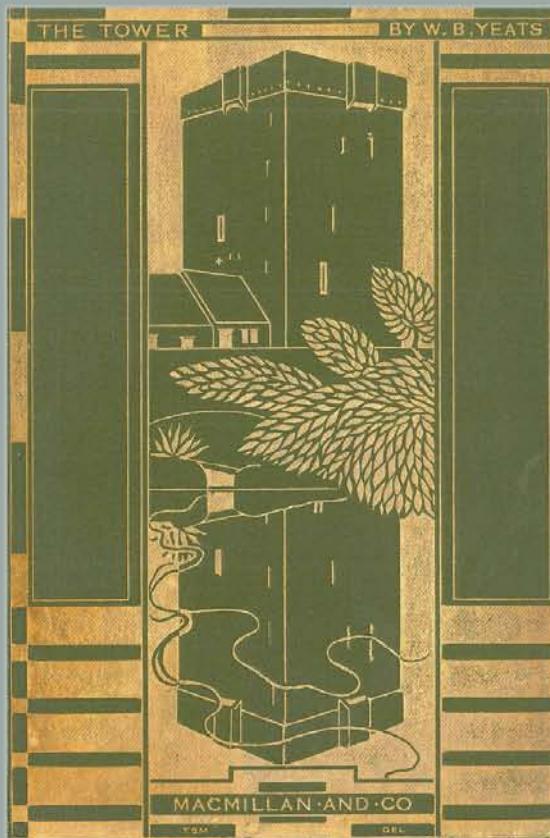


THE LIVING STREAM



Yeats Annual No. 18: A Special Issue

Essays in Memory of
A. Norman Jeffares



Edited by WARWICK GOULD

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Frontispiece: Derry Jeffares beside the Edmund Dulac memorial stone to W. B. Yeats. Roquebrune Cemetery, France, 1986.
Private Collection.

THE LIVING STREAM
ESSAYS IN MEMORY OF
A. NORMAN JEFFARES

YEATS ANNUAL №. 18
A Special Issue

Edited by Warwick Gould



in association with the Institute of English Studies
School of Advanced Study, University of London



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ISBN Hardback: 978-1-909254-36-7

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-909254-35-0

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-909254-37-4

ISBN Digital ebook (epub): 978-1-909254-38-1

ISBN Digital ebook (mobi): 978-1-909254-39-8

Series ISSN: 0278-7687

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0028

Cover image: Thomas Sturge Moore's cover for *The Tower* (1928), Private Collection, London. The *Yeats Annual* fleuron (cover and half-title) is based upon Thomas Sturge Moore's rose design, as used in his illustrations for H. P. R. Finberg's translation of Count de Villiers de l'Isle Adam's *Axel* with Yeats's preface (London: Jarrolds Publishers Ltd., 1925), and elsewhere on cover designs for Yeats's books, most notably *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1917), courtesy of the late Riette Sturge Moore.

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IN MEMORIAM

A. Norman Jeffares

11 August 1920-1 June 2005

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Frontispiece: Derry Jeffares beside the Edmund Dulac memorial stone to W. B. Yeats, Roquebrune Cemetery, France, 1986. Private Collection.

Plates

1. Between pp. 25-26, Yeats's holograph revision to 'The Sorrow of Love' tipped in to Lady Gregory's copy of *Poems* (1895) and misdated, probably by her, in the Robert W. Woodruff Collection, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.
2. Between pp. 25-26, Yeats's holograph revision in another of Lady Gregory's copies of *Poems*, that of 1904, also now in the Woodruff Collection at Emory and altered in 1924 as marked in pencil. This slip is pasted onto a torn-off printed slip bearing a part of line 10, almost certainly from an uncorrected proof of *Early Poems and Stories* (1925).
3. Between pp. 25-26, top board of Lady Gregory's white and gold copy of *Poems* (1904) now in the Robert W. Woodruff Collection, Emory.
4. Between pp. 25-26, close-up of the tipped-in revisions in Plates 1 and 2.
5. Facing p. 40, 'W. B. Y. listening to Homer', undated (c. 1887), by Jack B. Yeats, pasted into a copy of *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1900), in the Woodruff Collection, Emory.
6. Facing p. 45, Yeats's holograph revisions in the setting copy of 'The Adoration of the Magi' for *Early Poems and Stories* (1925). Berg Collection, New York Public Library.
7. Facing p. 105, Thoor Ballylee, cottage in ruin, river and bridge, a pen and ink drawing by A. Norman Jeffares, 17 x 22.5 cm, private collection. This drawing was the basis of a chapter tailpiece vignette in *W. B. Yeats: Man and Poet* (London: Routledge, 1949).
8. Facing p. 108, 'Mrs W. B. Yeats', by Edmund Dulac, exhibited at the Leicester Galleries, London, June 1920, in the possession of the Yeats family, photograph by Nicola Gordon Bowe. All Dulac images ©

9. Marcia Geraldine Anderson, courtesy Hodder and Stoughton Ltd.
9. Between pp. 108-09, Robert Gregory's design of the 'Charging Unicorn' first used on the title-page of *Discoveries* (1907). Private Collection.
10. Between pp. 108-09, Gustave Moreau, 'Les Licornes' (c. 1885), an unfinished oil on canvas in the Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris, and based on the 15th century tapestries then recently acquired by the Musée de Cluny, Paris (see Plate 12). Photographer unknown.
11. Between pp. 108-09, 'Monoceros de Astris' by Thomas Sturge Moore, title-page of *Reveries Over Childhood and Youth* (1915). Private Collection.
12. Between pp. 108-09, Bookplate for George Yeats by Thomas Sturge Moore, showing a round tower struck by lightning, releasing a white unicorn, Senate House Library, University of London.
13. Between pp. 110-11, Red tapestry, 'La dame à la licorne', 15th century, Musée de Cluny, Paris. Photographer unknown, Public Domain.
14. Between pp. 110-11, 'Deer and Unicorn' wood-cut from *The Book of Lambspring*, as reproduced in A. E. Waite's *The Hermetic Museum, Restored and Enlarged* (London, James Elliott & Co., 1893).
15. Facing p. 117, Edmund Dulac's pastel caricature of Yeats, 1915, Abbey Theatre, Dublin, photographer unknown.
16. Facing p. 130, Edmund Dulac's 'The Good Chiron Taught His Pupils How to Play upon the Harp' in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918). Private Collection.
17. Between pp. 139-40, Edmund Dulac's woodcut of a unicorn in *A Vision* (1925). Private Collection, London. It also appeared on the title-page of *Stories of Michael Robartes and his Friends* (1932), and in *Last Poems and Two Plays* (1939). Copies in Private Collection.
18. Between pp. 139-40, Charles Ricketts's endpapers for the 1920s Macmillan *Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*. Private Collection.
19. Between pp. 139-40, Thomas Sturge Moore's 'Candle in Waves' sigil on the title-page of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1920). This emblem of 'the soul in the midst of the waters of the flesh or of time' also appeared in *Seven Poems and a Fragment* (1922) and *October Blast* (1927). Private Collection.
20. Between pp. 139-40, Yeats's bookplate, by Thomas Sturge Moore, showing the candle in waves motif above Sturge Moore's gates, his visual pun on the origins of Yeats's name in the Middle English and northern and north-midland dialectal word 'yeat' or 'yate' meaning 'gate', Senate House Library, University of London.
21. Facing p. 197, the biggest rookery in Europe at Buckenham Carr Woods, near Norwich, courtesy Jane Rusbridge, ©Natalie Miller.
- 22-24. Facing p. 242, three faces of Derry Jeffares, Unknown contemporary press photographers. Images courtesy of Colin Smythe Ltd. All rights reserved.

