, by definition, transitory and writing which caters for them journalistic. A purpose of scholarship is to break free from the provinciality of the present and understand subject from the point of view of its own framework. If one veers beyond that, it might be firstly and firmly in the interests of permanency—values that transcend time. This is a big ask, but fealty to subject is less so. Thus, the most honest approach to Yeats, *Gonne & Co.* would be to represent them as closely as possible to how they seemed to themselves, not how they appear to 'us'. 'We' are not the subject, and not even the audience finally. Books live beyond lives; the ultimate audience is unborn, and responses affected by perceived opinions of this era or that are necessarily partial. The best readers may transcend them, collating all and coming to conclusions only after scrupulous hesitation. There are few writers on his subjects as engaging as Adrian Frazier. To his credit, he often strains against his gift for easy, contemporary expression. When he is lax in this, his quality as an objective historian falters. One may read him with inevitable pleasure, but one must also remain vigilant.

His focus in what is trailed as a book about three characters is disfigured near the end by introduction of a fourth, *Gonne's* sole husband, John McBride—a monster on the basis of the portrait here, though with biographer's prudence Frazier qualifies the dominant impression by a few final paragraphs granting that the truth may be other. We lose Millevoe in this phase; Yeats is confined to the shadows, and the book reveals itself as what it has been in essence from the first—a biography of *Gonne*. Rivals dispatched, Frazier's relationship with the 'muse'—visceral grappling with a live spirit—is what one is left with. It could be described as an unruly, even titanic love affair, full of sensational argument and moments of disgusted passion; possibly too it bears metaphorical witness to its author's feelings after decades as a professor in a country *Gonne* sought to rebirth and embody. Here I follow Frazier into a spot of cod-psychology; and like him I must revert, chagrined by my dereliction, to fact. His last chapter tracks the wind-down of his heroine into doting motherhood, religious devotion and a degree of regret for her early excesses. A kind of motif of redemption such as a post-Wagner era (and not least George Moore), took to heart sounds in Frazier's further qualification to his inferences and last words about his principals, Millevoe excepted. The two-dimensional portrait of the Frenchman remains one of the book's flaws. For the rest, I have to confess once again that it is hard to read without curious excitement and occasionally wicked delight.



## AFTERWORD

## Deirdre Toomey

When Roy Foster told me that Adrian Frazier's 'The Adulterous Muse' followed on from an article of mine, 'Labyrinths', I was mildly intrigued.<sup>1</sup> So I opened the monograph with some trepidation. It opens with an excellent brisk account of Maud Gonne's pretensions to Irishness, unpicking the numerous false claims in *A Servant of the Queen* and moves on to the fatal encounter with Lucien Millevoye and the 'alliance' which Frazier reads in the light of *A Portrait of a Lady*, in that Maud Gonne's vast inheritance leads her not towards true independence, but in her case to a crippling secret relationship and an illegitimate son. Frazier then reads her account of her early 'alliance' in the light of Boulangist politics and her orientation within the French anti-semitic radical right. Her journey to Russia, with 'secret documents' is revealed as part of a Boulangist plot to gain the support of the Czar. Millevoye probably accompanied her, but the plan failed.

She then began her attempt to become the Irish Joan of Arc, donating lavishly to good causes and hovering on the fringes of nationalist movements. These activities were varied with theatrical performances, she shared with Constance Gore-Booth a confusion of the theatrical and the political. Her beauty and her great height dazzled many nationalists, but she did not join the main Nationalist group, the IRB—perhaps John O'Leary, who had spent his exile in France, was doubtful of her loyalties. Meanwhile General Boulanger's attempt to take over France failed, he retired to Jersey, his movement a spent force. Maud Gonne evidently joined Millevoye in France at some point in early 1889 and became pregnant: although Divorce was legal in France, Millevoye was a Catholic, so they could not marry. She stayed out of the public eye for most of the year, but attended her sister's wedding while heavily pregnant, although I presume she would have worn a maternity corset. Her son George was born in January 1890, and shortly afterwards she returned to active politics in Ireland. So far, the monograph gives a really solid sense of Maud Gonne's French milieu, but when we

<sup>1</sup> See 'Labyrinths: Yeats and Maud Gonne' *YA9* 95–131; reprinted, Deirdre Toomey ed., *Yeats and Women* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 1–41.

come to Section VI, subtitled 'How much did Yeats know?' its tone changes, from that of a narrative grounded in solid historical data, to that of (largely) undocumented speculation.