Abbreviations

<i>Au</i>	<i>Autobiographies</i> (London: Macmillan, 1955).
<i>AVA</i>	<i>A Vision: An Explanation of Life Founded upon the Writings of Giraldus and upon certain Doctrines attributed to Kusta Ben Luka</i> (London: privately printed for subscribers only by T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., 1925). See also <i>CVA</i> .
<i>AVB</i>	<i>A Vision</i> (London: Macmillan, 1962).
Berg	Books and Manuscripts, The Berg Collection, New York Public Library (Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations).
<i>BIV1, 2</i>	<i>A Book of Irish Verse</i> (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, <i>Yeats at Work</i> (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965).
Brotherton	Manuscript, The Brotherton Collection, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.
<i>CH</i>	<i>W. B. Yeats: The Critical Heritage</i> , ed. A. Norman Jeffares (London: Henley; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).
<i>CL1, 2, 3, 4</i>	<i>The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats: Volume I, 1865-1895</i> , ed. John Kelly and Eric Domville; <i>Volume II, 1896-1900</i> , ed. Warwick Gould, John Kelly and Deirdre Toomey; <i>Volume III, 1901-1904</i> , and <i>Volume IV, 1905-1907</i> , eds. John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, 1997, 1994, 2005).
<i>CL InteLex</i>	<i>The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats</i> , gen. ed. John Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press (InteLex Electronic Edition)) 2002. Letters cited by Accession number.
<i>CM</i>	<i>W. B. Yeats: A Census of the Manuscripts</i> , 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*.
- 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*.
- CW5* *Later Essays*, ed. 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*.
- CW6* *Prefaces and Introductions: Uncollected Prefaces and Introductions by Yeats to Works by other Authors and to Anthologies edited by Yeats*, ed. William H. O'Donnell (London: Macmillan, 1988), vol. VI of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*.
- CW7* *Letters to the New Island* eds. George Bornstein and Hugh Witemeyer (London: Macmillan, 1989), vol. VII of *The Collected 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*.
- CW9* *Early Articles and Reviewss: 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*.
- CW10* *Later Articles and Reviews: Uncollected Articles, Reviews, and Radio Broadcasts written after 1900*, ed. Colton Johnson (New York: Scribner, 2000), vol. X of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*.
- CW12* *John Sherman AND Dhoya*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991), vol. XII of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*.

<i>CW13</i>	<i>A Vision: The Original 1925 Version</i> , ed. Catherine E. Paul and Margaret Mills Harper (New York: Scribner 2008), vol. XIII of <i>The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats</i> .
<i>CWVP1-8</i>	<i>The Collected Works in Verse and Prose of William Butler Yeats</i> (Stratford-on-Avon: The Shakespeare Head Press, 1908, 8 vols.).
<i>DC</i>	<i>Druid Craft: The Writing of The Shadowy Waters, Manuscripts of W. B. Yeats</i> , transcribed, edited and with a commentary by Michael J. Sidnell, George P. Mayhew and David R. Clark (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1971).
<i>Diaries</i>	<i>Lady Gregory's Diaries 1892-1902</i> , ed. James Pethica (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1996).
<i>E&I</i>	<i>Essays and Introductions</i> (London and New York: Macmillan, 1961).
<i>Emory</i>	Books and Manuscripts in the Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta.
<i>Ex</i>	<i>Explorations</i> , sel. Mrs W. B. Yeats (London: Macmillan, 1962; New York: Macmillan, 1963).
<i>FFTIP</i>	<i>Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry</i> . Edited and selected by W. B. Yeats (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1888).
<i>G-YL</i>	<i>The Gonne-Yeats Letters 1893-1938: Always Your Friend</i> , ed. 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>I&R</i>	<i>W. B. Yeats: Interviews and Recollections</i> , ed. E. H. Mikhail (London: Macmillan, 1977), 2 vols.
<i>IFT</i>	<i>Irish Fairy Tales</i> edited with an introduction by W. B. Yeats (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892).
<i>J</i>	<i>W. B. Yeats: A Classified Bibliography of Criticism</i> , second edition, revised and enlarged, by K. P. S. Jochum (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990). Item nos. or page no. preceded by 'p.'
<i>JBYL</i>	<i>Letters to his Son W. B. Yeats and Others 1869-1922</i> , by J. B. Yeats, edited with a Memoir by Joseph Hone and a Preface by Oliver Elton (London: Faber and Faber, 1944).
Kansas	Manuscripts in the Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, Lawrence.
<i>L</i>	<i>The Letters of W. B. Yeats</i> , ed. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954; New York: Macmillan, 1955).
<i>LBP</i>	<i>Letters from Bedford Park: A Selection from the Correspondence (1890-1901) of John Butler Yeats</i> , ed. 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. Alan B. Himer, with the assistance of George Mills Harper (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983).
- LMR* *'Ah, Sweet Dancer': W. B. Yeats, Margot Ruddock, A Correspondence*, ed. Roger McHugh (London and New York: Macmillan, 1970).
- LNI* *Letters to the New Island: A New Edition (CEW 7)*, ed. George Bornstein and Hugh Whitemeyer (London: Macmillan, 1989).
- LRB* *The Correspondence of Robert Bridges and W. B. Yeats*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (London: Macmillan, 1977; Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1978).
- LTWBY1, 2* *Letters to W. B. Yeats*, ed. Richard J. Finneran, George Mills Harper and William M. Murphy, with the assistance of Alan B. Himer (London: Macmillan; New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 2 vols.
- MBY* Manuscript in the Collection of Michael Butler Yeats.
- McGarry* James P. McGarry, *Places Names in the Writings of W. B. Yeats*, edited with additional material by Edward Malins and 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 (Hounds-mills, 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.
- 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.
<i>OBMV</i>	<i>The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1895–1935</i> , chosen by W. B. Yeats (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936).
Princeton	Manuscript in the Scribner Archive, Firestone Library, Princeton University.
<i>Quinn Cat.</i>	<i>Complete Catalogue of the Library of John Quinn sold by auction in five parts [with printed prices]</i> (New York: The Anderson Galleries, 1924), 2 vols.
<i>SQ</i>	<i>The Speckled Bird by William Butler Yeats: an Autobiographical Novel With Variant Versions: New Edition, incorporating recently discovered manuscripts</i> , edited and annotated by William H. O'Donnell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
<i>SQ</i>	<i>A Servant of the Queen: Reminiscences</i> , by Maud Gonne MacBride, eds. A. Norman Jeffares and Anna MacBride White (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1994).
<i>SS</i>	<i>The Senate Speeches of W. B. Yeats</i> , ed. Donald R. Pearce (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1960; London: Faber and Faber, 1961).
<i>TB</i>	<i>Theatre Business: The Correspondence of the First Abbey Theatre Directors: William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory and J. M. Synge</i> , ed. Ann Saddlemeyer (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe; University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982).
<i>TSMC</i>	<i>W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence, 1901–1937</i> , ed. Ursula Bridge (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).
<i>UP1</i>	<i>Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats</i> , Vol. I, ed. John P. Frayne (London: Macmillan; New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).
<i>UP2</i>	<i>Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats</i> , Vol. 2, ed. John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson (London: Macmillan, 1975; New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).
<i>VBWI</i>	<i>Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland collected and arranged by Lady Gregory: With two Essays and Notes by W. B. Yeats</i> with a foreword by Elizabeth Coxhead (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).
<i>VP</i>	<i>The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats</i> , ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957). Cited from the corrected third printing of 1966.

- VPl* *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*, ed. 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. Warwick Gould, Phillip L. Marcus and Michael J. Sidnell (London: Macmillan, 1992). Second ed., revised and enlarged.
- Wade Allan Wade, *A Bibliography of the Writings of W. B. Yeats*, third ed., revised by Russell K. Alspach (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968). Item nos. and/or page nos. 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).
- YA* *Yeats Annual* (London: Macmillan, 1982-) cited by no.
- YAACTS* *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (publishers vary, 1983-99) cited by no.
- YGYL* *W. B. Yeats and George Yeats: The Letters*, ed. 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. George Mills Harper (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada; Niagara Falls, New York: Maclean-Hunter Press, 1975).
- YP* *Yeats's Poems*, ed. and annotated 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. 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), George Mills Harper (general editor) assisted by Mary Jane Harper, vol. I: *The Automatic Script: 5 November 1917–18 June 1918*, eds. Steve L. Adams, Barbara J. Frieling and Sandra L. Sprayberry; vol. II: *The Automatic Script: 25 June 1918–29 March 1920*, eds. Steve L. Adams, Barbara J. Frieling and Sandra L. Sprayberry; vol. III: *Sleep and Dream Notebooks, Vision Notebooks 1 and 2, Card File*, eds. Robert Anthony Martinich and Margaret Mills Harper; vol. IV: *'The Discoveries of Michael Robartes' Ver-*

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Joseph M. Hassett is a partner in a Washington law firm and the author of *Yeats and the Poetics of Hate* (1986) which grew from his UCD doctorate. His recent *W. B. Yeats and the Muses* (2010) is to be reviewed in the next volume of *Yeats Annual*.