Frazier assumes that, from as early as 1891, Yeats was fully aware of Maud Gonne's double life. The only evidence he produces for this speculation is a very strained reading of two early unpublished poems. He then examines key moments in *Memoirs* (a document of 1915–1916), in the light of this seemingly established thesis, thus assuming that which has to be proved. The vivid account of Maud Gonne's arrival in deep mourning on 11 October 1891, on the same ship as carried Parnell's body to Ireland for his funeral that day, is read by Frazier as an indication that Yeats knew that this child was not adopted, yet there is nothing in the text to support this, even though written with full knowledge in maturity. Yeats attempts with great success to recreate his youthful feelings. Nor is there any such evidence in 'On a Child's Death' written on 5 September 1893.

You shadowy armies of the dead  
 Why did you take the starlike head  
 The faltering feet, the little hand?  
 For purple kings are in your band  
 And there the hearts of poets beat;  
 Why did you take the faltering feet?  
 She had much need of some fair thing  
 To make love spread his quiet wing  
 Above the tumult of her days  
 And shut out foolish blame & praise.  
 She has her squirrel & her birds  
 But these have no sweet human words  
 And cannot call her by her name:  
 Their love is but a woodland flame.  
 You wealthy armies of the dead  
 Why did you take the starlike head.<sup>2</sup>

Yeats's template for Maud Gonne at this time was the (childless) Countess Cathleen, a noble woman, full of altruistic self-sacrificing love. Maud Gonne's 'need' of 'some fair thing' is not the way this poet would describe her own child.

<sup>2</sup> First published in facsimile, *YA3* Plate 16. See also W. B. Yeats, *The Early Poetry: Manuscript Materials*, ed. by George Bornstein (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), Vol. 2: *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Early Poems to 1895*, 490–92.

However, Frazier's argument continues with 'The Glove and the Cloak', an uncollected poem of 1893,

I saw her glitter and gleam,  
And stood in my sorrow apart,  
And said: 'She has fooled me enough,'  
And thought that she had no heart.

I stood with her cloak on my arm  
And said: 'I will see her no more,  
When something folded and small  
Fell at my feet on the floor,—

The little old glove of a child:  
I felt a sudden tear start,  
And murmured: 'O long grey cloak,  
Keep hidden and covered her heart!'<sup>3</sup>

which Maud Gonne begged him not to publish. This does not, in my reading, indicate Yeats's knowledge that this 'glove' (rather a bootie) was that of her own child, merely that of an adopted child. Maud Gonne was indeed conscious of Parisian scandal about her relationship with Millevoeye. As Yeats says, he had heard 'much scandal' about her, but had dismissed it (*Mem* 63). It is her nobility and tender-hearted altruism which he admires in this poem, which feeds into 'Aedh thinks of those who have Spoken Evil of his Beloved' (written 1897, published in its 1898 *Dome* version as below) with its grand conclusion, as strong a statement as possible of his assumptions of Maud Gonne's heroic purity, and a condemnation of the poison of Dublin gossip:

Half close your eyelids, loosen your hair,  
And dream about the great and their pride,  
They have spoken against you everywhere,  
But weigh this song with the great and their pride;  
I made it out of a mouthful of air;  
Their children's children shall say they have lied. (*VP* 166vv.)

A poet who realised that the 'scandal' was based on fact could not have written these lines, which Russell praised as full of the pride of art. Adrian Frazier, however, perversely reads it as indicating full knowledge of Maud Gonne's secret life and interprets the children of the last line as their own

<sup>3</sup> *VP* 844. Printed in *Roma*, 1897 and then not reprinted.

spiritual children, rather than the descendants of her current Irish accusers, the obvious reading.

Frazier also presents a very good account of the scandal about her private life in French journalism, which Yeats could not have read. His French was so weak that when he first dined out in Paris, he ordered soup for all three courses. By this stage in his monograph, Frazier boldly asserts that Yeats' knew the stories about Gonne must be true'.

When we come to the events of December 1898, as recalled in *Memoirs*, such plain statements prove more difficult. Frazier's ingenious argument is that although Yeats already 'knew' about Maud Gonne's secret life, it was still a shock to have it confirmed in some detail from her own mouth. The frantic letters to Lady Gregory indicate profound shock and disturbance. Lady Gregory recalls this 'as distracted letters' about 'something that had happened' (*Diaries* 196). She was herself agitated enough to hurry from Venice to Dublin to see him. But as Yeats said in a surviving letter for reasons 'of a tragic origin' that Maud Gonne could never marry (*CL2* 319–20, 15 December [1898]). Even in person, he only gave a vague censored account to Lady Gregory, and unsurprisingly she gives no indication whatsoever in her diary of being told the full story. In late 1898, Yeats was clearly devastated. As I have argued in 'Labyrinths'<sup>4</sup> this affected his poetry—he had a massive block, writing no new lyric poetry for nearly eighteen months and only returning in a poem of 1901, which dismantles the iconography of much of the poetry of the 1890s, as in 'The Withering of the Boughs' (*VP* 203–04).

The truth about the existence of Iseult and the relationship with Millevoeye did not in fact come out until after her marriage to MacBride in February 1903, in a letter to Lady Gregory of May 1903: 'there has been nothing between her and Milvoeye for years'. However, she resolved to make a final break. 'I married in a sudden impulse of anger' (*CL3* 356). Her marriage marked the end of secrecy. As he said earlier, his whole imagination had 'shifted its foundation' (*CL2* 257). This does not seem to me to be the reaction to a suspicion confirmed, but to a completely new and utterly shocking revelation. That is how the episode is depicted in *Memoirs*, in which, at the age of fifty, he can hardly be lying to himself. The detail is telling; 'the adopted child I had been told of', 'amid so much broken speech' (*Mem* 133). Yeats is vividly recreating his shock.

Although by this time in 1898 he was, at last, sexually experienced, the complete transformation of someone he had thought he knew well was a shock, 'things that I had heard all twisted awry by scandal and disbelieved'

<sup>4</sup> *YA9* 102–3; *Yeats and Women*, 9–10.

(*Mem* 132). The young Yeats was not a man of the twenty-first century, such a revelation was genuinely appalling to him. I conclude that in this matter Adrian Frazier has tried to make him a more modern and sophisticated figure than he could possibly have been in 1898.

Frazier's monograph continues through the disastrous marriage to MacBride and the trauma of the legal separation. He takes MacBride's patently biased evidence in court as to Maud Gonne's having had three lovers before their marriage as dependable, despite Maud Gonne's assertion to Yeats that he had accused her of having had an affair with any man whose photograph she owned, including Yeats and George Russell! The influence and prejudices of the extended MacBride family of the West is also worryingly strong in this section. MacBride's assaults on the nine year old Iseult are minimised and his consensual affair with Eileen Wilson is swept under the carpet. Bizarrely, Frazier also compares Yeats's marriage proposal to the twenty-four year old Iseult to MacBride's sexual assaults on her when she was a child of nine (258), and unfortunately relies on material from Anthony Jordan, an extreme apologist for MacBride, who gives a nauseatingly sentimental account of MacBride's execution and bases his viewpoint in several books on a MacBride/Durcan family tradition of hagiography of the hero of 1916.<sup>5</sup> Compounding the problem of Frazier's counter-intuitive thesis, this suggests that Frazier is prepared to rely uncritically on dubious sources. In sum, then, a fascinating but deeply-flawed monograph.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony J. Jordan has written various books on this theme, e.g., *Willie Yeats and the Gonne-MacBrides* (Dublin: designed and printed by the Central Remedial Clinic, 1997), *The Yeats-Gonne-MacBride Triangle* (Westport: 2000); *W. B. Yeats: Vain, Glorious, Lout: a Maker of Modern Ireland* ([Dublin]: Westport Books, 2003).