Seamus Heaney is the most renowned of contemporary Irish poets. He first achieved notice for *Door into the Dark* (1966), and the most recent of his many volumes of poems is *Human Chain* (2010). The winner of many honours for his work, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995. He is also a prolific essayist and translator.

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Neil Mann teaches at the Escuela Diplomática in Madrid. He has written primarily on *A Vision* and related matters, and maintains the website, <http://www.YeatsVision.com>, and a blog on aspects of *A Vision*, <http://YeatsVision.blogspot.co.uk>. He has been involved with the exhibition on W. B. Yeats currently at the National Library of Ireland, and has written on manuscript notebooks for an associated book.

Phillip L. Marcus is Professor Emeritus of English at Cornell University and Professor of English at Florida International University. He is the author of *Yeats and the Beginning of the Irish Renaissance* and *Yeats and Artistic Power*, and editor of *The Death of Cuchulain: Manuscript Materials*, co-editor of *The Secret Rose, Stories by W. B. Yeats: A Variorum Edition*, and co-general editor of the Cornell Yeats Series.

Christopher Rush is a Scottish writer, and was for thirty years a teacher of literature. His books include *Resurrection of a Kind* (1984), *A Twelvemonth and a Day* (1985), *Peace Comes Dropping Slow* (1989), *Into the Ebb* (1989), *Last Lesson of the Afternoon* (1994), *To Travel Hopefully* (2006), *Hellfire and Herring* (2006), *Will* (2007), and *Sex, Lies and Shakespeare* (2009). A neighbour of Derry and Jeanne Jeffares on the Fife peninsula, he was Jeffares' obituarist.

Ann Saddlemeyer has published extensively on Irish and Canadian theatre, and has edited the plays of J. M. Synge, Lady Gregory, and the letters between the founding Directors of the Abbey Theatre. She has edited *The Collected Letters of John Millington Synge* and her *Becoming George: The Life of Mrs W. B. Yeats* was published in 2002 and is reviewed in this volume. Her *W. B. Yeats and George Yeats: The Letters* was published in 2011. In a long teaching career she has taught at the University of Victoria, B.C., was Berg Chair at New York University, and has been Director of the Graduate Centre for the Study of Drama and Master of Massey College in the University of Toronto.

Ronald Schuchard is Emeritus Goodrich C. White Professor at Emory University and General Editor of *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot* (forthcoming, Faber and Johns Hopkins). His books include *The Last Minstrels: Yeats and the Revival of the Bardic Arts* (reviewed in this volume) and *Eliot's Dark Angel: Intersections of Life and Art* (1999). He co-edited vols. 3-5 of *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.

Colin Smythe is presently working on a new bibliography of W. B. Yeats, correcting, enlarging and updating that by Alan Wade (3rd edition, 1968). He is General Editor of his publishing company's Irish Literary Studies Series (53 titles), and (with the late T. R. Henn) the *Coole Edition of Lady Gregory's Works* (16 volumes so far

published), and with Henry Summerfield, the *Collected Works of G.W.Russell (AE)*. He is also Sir Terry Pratchett's literary agent (and first publisher). He received an Hon. LLD from Dublin University for services to Irish Literature in 1998.

Deirdre Toomey is editor of *Yeats and Women: Yeats Annual No. 9* (1991), revised and augmented as *Yeats and Women* (Macmillan, 1997). She is co-editor of *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats, Volume II, 1896-1900* (1997) and *Mythologies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

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Editor's Introduction

IN EARLY 1937, a schoolboy editor at The High School, Harcourt St., Dublin sought a poem from an old boy for *The Erasmian*. Yeats obliged with 'What Then', recently published in an annual anthology in London, but uncollected. Yeats told the editor that it was 'one of the few poems he had written lately that might be fit for a school magazine' (*NC* 378).

The Living Stream is the first set of essays in memory of that editor, Alexander Norman Jeffares, and the quoted allusion in its title pays tribute to the tradition of commentary that he founded. Jeffares, a man of enormous energy and practical force, whose life is more fully described in the opening essay by his friend the Scottish writer Christopher Rush, a neighbour in the Fife Ness peninsula where Derry (as he was universally known to those scholars he trained or encouraged) and Jeanne Jeffares lived in their retirement years. It might well be said that one of the principal deployments in his Trinity College, Dublin doctorate (for a contemporary image of its author, see Plate 22) which later became *A Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats* (1968) is of passages across Yeats's work to which poems make allusion, or which cast light upon the meanings of poems. In order to see just what Jeffares was on to, it is necessary to go back to 1926, when an aspiring Australian actor and writer met Yeats, as she recalled in 1980 when lecturing to the Library of Congress. Her mother, she said, 'bore me in the Southern wild', and brought her up, filled with the poetry of an Ireland the more intense for being utterly remote. Here is how she got there.

'Hardly W. B. Yeats,' said father once, when my mother showed him a scrap of mine. And remembering it now I feel bound to agree with him, though at the age of seven it would have been hard even for Yeats to be W.B. Yeats.

My father, as you see, perhaps because he was so far away from her, was in love with Cathleen ni Houlihan. Nothing that Ireland did was wrong, nothing that other countries did was completely right. . . . I was drenched in the Celtic twilight before I ever came to it. Indeed I only came to it when it was over and had practically turned into night. I had dreamed of it all my life and although my father was long dead, I had to test what my childhood had taught me. So the first thing I did on arriving in England was to send a piece of writing to A.E. (George Russell), who was then editor of *The Irish Statesman*. With all the hauteur of youth I deliberately sent no covering letter, just a stamped addressed envelope for return. And sure enough the stamped envelope came back, as I had fully expected it to do, but inside—instead of my manuscript—was a check for three guineas and a letter from A.E. It said 'If you have any more, please let me see them and if you are ever in Ireland let us meet.' . . . Even if I hadn't been already going to Ireland I would have been off on the next train.

That was how I came under the wing of A.E. and got to know Yeats and the gifted people in their circle, all of whom cheerfully licked me into shape like a set of mother cats with a kitten. . . .¹

This was in 1925 when Pamela Travers quickly became the 'pet and protégée' first of Russell who published her sub-Yeatsian verses in *The Irish Homestead*. Back in the West in the late summer of 1926, Travers remembered that her train back to Dublin would pass Lough Gill, so she 'leapt from the carriage and charged a boatman' to take her to Innisfree. He assured her that there was no such place.

'Oh, but there is, I assure you. W. B. Yeats wrote about it.' 'And who would he be?' I told him. 'Ah, I know them, those poets, always stravaging through their minds, inventing outlandish things. We call it Rat Island!' Rat Island! Well!

So we set out, under grey hovering clouds, with me in the bows and a young priest, who suddenly arose out of the earth, it seemed, joining us in the stern. At last, after a rough passage, there was Innisfree. No hive for the honeybee and no log cabin but of course I hadn't expected them. They were only in the bee-loud glade of Yeats's stravaging mind. But the whole island was covered with rowan trees, wearing their red berries like jewels and the thought suddenly came to me—a most disastrous one, as it turned out—'I'll take back some branches to the poet.' In no time, for the island is

¹ P. L. Travers, 'Only Connect' in Virginia Haviland (ed.) *The Openhearted Audience* (Washington, Library of Congress, 1980), pp. 9-11.

diminutive, I had broken off pretty nearly every branch from the rowans and was staggering with them toward the boat. By now a strong wind had sprung up and the rain was falling and the lake was wild. Those Irish loughs beat up into a great sea very quickly. As we embarked, the waves seemed as high as the Statue of Liberty and I wished I'd had more swimming practice. Then I noticed, between one trough and the next, that the priest, pale as paper, was telling his beads with one hand and with the other plucking off my rowan berries and dropping them into the water. 'Ah, Father,' said the boatman, pulling stertorously on the oars, 'it's not the weight of a berry or two that will save us now.' He gave me a reflective glance and I got the idea, remembering that in times of shipwreck women are notoriously unlucky, that he was planning to throw me overboard, if the worse came to the worst. I wished I had a string of beads! However, perhaps because of the priest's prayers, we came at last safely to shore. I hurried through the rain with my burden and took the next train for Dublin. The other passengers edged away from my streaming garments as though I were some sort of ancient mariner. I should never have started this, I knew, but there is an unfortunate streak of obstinacy in me that would not let me stop. From Dublin station, through curtains of cloud—taxis did not exist for me in those days—I carried the great branches to Yeats's house in Merrion Square and stood there, with my hair like rats' tails, my tattered branches equally ratlike, looking like Birnam come to Dunsinane and wishing I was dead. I prayed, as I rang the bell, that Yeats would not open the door himself, but my prayer went unheard.