## Publications Received

In addition to the books reviewed above, copies of the following have been received before our 2017 copy deadline, and will be considered for review in *Yeats Annual No. 22*.

- Antonielli, Antonia and Mark Nixon (eds.), *Edwin John Ellis's and William Butler Yeats's The Works of William Blake: Poetic, Symbolic and Critical: A Manuscript Edition*, with a preface by Warwick Gould (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2016), pp. xvi + 746. ISBN Online 9788864533414; Print 97888645303407.
- Arrington, Lauren, *Revolutionary Lives: Constance and Casimir Markievicz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 312; ISBN 9780691161242 15 halftones; e-book ISBN 9781400874187.
- Bubb, Alexander, *Meeting without Knowing It: Kipling and Yeats at the Fin de Siècle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 288. ISBN 9780198753872.
- Chapman, Wayne K. (ed.), *Rewriting The Hour-Glass: A Play written in Prose and Verse Versions* (Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2016), pp. xxxii + 113. ISBN 97781942954163.
- Evans, Siân, *Queen Bees: Six Brilliants and Extraordinary Society Hostesses between the Wars* (London: Two Roads, 2016; pb. 2017), pp. viii + 403. ISBN 9781473618053. Includes such London hostesses as Lady Sibyl Colefax, Lady Emerald Cunard, Lady Londonderry and others who were eager to have writers among their social exhibits.
- Frazier, Adrian, *The Adulterous Muse: Maud Gonne, Lucien Millevoeye and W. B. Yeats* (Dublin: Lilliput, 2016), pp. viii + 312. ISBN 97818435106781.



- Gibson, Matthew, and Neil Mann (eds.), *Yeats, Philosophy, and the Occult* (Clemson: Clemson University Press, 20916), pp. xix + 344. ISBN 9781942954255 (print) and ISBN 9781942954262 (e-book). Contains essays by Wayne. K. Chapman, Katherine Ebury, Charles I. Armstrong, Neil Mann, Matthew Gibson, Gordon A. Dampier, and Colin McDowell, with appendices on 'Annotations in the Writings of Walter Savage Landor in the Yeates Library' and 'Yeats's Notes on Frobenius's *The Voice of Africa* (1913).
- Hassett, Joseph M., *The Ulysses Trials: Beauty and Truth Meet the Law* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2016), pp. x + 221. ISBN 97801843516682.
- Leonard, Marjorie and Jason McElligott (curators), *Hunting Stolen Books: an Exhibition in Marsh's Library, Dublin, from May 2077* (Dublin: Marsh's Library, 2017), pp. 80. ISBN 9780993095337.
- O'Hanlon, Karl, "Noble in his Grandiose Confusions": Yeats and *Coriolanus* in the Poetry of Geoffrey Hill', *English*, 65:250 (Autumn 2016), 211–34.
- Pašeta, Senia (ed.), *Uncertain Futures: Essays about the Irish Past for Roy Foster* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. x + 300. ISBN 9780198748274. A *festschrift* by twenty-two contributors containing *inter alia* Lauren Arrington, 'Feeding the Cats: Yeats and Pound at Rapallo, 1928' (pp. 188–98) and Ben Levitas, 'A Temper of Misgiving: W. B. Yeats and the Ireland of Synge's Time' (pp. 110–22).
- Pietrzak, Wit, *The Critical Thought of W. B. Yeats* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. x + 258. ISBN 97803319600888.
- Psilopoulos, Dionysious, *The Prophets and the Goddess: W. B. Yeats, Aleister Crowley, Ezra Pound, Robert Graves and the Chthonic Esoteric Tradition* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), pp. xxvi + 307. ISBN (10) 1443893757.
- Sheppard, D. J., *Theodore Wratislaw: Fragments of a Life*, with a Foreword by Barry Humphries (High Wycombe: The Rivendale Press, 2017), pp. 291. ISBN 9781904201243.