For an articulate man to be struck dumb is, you can imagine, rare. But struck dumb he was at the sight of me. In shame, I heard him cry a name into the dark beyond of the house and saw him hurriedly escape upstairs. Then the name came forward in human shape and took me gently, as though I were ill or lost or witless, down to the basement kitchen. There I was warmed and dried and given cocoa; the dreadful branches were taken away. I felt like someone who had died and was now contentedly on the other side, certain that nothing more could happen. In this dreamlike state, I was gathering myself to go—out the back way if possible—never to be seen again. But a maid came bustling kindly in and said—as though to someone still alive!—'The master will see you now.' I was horrified. This was the last straw. 'What for?' I wanted to know. 'Ah, then, you'll see. He has his ways.'

And so, up the stairs—or the seven-story mountain—I went and there he was in his room with the blue curtains.

'My canary has laid an egg!' he said joyously led me to the cages by

the window. From there we went round the room together, I getting better every minute and he telling me which of his books he liked and how, when he got an idea for a poem. There was long momentous pause, here. He was always the bard, always filling the role of poet, not play-acting but knowing well the role's requirements and giving them their due. He never came into a room, he entered it; walking around his study was a ceremonial peregrination, wonderful to witness. 'When I get an idea for a poem,' he went on, oracularly, 'I take down one of my own books and read it and then I go on from there.' Moses explaining his tablets couldn't have moved me more. And so, serenely, we came to the end of the pilgrimage and I was just about to bid him good-bye when I noticed on his desk a vase of water and in it one sprig of fruiting rowan. I glanced at him distrustfully. 'Was he teaching me a lesson?' I wondered, for at that age one cannot accept to be taught. But he wasn't; I knew it by the look on his face. He would do nothing so banal. He was not trying to enlighten me and so I was enlightened and found a connection in the process. It needed only a sprig, said the lesson. And I learned, also, something about writing. The secret is to say less than you need. You don't want a forest, a leaf will do.

Next day, when I was lunching with A.E., he said to me, 'Yeats was very touched that you brought him a sprig of rowan from Innisfree.' So I had to tell him the whole story²

Pamela Travers applied this lesson of retreading the grapes, rummaging around in her poems and stories, and shaping the Mary Poppins books out of them. By then she had become a darling of the circle of 'Poets and Wits' who drew around Yeats and A.E., Stephens, Colum, O'Faolain, and Gogarty, who bombarded her with love poems and dedicated *An Offering of Swans* to her.

Many of those who pay tribute in this volume to this great and pioneering Yeats scholar are themselves senior scholars. While their essays contain to a greater or a lesser degreee memories of him, for each it is a matter of carrying forward in some particular way the work he had pioneered in his TCD doctorate, the work of commentary. Derry Jeffares seems to have understood the same self-reflexive principle at work in Yeats's writing, because so much of his pioneering work on what became the *Commentary* is dependent upon the elaborate structure he built therein for the cross-referencing of

² *Ibid.*, 11-14

Yeats's poems, letters, prose, and plays. For this reason above all, he showed himself to be truly one of those whom Yeats (following Boehme, as he thought) referred to as his 'schoolmates' (*E&I xi*) one of that inner circle of readers for whom a writer writes. It is fair to say that the better editions of Yeats's works which have followed down the years can be distinguished from the rest by their annotation's having grown from such strategies of self-allusion as Yeats himself encouraged.

This volume joins the last three interlinked special issues of *Yeats Annual* all of which have had for their broader theme the notion that the impetus for new writing may often be found in the poet's reading and in the collaborative nature of literary endeavour, matters revealed to scholars by the restoration of contexts to poems increasingly distant from us. The volume has, however, been unconscionably delayed by the illnesses of the Editor and Research Editor, for which delay we apologise to all contributors, and thank them for their patience.

WARWICK GOULD
7 DECEMBER 2012

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.) to use published and unpublished materials by W. B. Yeats. Many of our contributors are further indebted to the Yeats family and Estate for making unpublished materials available for study and for many other kindnesses, as is the Editor.

A number of helpful librarians include Dr Declan Kiely of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York; Professor Thomas F. Staley, Dr Cathy Henderson and Dr Richard Oram at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Austin; Catherine Fahy at the National Library of Ireland; all of whom have provided us with materials and research assistance. At the British Library, the Curator of the Macmillan Archive, Dr Elizabeth James, renders continuous assistance to the Editor, while the research librarians at the Robert W. Woodruff Library at Emory University are equally generous and prompt in recovering specialist materials. Christine Wise and Dr Karen Attar in Special Collections at the Senate House Library, University of London have also been unfailingly helpful. Many other scholars and librarians have been thanked within the compass of individual contributions to this volume. Riette Sturge Moore (who died in 1995) allowed us to use on the front board of *Yeats Annuals* a symbol adapted from Thomas Sturge Moore's designs for the H. P. R. Finberg translation of *Axel* (1925). Linda Shaughnessy of A. P. Watt & Son, Professors Roy Foster, F.B.A. and John Kelly on behalf of OUP were most generous with permissions. Individuals, institutions and estates which gave permission for the reproductions of images in the Plate section are thanked within the legends. 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, Rupert Gatti and 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. We remain grateful to Dr Conor Wyer and Miss Zoe Holman of the Institute of English Studies, and to Ms Kerry Whitston in the School of Advanced Study, for their work in setting the volume in Caslon SSi. Readers may recall that

Caslon Old Face was the typeface which Yeats himself preferred for Cuala Press books.

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 unavailing assistance.

Contributions for *Yeats Annual No. 19* are largely in place, and those for No. 20 should reach me, preferably by email, by 1 January 2014 at:

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Yeats Annual is offered to its publishers in camera-ready form. A style sheet, instructions for the submission of articles to the Editorial Board and consequent editorial procedures will be found at our website, www.sas.ac.uk/ies/Yeats/yeat-sannual.html, 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 openbookpublishers.com.

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 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 now in proof sat the Clarendon Press. The electronic edition will apparently continue to be updated to absorb the new materials. Colin Smythe (PO Box 6, Gerrards Cross, Bucks, SL9 8XA, UK, cpsmythe@aol.com) is completing his revision of the Wade-Alspach *Bibliography* for the Clarendon Press, while an authorised edition of *Yeats's Occult Diaries, 1898–1901* is being prepared for Palgrave Macmillan, again 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

ESSAYS IN MEMORY OF

A. NORMAN JEFFARES

1920-2005

Professor Alexander Norman Jeffares

11 August 1920-1 June 2005

Christopher Rush

IN 1937 A DUBLIN SCHOOLBOY approached no less a person than W. B. Yeats with a request that he write a poem for the school magazine of which he was the editor. He was informed rather haughtily that the poet was not at that moment writing anything that would be ‘suitable’ for mere schoolboys. The mere schoolboy persisted. In that case wasn’t it about time that he did write something suitable and let him have it? A week later one of Yeats’s finest poems, ‘What Then?’ arrived in the post and was duly published that April in the school magazine, *The Erasmian*.

The High School was Yeats’s old school—he’d been a pupil there in the 1880s—and the schoolboy was Alexander Norman Jeffares, who went on to become one of the most distinguished Yeats scholars of the 20th century, although his first degree in Trinity College Dublin (TCD) was in Classics. This early pioneering spirit, seen in the enterprising adolescent, turned out to be typical. Here was a teenage boy telling the Nobel Prizewinner and the greatest living poet writing in English to get on with it and produce something appropriate to the occasion. Also typically, the person he was badgering obliged, to the benefit of Anglo-Irish letters. That was Derry Jeffares in a nutshell: a prodder and provoker, a facilitator, determined to stir things up and make them happen when they might have seemed moribund or extinct or resistant to change.

Change was on the way when he was born, of southern county Protestant stock—on 11th August 1920—during the Irish War of

Independence. That too was appropriate. Derry (as he was universally known) was destined to fight his own wars in changing the face of English and Anglo-Irish studies (the latter he practically invented) in Britain and Ireland and abroad during the next half century.

After leaving the High School he entered TCD in 1939, opting for Classics partly because English was a split subject which had to be done with a Modern Language and his French was not up to it. After four years of turf fires and gowns worn over overcoats in freezing lecture halls and libraries, Derry graduated, glad to leave Classics behind him. ('Classics? Too much work! All that bloody memorising! English by comparison was easy. You read a few books, you got across your ideas on them—and that was it!'). He could speak about the difference, having taken on English as well—for fun and for show, again typically. Classics, however, had groomed him in strenuous and disciplined stables and he was now ready for the chase.

The first hurdle was not so much the PhD as the choice of subject. After some thrashing around, a friend read to him a poem by the now dead Yeats (he'd died soon after writing the required school mag piece) and asked him, 'What the hell does it mean?' Derry had no idea and his curiosity was aroused. So a dinner party was concocted at the Unicorn restaurant, Mount Street, at which it was arranged that he should meet Yeats's widow. She told Derry that he was welcome to be let loose on her late husband's books and papers at 46 Palmerston Road. Joe Hone, the official biographer, had been there before him, but in entering Yeats's library with an impartial mind, Derry was the first scholar to begin to probe the mind of the poet, a man's library being, after all, an index to his mind. 'Take anything you like,' Mrs Yeats said, though she was liable to ring at three o'clock in the morning and demand the immediate return of a diary or a manuscript. She was a good critic of her husband's work, in spite of being eccentric and awkward.

There were other difficulties. The Yeats texts were out of print and Macmillan didn't reprint them during the war. The *Collected Poems* took him ages to obtain and cost a fabulous fifteen pounds. But Derry was always a swift worker and he set his life's pattern by completing it in 1½ years instead of three, submitting it for his doctorate at Easter 1945 (eventually it was to emerge as the *Commentary*

on Yeats's poems, published in 1968) and in April 1945 went to Oxford where he wrote the D.Phil thesis which was to see the light of day as his first major publication, *W.B. Yeats: Man and Poet*, in 1948.

The following year Richard Ellmann published his book, *Yeats: the Man and the Masks*. There couldn't have been a greater contrast. Ellmann's was an over-determined thesis, written on the assumption that you can mine a life of a writer purely out of his works. Derry acknowledged that Yeats had a life as well as having written some poems, and his biography is much more faithful to the man and therefore, in the end, to his mind and his works. Ironically, the radically oversimplified and schematic Ellmann book had a better popular life than Derry's because it gave students a key to Yeats and obviated any necessity to think for themselves about the answers to the difficult questions raised by a study of his poetry. A philosophy of making people explore rather than handing them something on a plate was central to Derry's life as an academic.

At Oriel he was supervised by David Nichol Smith, the king-maker of his day, on whom to some extent he was to model himself. But in spite of his liking for lecturers such as Nevill Coghill, he found Oxford on the whole a dull and dreary institution, run by boring and complacent dons—or bad-mannered ones like C. S. Lewis ('a northern boor') who in Derry's eyes at least treated staff and students alike with contempt. If there was one thing Derry Jeffares hated it was academic rudeness and pomposity. He had no time for it.

In April 1946 he began his university career as a lector in English at the University of Groningen. After a year there he married the love of his life, Jeanne Calembert, whose Belgian father, a spy for British Intelligence in German-occupied Belgium during the First War, had married her Scottish mother in the Congo and died young, leaving mother and daughter to settle in Edinburgh, where Jeanne attended George Watson's Ladies' College and Edinburgh University. Derry had met her in 1942 when he was over from TCD taking part in an inter-university debate.

When they left Holland at Christmas 1948 Jeanne was pregnant with their only daughter, Bo. Getting out was a bureaucratic night-

mare. Derry had to swear an oath to the Dutch queen that he would take good care of his wife. Little did the Queen of Holland appreciate the extent and depth to which the swearer would keep his word. The final hurdle was Jeanne's condition, which by Dutch law debarred her from flying. She got round this by tying a cushion to her behind, so as to look like all other Dutch women. The ruse worked and the couple arrived in Dublin.

Bo was born on the first day of the new year and by that time Derry was now a lecturer in English at Edinburgh university, living on a salary of just over ten pounds a week. One day he spent some of his pittance (in Elliot's bookshop at the Waverley end of Princes Street) on some second-hand books. They had belonged to the distinguished scholar Herbert Grierson, who had pioneered the study of Donne in much the same way as Derry was doing with Yeats. 'But Professor Grierson is still alive,' he said to the bookseller. 'How on earth did you persuade him to part with his books?' The bookseller laughed. 'Persuade him? He comes down with a taxi full of them. You see, he likes his dram of an evening but he can't afford it on the pension he gets.' This incident had a profound effect on the young lecturer. Here was one of the most distinguished academics of his day whose pension didn't even run to a bottle of whisky. Derry was determined not to come out of academia into penurious old age. The answer lay in publishing. By the time he died he had over three hundred publications to his name: scores of articles, dozens of books and editions, and a variety of influential series which he had engineered. What pupil hasn't used *York Notes*? What student or general reader hasn't encountered *Writers and Critics*?

He also decided that Edinburgh University was not the place to establish financial security. The administration treated him shabbily and after two and a half years he left in July 1951 for a Chair in Adelaide, also leaving a salary of £600 for one of £1600. Here he stayed for six happy years, the Chair allowing him scope for his ideas, and the country and climate encouraging in him a taste for good wine, one which he continued to refine to the end of his life.

In 1957 he received a letter from the Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University asking if he'd be interested in taking over the Chair from Bonamy Dobrée. Derry was interested, but on one condition:

expansion, backed by money. The promise was made and the Jeffares arrived in Leeds at the same time as Harold Macmillan entered 10 Downing Street. Change was in the air, in the country, in the Commonwealth, and in their universities. For the English Department in Leeds it was the start of an astonishing period of transformation. Derry built up the School of English into the biggest and one of the best in the country; brought Language and Literature together (they didn't even co-operate at the time he took over the Chair); successfully reformed the timetable with a view to enhancing student performance and cutting the failure rate; created Chairs in American Literature, Commonwealth Literature and Contemporary English Language as well as having the usual Chairs in Language and Literature; organised the first Commonwealth Literature Conference ever held in the UK, well ahead of its time in 1964; introduced studies in Bibliography, Dialectology, Folklife, Irish Literature and Modern English Language, adding these to the core courses in Old and Middle English and Literature; founded a Workshop Theatre; introduced four main types of BA Honours so that students could concentrate on the areas that appealed to them; brought scholars and students to Leeds from all around the world and encouraged his own staff to gain experience and conduct research abroad; and he attracted luminaries to Leeds to lecture on their disciplines—Noam Chomsky, Iris Murdoch. Many Commonwealth writers of distinction were his students, such as the Nobel prize winner Wole Soyinka. In the areas of Literature and Language his influence on British and Commonwealth universities was incalculable. Not surprisingly he became known as The Kingmaker and Leeds was the royal matrix of many a shining career.

Through all of this Yeats remained the centre of his own scholarly and critical focus. The original biography was revised, selections edited, commentaries, collections of essays, summer schools master-minded, and later a whole new complete edition and a new biography were to appear. But his many publications extend well beyond Yeats, covering Congreve, Farquhar, Swift, Gogarty, Moore, and range well beyond the field of Irish studies, embracing English, Commonwealth and American literature. He edited *A Review of English Literature*, *ARIEL*, and the *Macmillan History of Literature*

series. Students and staff from that era speak of the ferment of intellectual excitement as akin to being around London when Shakespeare and his contemporaries were at their height. Leeds had become the university capital of the world and some felt that even Oxbridge was an antique shop by comparison.

Then in 1974 he left—to take up a Chair in Stirling. His departure stunned and puzzled many people. The truth is that he was not burnt out but bored. Bored with Leeds. ‘It couldn’t have been pushed any further. I’d done it all. There would have been nothing left but sterile repetition. And after I left, it reverted to the little provincial place it was before.’ This was said without bitterness as an impartial acknowledgement of what in fact happened. Nobody could be found to fill his shoes and the political Philistines of the Thatcher era were soon to be upon us. Not that he had any illusions about any of the other political camps. He left Stirling in 1986, having already set up Academic Advisory Services and retired to Craighead Cottage at Fife Ness where he and Jeanne had spent almost twenty years at the time of his death.