- Soud, W. David, *Divine Cartographies: God, History, and Poiesis in W. B. Yeats, David Jones, and T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 238. ISBN 9780198777779.
- Williams, Mark, *Ireland's Immortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. xxx + 578. ISBN 9780691157313.

Additionally, news has reached us that Douglas Saum of Reno, Nevada has completed his 22 year project of setting Yeats's poems to music and recording them. He has performed these songs in Dublin, Sligo, New York, San Francisco, Reno, Chestertown NY, and Dublin (Ohio). With a cast of twenty to thirty musicians and speakers, Saum offers nearly three-hundred pieces on nine CD's, all set to his original music. They may be purchased at <http://www.yeats2music.com/>. A full list of those available follows.

*First Songs: Lullabies for Ireland*

1. Come Ride and Ride to the Garden (1:54)
2. Wisdom and Dreams (1:52)
3. Love Song (3:25)
4. Going the Road (1:54)
5. The Danaan Quicken Tree (3:07)
6. Full Moody is my Love and Sad (3:44)
7. Street Dancers (4:22)
8. A Song of the Rosy Cross (2:40)
9. I will go Cry with the Woman (2:26)
10. When you are Sad (2:32)
11. The Glove and the Cloak (2:34)
12. Seven Paters Seven Times (3:41)
13. In the Firelight (3:19)
14. Remembrance (3:31)
15. Where my Books Go (2:14)
16. Four Rivers (1:48)
17. Lift up the White Knee (4:14)

*The Rose and the Crossway*

[Disc One: from 'Crossways']

1. Cast a Cold Eye (1:08)
2. Advice from the Happy Shepherd (:54)
3. The Sad Shepherd (4:50)
4. The Cloak, the Boat, and the Shoes (1:32)
5. The Falling of the Leaves (2:30)
6. The Stolen Child (4:26)
7. To an Isle in the Water (2:15)
8. Down by the Salley Gardens (3:33)
9. The Meditation of the Old Fisherman (3:58)
10. The Ballad of Father O'Hart (3:25)
11. The Ballad of Moll Magee (5:58)
12. The Ballad of the Foxhunter (3:24)

[Disc Two: from 'The Rose']

13. To the Rose upon the Rood of Time (4:02)
14. A Faery Song (3:20)
15. The Lake Isle of Innisfree (3:27)
16. A Cradle Song ['Angels are stooping ...'] (1:30)
17. The Pity of Love (2:37)
18. The Sorrow of Love (2:08)
19. When You are Old (2:13)
20. The White Birds (4:47)
21. A Dream of Death (1:46)
22. The Countess Cathleen in Paradise (3:24)
23. Who Goes with Fergus? (1:40)
24. The Man Who Dreamed of Faeryland (4:02)
25. The Lamentation of the Old Pensioner (3:35)
26. The Ballad of Father Gilligan (3:34)
27. The Happy Shepherd Bids Farewell (:58)

*The Wind, the Reeds, and the Seven Woods*

[Disc One]

1. To Ireland in the Coming Times (5:26)
2. A Dawn Song (2:56)
3. The Gates of the Day (2:21)
4. The Hosting of the Sidhe (3:31)
5. The Everlasting Voices (2:36)
6. The Moods (1:42)