It was not twenty years of retirement, however. The stream of publications continued: *Notes on Yeats’s Poems* in 1986, two volumes of his own poems in 1987, the *New Biography* in 1988, *Images of Invention* (a collection of essays on Irish writing) in 1995, *A Pocket History of Irish Literature* in 1997, *The Irish Literary Movement* in 1998 and another Yeats selection in 2000. There were editions of Swift, Joyce, Irish Childhoods, Irish love poems, Victorian love poems, *The Gonne-Yeats letters* in 1993 and the *Iseult Gonne Letters* in 2004—to name but some. And there was the monumental *Collected Poems and Plays of Oliver St John Gogarty* in 2001. One week before his death he had just completed the Homeric task of co-editing (with Dr Peter Van De Kamp) four anthologies of Irish Literature of the 18th and 19th centuries and he was working on his Anecdotes, of which he had many. Indeed he saw life as an endless anecdote, a continuous story. As his latest of many collaborators said, ‘he died in harness’. He would have had it no other way.

When book lovers crowd into the great tent in Charlotte Square in August for the Edinburgh Book Festival, few if any of them have any idea how it originated. But if you look through the papers of

Professor A. Norman Jeffares you will find one entitled *A Proposal For An Edinburgh Book Fair*. It was a modest proposal but it led to great things. That was again typical of the schoolboy who went personally to Yeats. He made things happen. But for Derry we might never have had our Book Festival. We would never have had the Maud Gonne letters or the Iseult letters. Indeed we would never have understood Yeats as well as we do. It was the young Derry who made Mrs Yeats and Maud Gonne talk about aspects of Yeats and his poetry about which they would have been silent, and so illuminate areas which would have remained obscure. He was in fact the closest link any of us living now could have had with Yeats—the last of the Yeatsians and now that link has snapped. He was the one with the hands-on knowledge. He didn't just read himself into it like most academics—he'd been there.

Does this powerhouse of energy and innovation sound like a bookish and humourless work-horse? Those who knew him will laugh the question to scorn. He was a laughing titan of a man, at home with anybody who was not costive or pretentious. He hated ceremony, vanity, pomposity, hypocrisy, narrowness, meanness and obscurity whether in the academic world or the one around him. Candour, compassion, humanity, warmth, undogmatic diversity, eagerness to help and the expertise to accompany it—these were his best virtues. Undisfigured by narrow academic axe-strokes, he valued directness and simplicity in life as in his writing. Needless to say he remained cheerfully scornful of the drift into the arid arena of theory and over-cleverness, which left him open to the charge of being a populariser, an expicator rather than a critic, an editor rather than an evaluator. Those who failed to understand that to select and edit is to evaluate, that everything seems simple that is practised to perfection, were the sort who would take an entire book to say badly what Derry had the facility to say simply in a few sentences. Modern commentators equate simplicity with simple-mindedness and scatter clouds of unreadable erudition over everything they have to say. In going the opposite way from obfuscation he went the way of his nature: he was as down to earth as a giant could possibly be. He was also a democrat. As Chairman of the Literature Panel of the Arts Council he helped writers such as Liz Lochhead, James Kelman and more recently J. K. Rowling for whose work he did not have much personal regard. But he never

imposed his opinions and ideas. He was a great listener. He was also a great draughtsman, a devoted son, husband, brother and father, a *bon viveur*, an inveterate tinkerer with and buyer of cars (one for every year of his life), a concerned neighbour, a carer for the community, and the best, the most unbendingly loyal, the most generous friend anyone could ever hope to have.

Fife Ness juts out to sea off the edge of Scotland like a terrier's muzzle. That's how it looks on the map. To those who live there or thereabouts it's almost an island. The island has now lost its Prospero, its Nestor, its Ulysses. He could quote you more than chapter and verse on literature. He could tell you who smoked the best fish, sold the best bacon, where to find a good mechanic, accountant, bottle of wine. His hand was always open, the eyes twinkling, the smile on his face. God, how I miss that hand, that smile, that face! I think Derry will forgive me if I try to sum him up by quoting not from an Irish writer but from Sir Izaak Walton, author of *The Compleat Angler*, who wrote that 'it may be said of angling what the late Dr Boteler says of strawberries: "Doubtless God could have made a better berry, but doubtless God never did"?' The name Jeffares may originate in 'Dieu Freres' brothers of God. And so, to re-vamp Izaak Walton, doubtless God could have made a better gentleman-scholar and loving friend than Derry Jeffares—but doubtless God never did.

From the Window of the House

Seamus Heaney

'YOU LIKED JEANNE'S painting of Glanmore, & when I came across a couple of old scraperboards of mine, I thought you might like to have them too . . . The landskip is what I saw from the sitting room window.' So Derry wrote to me in December 2001, in a brief note accompanying copies of two pieces of his unexpected and finely executed art. 'I blew them up to roughly A4 size.' And then as a PS, 'I see I did them in 1956—eheu, fugaces etc.'

The briskness will be familiar to anyone who knew him, the kindness at once impulsive and decisive, the learning like a ball lightly batted and bounced at you over a net. I loved the way he made the land skip and the Horace bop, but chiefly I loved having those black and white images of the house and environs that meant so much to both of us.

In 1972, when I had more or less decided to give up my lectureship in Queen's University and go full time as a writer, Ann Saddlemeyer wrote to Marie and me, suggesting that we could use Glanmore Cottage as an interim home. We didn't know then that Ann had acquired the property from Derry's mother, or that Derry and Jeanne had spent their honeymoon in the place decades earlier. At that stage, I had met Derry only once, but after the meeting had received another equally kind and impulsive note. That was in either 1968 or '69, when I went for the first time to the W. B. Yeats International Summer School in Sligo. In those days I was beginning to receive the occasional literary fee from journals and for freelance work with the BBC, but I was useless at keeping accounts and

had got myself into a slight mess with the income tax people. I must have told Derry because soon after I returned to Belfast a letter arrived with a set of very practical instructions: get four or five big envelopes, and every time a cheque comes in (your salary chit included) or an expense is incurred—stationery, postage, meals bought for visiting writers or lecturers—drop the bill or the receipt into your ad hoc filing system. Simple. Or so he made it sound.

As the years went on, Marie and I would become friends with Derry and Jeanne and get to visit them in their sea-bright, flower-girt house in Crail. And on one of those visits, the night before I was to be conferred with an honorary degree at Stirling, they presented us with the painting of Glanmore Cottage that Jeanne had done during their honeymoon there in the 1940s. Derry had been busy on that occasion also, fitting new panes in the back window of the living room, another ad hoc job that survived (his thumb marks still in the putty) until we renovated the place in 2002. So now, on the newly plastered wall of the hallway, Jeanne's brightly coloured, thickly impasted image of the cottage enjoys pride of place—in the cottage. It is my equivalent, I tell visitors, of Joyce having on his wall a photograph of Cork framed in cork.

The upstairs sitting room window where Derry incised and lined and scraped and cross hatched provided him with a view of walls and fields and farm buildings, but if he had shifted his chair a little to the left and gazed off a bit more to the right, he would have had a view of the open field and hilltop woodland that figure in the first sonnet I wrote in Glanmore in 1974 (which would end up as Sonnet III in the 'Glanmore Sonnets' sequence):

This evening the cuckoo and the corncrake
(So much, too much) consorted at twilight.
It was all crepuscular and iambic.
Out of the field a baby rabbit
Took his bearings, and I knew the deer
(I've seen them too from the window of the house,
Like connoisseurs, inquisitive of air)
Were careful under larch and May-green spruce.
I had said earlier, 'I won't relapse
From this strange loneliness I've brought us to.
Dorothy and William—' She interrupts:

'You're not going to compare us two...?'
Outside a rustling and twig-combing breeze
Refreshes and relents. Is cadences.

On the evening when I heard the cuckoo and the corncrake, I had just come back from Dove Cottage and couldn't help making connections between our new experience of a full time writing life in Wicklow and the emotional security and creative confidence which the Wordsworths enjoyed when they first arrived in Cumberland. A 'strange loneliness' in our case, perhaps, but also, thanks to friends who had been friends indeed,

It was marvellous
And actual, I said out loud, 'A haven.'