7. The Lover tells of the Rose in his Heart (2:19)
8. The Host of the Air (3:41)
9. The Fish (1:46)
10. The Unappeasable Host (4:34)
11. Into the Twilight (2:19)
12. The Song of Wandering Aengus (2:32)
13. The Song of the Old Mother (3:25)
14. The Heart of the Woman (1:50)
15. The Lover Mourns for the Loss of Love (2:24)
16. He mourns for the Change that has come upon Him and his Beloved and longs for the End of the World (3:46)
17. He bids his Beloved be at Peace (3:25)
18. He Reproves the Curlew (2:41)
19. He Remembers forgotten Beauty (2:54)
20. A Poet to his Beloved (2:26)
21. He gives his Beloved certain Rhymes (:48)
22. To his Heart, bidding it have no Fear (3:06)

## [Disc Two]

23. The Cap and Bells (3:45)
24. The Valley of the Black Pig (4:02)
25. He tells of a Valley full of Lovers (1:19)
26. He tells of the Perfect Beauty (3:33)
27. He hears the Cry of the Sedge (1:07)
28. He thinks of Those who have spoken Evil of his Beloved (2:18)
29. Spiritual Marriage (The Secret Rose) (1:16)
30. Maid Quiet (2:10)
31. The Lover pleads with his Friend for Old Friends (2:16)
32. He wishes his Beloved were Dead (2:27)
33. He wishes for the Cloths of Heaven (2:08)
34. He thinks of his Past Greatness when a part of the Constellations of Heaven (3:38)
35. The Fiddler of Dooney (2:34)
36. In the Seven Woods (2:00)
37. The Folly of Being Comforted (1:23)
38. Never give all the Heart (2:29)
39. Adam's Curse (5:16)
40. Red Hanrahan's Song about Ireland (4:55)
41. The Old Men admiring Themselves in the Water (4:28)
42. The Ragged Wood (2:29)
43. O do not Love Too Long (3:02)
44. The Players ask for a Blessing on the Psaltery and on Themselves (3:24)
45. The Happy Townland (4:21)

*Responsibilities*

1. [Introductory Rhymes] (2:51)
2. September 1913 (4:07)
3. To a Friend whose Work has come to Nothing (3:04)
4. Paudeen (4:18)
5. To a Shade (3:46)
6. The Three Hermits (2:36)
7. Beggar to Beggar Cried (3:27)
8. Running to Paradise (1:56)
9. Murphy, Martyn, and Moore (2:02)
10. A Song from 'The Player Queen' (1:50)
11. The Realists (4:23)
12. I. The Witch (:44)
13. II. The Peacock (2:24)
14. The Mountain Tomb (2:18)
15. I. To a Child Dancing in the Wind (3:09)
16. II. Two Years Later (2:26)
17. A Memory of Youth (1:53)
18. Fallen Majesty (3:32)
19. Friends (2:55)
20. The Cold Heaven (3:36)
21. That the Night Come (4:04)
22. The Magi (3:54)
23. The Dolls (4:13)
24. A Coat (:42)
25. [Concluding Rhymes] (2:21)

*The Wild Swans at Coole*

[Disc One]

1. The Wild Swans at Coole (7:16)
2. In Memory of Major Robert Gregory (7:15)
3. An Irish Airman foresees his Death (2:03)
4. Men Improve with the Years (2:03)
5. The Collar-Bone of a Hare (3:04)
6. Under the Round Tower (3:08)
7. Solomon to Sheba (2:23)
8. The Living Beauty (1:30)
9. A Song (2:34)
10. To a Young Beauty (1:29)
11. To a Young Girl (3:09)
12. The Scholars (2:06)
13. Tom O'Roughley (1:49)

14. Shepherd and Goatherd (8:15)
15. Lines Written in Dejection (2:12)
16. The Dawn (3:03)
17. On Woman (3:27)
18. The Fisherman (2:56)
19. The Hawk (2:39)
20. Memory (4:05)
21. Her Praise (2:39)
22. The People (3:30)

[Disc Two]

23. His Phoenix (3:59)
24. A Thought from Propertius (2:59)
25. Broken Dreams (4:06)
26. A Deep-sworn Vow (:26)
27. Presences (3:23)
28. The Balloon of the Mind (2:20)
29. To a Squirrel at Kyle-na-no (2:31)
30. On being asked for a War Poem (3:41)
31. In Memory of Alfred Pollexfen (4:06)
32. (Upon a Dying Lady) I. Her Courtesy (2:41)
33. (UADL) II. Certain Artists bring her Dolls and Drawings (1:36)
34. (UADL) III. She turns the Doll's Faces to the Wall (2:04)
35. (UADL) IV. The End of Day (1:39)
36. (UADL) V. Her Race (2:06)
37. (UADL) VI. Her Courage (2:56)
38. (UADL) VII. Her Friends bring her a Christmas Tree (3:12)
39. Ego Dominus Tuus (6:14)
40. A Prayer on going into my House (2:09)
41. The Phases of the Moon (5:14)
42. The Cat and the Moon (2:13)
43. The Saint and the Hunchback (1:52)
44. First Fool's Song (1:18)
45. Second Fool's Song (2:29)
46. Another Song of a Fool (3:20)
47. The Double Vision of Michael Robartes (4:37)

*Youth and Age*

1. Brown Penny (2:46)
2. Father and Child (1:03)
3. First Love (2:23)
4. A Drinking Song (:37)
5. Before the World was Made (1:43)

6. Human Dignity (:58)
7. His Dream (2:51)
8. A First Confession (2:37)
9. The Mermaid (1:08)
10. Peace (2:45)
11. Her Triumph (1:46)
12. The Death of the Hare (1:53)
13. The Mask (2:03)
14. Consolation (2:18)
15. The Empty Cup (2:07)
16. The Coming of Wisdom with Time (1:06)
17. Chosen (1:32)
18. His Memories (3:25)
19. The Choice (3:30)
20. Parting (2:02)
21. The Friends of his Youth (2:12)
22. These are the Clouds (2:35)
23. Her Vision in the Wood (2:36)
24. Summer and Spring (2:07)
25. The Lamentation of the Old Pensioner (reprise) (2:15)
26. A Last Confession (3:38)
27. The Secrets of the Old (2:43)
28. Cuchulain Comforted (2:59)
29. Meeting (3:17)
30. His Wildness (1:23)
31. Youth and Age (:42)
32. From the *Antigone* (2:50)
33. From *Oedipus at Colonus* 3:16)
34. Transit (2:01)

*Music for Words Perhaps*

1. Broth in the Pot (:59)
2. Crazy Jane and the Bishop (3:14)
3. Crazy Jane Reproved (2:42)
4. Crazy Jane on the Day of Judgment (2:44)
5. Crazy Jane and Jack the Journeyman (3:55)
6. Crazy Jane on God (2:38)
7. Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop (2:12)
8. Crazy Jane Grown Old looks at the Dancers (3:42)
9. Crazy Jane on the Mountain (2:30)
10. Girl's Song (2:10)
11. Young Man's Song (3:30)
12. Her Anxiety (2:19)
13. His Confidence (2:56)

14. Love's Loneliness (2:11)
15. Her Dream (2:08)
16. His Bargain (2:38)
17. Three Things (3:10)
18. Lullaby (3:30)
19. After Long Silence (3:10)
20. Mad as the Mist and Snow (2:06)
21. Those Dancing Days are Gone (3:21)
22. 'I am of Ireland' (3:19)
23. The Dancer at Cruachan and Cro-Patrick (2:17)
24. Tom the Lunatic (1:44)
25. Tom at Cruachan (1:40)
26. Old Tom Again (:59)
27. The Delphic Oracle upon Plotinus (1:45)
28. Who Goes with Fergus? (3:10)