(Sonnet VII)

Lips and Ships, Peers and Tears
Lacrimae Rerum and Tragic Joy
Warwick Gould

DERRY JEFFARES'S TRINITY doctorate was a commentary in the classical style upon the *Collected Poems*, and Derry thereafter compared its presence in his life to the constant repainting of the Forth Bridge.¹ It was not merely that new facts, sources, analogues and allusions had to be incorporated, but that the requirements of readers continue to change. What may have been too obvious to a classicist such as Derry now needs to be explained. If Yeats had 'small Latin and less Greek' his reluctantly endured grammar-school education was probably superior to most comparable levels of modern training in the ancient texts.²

T. S. Eliot remarked shortly after Yeats's death that the 'larger historical importance' of Yeats's poetry lay in the fact that Yeats himself had been 'one of those few whose history is the history of their own times, who are a part of the consciousness of an age which can-

¹ It was revised and published as *A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (first published in 1968, and reprinted four times before in 1984 becoming *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats*). Before his death Deirdre Toomey and I commenced working with Derry Jeffares on its revision, a huge task, which continues in progress.

² Ben Jonson's words are from his 'To My Beloved the Author, and what he hath left us', a prefatory poem to the 1623 folio. As Jonathan Bate has shown in the case of Shakespeare, a good foundation in Latin reading and writing in a traditional grammar school education (however much his own was despised by Yeats) was in itself an impressive achievement by the standards of modern Latin teaching and learning. See his *Soul of the Age: the Life, Mind and Work of William Shakespeare* (London: Penguin, 2008), 79–101.

not be understood without them'.³ The presence of classical thought is central to the relation of life and work in Yeats and it awaited documentation, especially when the subject had roundly declared that a poet's life (and so his reading) is 'an experiment in living and those that come after have a right to know it' (YT 74). Derry, then an ambitious young Irish scholar, had, as a school-boy, already commissioned Yeats to write 'What Then?' for *The Erasmian*, their school magazine, in 1936 (NC 378). Arguably, the stress on 'knowledge' and 'power' of Yeats's poems and plays is ultimately derived from his reading of epic and prophetic poetry.⁴ His war poetry, in particular, is nourished by a classical frame of reference, however modern, local and intimate the details of its horror. Once one has listened to the scream of Juno's peacock in 'Meditations in Time of Civil War', one can no longer read (say) 'Last night they trundled down the road / That dead young soldier in his blood' without the dragging of Hector around the walls of Troy entering, as I believe Yeats intended it to do, legitimately into one's own meditation of the Irish Civil War (VP 422, 425).

Commentary itself is challenged by Yeats's self-allusive, even self-dependent poetic strategies, and by his constant revision. On the one hand, we have seen the self-denying ordinance which limits the annotation of the *Collected Works* to what their late co-editor, Richard Finneran, deemed to be discrete 'specific allusions' (CW1 [623]). This pub quiz approach may be contrasted to the copious and interpretative strategy behind the annotation of the *Collected Letters*. It is that latter strategy which informs the approach in this essay, principally because in annotating the text that lies in front of us, it is frequently necessary to bring to mind earlier texts which later revision has apparently trowelled over.

³ T. S. Eliot, 'The Poetry of W. B. Yeats', the first Annual Yeats Lecture, delivered to the Friends of the Irish Academy at the Abbey Theatre, June, 1940, and published in *Purpose* XII, No.s 3 & 4, July-December 1940, 115-27 at p. 127.

⁴ VP 441. Some famous lectures have been delivered on his strategies of allusion. I think of T. R. Henn's British Academy lecture on 'Yeats and the Poetry of War' printed in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 51 (1965), 301-19 and republished with revisions in Henn's *Last Essays* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1976), 81-97, and of A. Norman Jeffares's 'Pallas Athene Gonne', in *Tributes in Prose and Verse to Shotaro Oshima, President of the Yeats Society of Japan, on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday, September 29th 1969* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1970), 4-7.

I take my point of departure from a silence in the *New Commentary*, a single, lightly buried allusion in the second line of the second stanza of ‘The Sorrow of Love’.

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 (*VP* 120).

There is a balanced detachment here, from which the girl (whoever she is) takes on a fore-doomed tragedy from Greek and Trojan alike: no sides are taken. These lines are conventionally read as ‘early’ Yeats and while there is a curious story to tell on their dating, they were first published in *Early Poems and Stories* (1925). To exfoliate ‘the greatness of the world in tears’ requires some review of the Homeric and Virgilian hinterland of Yeats’s poetic thought. My subject is not his interest in classical archaeology, nor his broader engagement with Greek and Roman themes (as explored respectively by Christine Finn and Brian Arkins⁵). Instead, it lies between what Allen Grossman called ‘poetic knowledge’ and those poetic processes which Helen Vendler explores in her *Poets Thinking*.⁶

Yeats’s constant revision of his early poems demonstrates (though not straightforwardly) how they remained ever-present for him as he embarked upon new writing. They remain part of his restless textual continuum, nourished by new situations, read and rewritten in the light of the subsequently written as well as the freshly experienced. Trojan themes remain a constant preoccupation—love as a paradoxical motive for war, and war’s inevitability of exile, the destinies of displaced peoples (such as Aeneas), or their return (as in the case of Ulysses)—but the lustre of later, familiar and fully annotated allu-

⁵ Christine Finn, *Past Poetic: Archaeology in the Poetry of Yeats and Heaney* (London: Duckworth, 2003); Brian Arkins, *Builders of My Soul: Greek and Roman Themes in Yeats* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1990).

⁶ Allen Grossman: *Poetic Knowledge in the Early Yeats: A Study of The Wind Among the Reeds* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1969). Helen Vendler, *Poets Thinking: Pope, Whitman, Dickinson, Yeats* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004). This essay was written before the publication of Professor Vendler’s *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), from which I have learned copiously.

sions deepens when their textual history reveals the continuities of his mind.

LACRIMAE RERUM

Yeats almost certainly studied Book 1 of the *Aeneid* for the ‘intermediate’ examination for which he was, as he eventually told his wife, ‘damnably ill taught’ (*CL InteLex* 7093, 13 October, 1937) at the High School. In 1881-83, Yeats encountered Aeneas, newly arrived in Carthage after the sack of Troy. Aeneas meets the goddess Venus Aphrodite before meeting Queen Dido, with whom he is to fall profoundly in love. Revolving much that the goddess has told him of his destiny and awaiting the entrance of the queen, he meditates upon a painting of the sack of Troy in the Carthaginian temple, marvelling at the

artificumque manus inter se operumque labore
miratur, videt Iliacas ex ordine pugnas,
belisque iam fama totum volgata per orbem,
Atridas, Priamumque, et saevum ambobus Achillem.
Constitit, et lacrimans, ‘Quis iam locus’ inquit ‘Achate,
quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?
En Priamus! Sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi;
sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.
Solve metus; feret haec aliquam tibi fama salutem.’

Sic ait, atque animum pictura pascit inani,
multa gemens, largoque umectat flumine voltum.

Namque videbat, uti bellantes Pergama circum
hac fugerent Graii, premeret Troiana iuventus,
hac Phryges, instaret curru cristatus Achilles.⁷

As translated in the Bohn’s Classical Library Virgil which Yeats owned, Aeneas is found marvelling at

the skill of the artists and their elaborate works, he sees the Trojan battles [delineated] in order, and the war now known by fame over all the world; the sons of Atreus, Priam, and Achilles implacable to both. He stood still;

⁷ Publius Vergilius Maro (70-19 BC), *Aeneid*, BK I, lines 455 *et seq.*

and, with tears in his eyes, What place, Achates, what country on the globe, is not full of our disaster? See Priam! even here praiseworthy deeds meet with due reward: here are tears for misfortunes, and the breasts are touched with human woes. Dismiss your fears: this fame of ours will bring thee some relief. Thus he speaks, and feeds his mind with the empty representations, heaving many a sigh, and bathes his visage in floods of tears. For he beheld how, on one hand, the warrior Greeks were flying round the walls of Troy, while the Trojan youth closely pursued; on the other hand, the Trojans [were flying], while plumed Achilles, in his chariot, pressed on their rear.⁸

Virgil's words, in the Christian era, have long seemed vaguely redemptive, even proto-Christian, with the 'mortalia' of 'sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt': ('[here too] there are the tears of things and mortal destinies touch the mind') being roughly equivalent to Hamlet's 'heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to'.⁹

Davidson's translation may not have been used as a crib by Yeats the schoolboy, but I'm not here looking for close verbal parallels as such because Yeats encountered Virgil in Latin. Reveries such as this spoke to Victorian schoolboys trained in Irish and English schools (one has only to think of how Virgil's present tense heroic descriptions penetrate Wilde's dialogues such as 'The Critic as Artist'). Virgil's passage fired Yeats's mind in all sorts of ways. To demonstrate this, one must get underneath the *Early Poems and Stories* text and look at the relationship of that wording to earlier versions. In 1899 the lines had read:

And then you came with those red mournful lips,
And with you came the whole of the world's tears,
And all the trouble of her labouring ships,
And all the trouble of her myriad years (*VP* 120).