### *Upon a Golden Bough*

1. Coole Park, 1929 (4:43)
2. The Second Coming (3:12)
3. The Wheel (2:20)
4. For Anne Gregory (1:57)
5. Remorse for Intemperate Speech 2:19
6. The Crazy Moon 3:12
7. The New Faces (2:11)
8. The Leaders of the Crowd (2:53)
9. The Fool by the Roadside (2:10)
10. In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markievicz (3:28)
11. Blood and the Moon (1:17)
12. Oil and Blood (1:27)
13. Stream and Sun at Glendalough (3:19)
14. The Rose Tree (2:17)
15. Veronica's Napkin (2:30)
16. Two Songs from a Play (2:09)
17. Sixteen Dead Men (2:49)
18. Symbols (1:55)
19. Sailing to Byzantium (5:50)
20. Easter, 1916 (4:47)
21. Leda and the Swan (2:42)
22. Towards Break of Day (3:40)
23. On a Political Prisoner (3:29)
24. Death (2:34)
25. Quarrel in Old Age (2:13)
26. A Meditation in Time of War (1:02)
27. Byzantium (5:37)



*Last Songs: Upanishads for Ireland (and All)*

## [Disc One]

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1. The Gyres (2:49)
2. Gratitude to the Unknown Instructors (1:09)
3. A Prayer for Old Age (1:34)

## In the Pub:

4. My Paistin Finn (2:10)
5. I would that I were an Old Beggar (1:51)
6. A Drunken Man's Praise of Sobriety (2:32)
7. Come Gather Round me Parnellites (2:14)

## In the Theatre:

8. The Cloak, the Boat, and the Shoes (3:58)
9. I am Content (from 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul') (2:38)
10. Beautiful Lofty Things (2:46)
11. Short Subjects (Homage to Bob Weir) (1:47)
12. Song for the Severed Head (2:32)

## At Home:

13. The Curse of Cromwell (3:46)
14. Hound Voice (1:24)
15. Sweet Dancer (2:32)
16. Politics (:56)
17. The Wild Old Wicked Man (3:42)
18. The Results of Thought (2:46)
19. To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee (:50)
20. The Old Stone Cross (1:49)

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21. Imitated from the Japanese (:48)
22. The Pilgrim (4:14)
23. The Black Tower (2:14)
24. At Algeciras: A Meditation upon Death (4:03)
25. Mohini Chatterjee (2:06)
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## [Disc Two]

## Supernatural Songs:

27. I Ribh at the Tomb of Baile And Aillinn (2:20)
28. II Ribh denounces Patrick (1:27)
29. III Ribh in Ecstasy (1:23)

30. IV There (1:00)
31. V Ribh considers Christian Love insufficient (4:07)
32. VI He and She (2:01)
33. VII What Magic Drum? (1:04)
34. VIII Whence had they Come? (2:33)
35. IX The Four Ages of Man (:28)
36. X, XI Conjunctions | A Needle's Eye (2:51)
37. XII Meru (3:02)

India ... and Beyond:

38. The Indian to his Love (3:32)
39. The Indian upon God (4:19)
40. Upanishads for Ireland (13:42)
41. Confluence | Raga Bairagi (Alap) (11:14)
42. What Then? (2:10)
43. 'I must be gone ...' (2:56)



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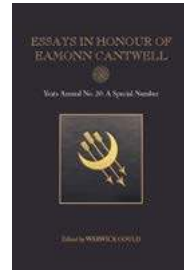
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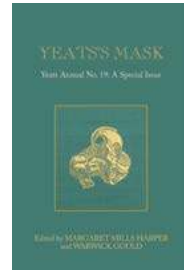


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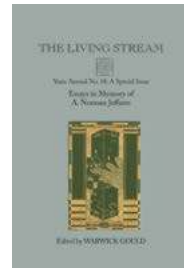


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