⁸ *The Works of Virgil, literally translated into English Prose*, with Notes, by Davidson. A New Edition, revised, with additional notes, by Theodore Alois Buckley of Christ Church (London: George Bell, Bohn's Classical Library 1875), 118-19 (YL 2203). Hereafter, Davidson edition.

⁹ '... To die: to sleep
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd.' *Hamlet* 3:1.

Here the Trojan references (clarified in the 1925 version above) are as yet implied, and must be unpacked by recognition of the source of ‘the whole of the world’s tears’, viz., Virgil’s *lacrimae rerum*, and that to which it refers, Aeneas’s response to the representation of the sack of Troy. Aeneas is not thinking of the fate of the Trojans alone. The Greeks had fallen out among themselves. One of the sons of Atreus, Agamemnon, has taken away Achilles’ captive Briseis, leaving Achilles, the Incredible Sulk, in his tent. Virgil’s allusion in describing the painting is explicitly to Homer’s opening theme in *The Iliad*, the wrath of Achilles. Above all, of course, ‘En Priamus!’ It is King Priam whose fate moves Aeneas to envisage the world’s tears, and in the later version Yeats underscores that emphasis himself. But in the 1899 version, Yeats makes ‘you’, the beloved with her red mournful lips, bear *all* exile, wandering, human trouble, that of Aeneas and the Trojans as well as that of Odysseus and his returning Greeks, the *whole* of the world’s tears. His consciously deployed Virgilian echo would have been instantly recognised by most of his early readers. It would have had a particular resonance at the time of composition and publication because of the fame of Tennyson, who had saluted Virgil as ‘Wielder of the stateliest measure | Ever moulded by the lips of man’ in ‘To Virgil’. Many critics, incidentally, have noticed Virgilian parallels and sentiment in Tennyson’s work, and one commentator even describes ‘Tears, Idle Tears’ as ‘the century’s most intense lyric distillation of the Virgilian “tears of things”’.¹⁰

So, an unmistakeable if unremarkable allusion to *lacrimae rerum*, explicit only in an abandoned text: obvious enough when you get to it. Derry Jeffares didn’t consider it worthy of a gloss in his *New Commentary*, largely because Yeats had obscured the source as he has mastered it, transforming *lacrimae rerum* into a far more personal if presently somewhat opaque concept ‘the greatness of the world in tears’.¹¹ There is, however, something else which is noteworthy

¹⁰ Kerry McSweeney, *Tennyson and Swinburne as Romantic Naturalists* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 70. See also *The Poems of Tennyson* ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Longman, 1987), II 232 and III 102. Dido’s tears leave Aeneas unmoved as he is leaving Carthage: ‘Mens immota manet; lacrimae volvuntur inanes (*Aeneid* 4. 449).

¹¹ How different a work from Poe’s ‘To Helen’, with its phrase-making sentimentality:—

about the 1899 text: its experiment with repetition, and the ‘trouble’ of the ships and the ‘trouble’ of the years satisfied him until 1925.

Peeling another layer; we get back to the text in 1893.

And then you came with those red mournful lips,
And with you came the whole of the world's tears,
And all the sorrows of her labouring ships,
And all [the] burden of her myriad years (*VP* 120).

The omission of ‘the’ (metrically significant) in the last line is probably accidental. This version is closer to Yeats’s original intentions, and to his youthful riff on the wandering ‘sorrows’ of exile, the ‘burden’ of the years. It is also a fairly early but unmistakeable example of his ‘music’, or lyric signature. Think of ‘labouring’, ‘myriad’—even the compound ‘red mournful’—disturbing trisyllabic formulations in penultimate locations. This is what Yeats would later call one of his ‘metrical tricks’,¹² and he discovered the device early and deployed it often amid lines characterized by polysyndeton (conjunctive repetition and parallelism) as in the spectacular double example

For Fergus rules the brazen cars,
And rules the shadows of the wood,
And the white breast of the dim sea
And all *dishevelled wandering stars* (*VP* 126, emphasis added).

HELEN, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicean barks of yore
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary way-worn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo, in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand,
Ah! Psyche, from the regions which
Are holy land!

¹² Letter to Harold Macmillan (*CL InteLex* 5731, 8 September, 1932).

The calculated repetition of ‘trouble’ in the 1899 text is yet another fingerprint. Verb or noun, ‘trouble’ is a wonderful word in Yeats, ‘Troubling the endless reverie’, ‘Troubled his animal blood’, ‘To trouble the living stream’, ‘troubles my sight’, even, very early on, in another Virgilian echo, ‘And then the whole world’s trouble weeps with you’ (*VP* 65, 378, 393, 442, 738). Yeats’s pastoral elegy for Robert Gregory, ‘Shepherd and Goatherd’ (itself, Yeats thought, modelled on Virgil’s fifth *Eclogue*, his ‘Menalcas/Mopsus lament for Daphnis’, as well as on Spenser’s *Astrophel*) reminds us that ‘Rhyme can beat a measure out of trouble’ (*VP* 339). It is the rhymes I want to think about just here.

Lips bring ships: love implies war, armadas, wandering, exile. ‘For love is war, and there is hatred in it’ as Yeats tells us in his greatest poem about lips and ships, *The Shadowy Waters* (*VP* 244). ‘Tears’ turn into myriad ‘years’ of tears, projecting *lacrimae rerum* into historical shapes. There is no escape, this is the human condition. This rhyme, rather than the later rhyme of ‘tears’ with ‘peers’, is thematically dominant; but what Yeats later sacrificed in terms of rhyme he gains in rhythmical precision and human agency: ‘And proud as Priam, murdered with his peers’. Let us trace the path of these developments.

First, iconography. The key line had been personal—‘And then *you* came with those red mournful lips, | And with *you* came the whole of the world’s tears’. Maud Gonne is the ‘you’ addressed here. It is not until those ships lumber into view that one sees that she has also taken on some classical dimensions. But whose?

Helen of Troy is not by nature mournful: when she recognises Telemachus in Lacedaemon as he comes searching for news of Odysseus, she is skittish in front of her husband, Menelaus, recalling that the ‘Achaeans came to Troy with war in your hearts for my sake, shameless creature that I was!’ When she does weep, it is briefly over Odysseus’ fate: ‘a jealous god must have . . . ensured that he unhappy man was the only one who never reached his home’ says Menelaus, words which ‘stirred in them all a longing for tears. Helen of Argos, child of Zeus, broke down and wept. Telemachus and Menelaus, son of Atreus, did the same. Nor could Nestor’s son keep his eyes dry’.¹³ Of course they quickly forget their ‘tearful mood’ and ‘turn their thoughts once more to supper’. Helen hits the entire com-

pany with a drug that once dissolved in wine, will ensure that no one who swallows it will shed ‘a single tear that day’ (*Odyssey* iv. 210–15, 220–25). She then tells her story of how the disguised Odysseus makes a reconnaissance of Troy, is found and bathed by Helen, kills a number of Trojans, causes the loud lamentation of the Trojan women and yet causes her to rejoice because of her change of heart and new-found wish to repent of forsaking her daughter, her bridal chamber and her husband Menelaus. After all, poor fellow, he ‘lacked nothing in intelligence and good looks’. Now she wants to return (*Odyssey* iv. 260–65).

Still less is ‘you’ Pallas Athene, Odysseus’s divine protector (who is rarely mournful, but always young, and bright-eyed), and into whose guise Maud Gonne really does step at Howth station in the late ‘Beautiful Lofty Things’.¹⁴ Nor is she wise Penelope, weepings over the lost Odysseus in Book 1 of the *Odyssey*, when Athene of the flashing eyes visits Telemachus in Ithaca; nor exactly Niobe, icon of tears over murdered progeny, who perhaps comes to Yeats from Homer via *Hamlet*, Act II, ‘all tears’, and who is invoked in *A Vision*.

A civilisation is a struggle to keep self-control, and in this it is like some great tragic person, some Niobe who must display an almost superhuman will or the cry will not touch our sympathy. The loss of control over thought comes towards the end; first a sinking in upon the moral being, then the last surrender, the irrational cry, revelation—the scream of Juno’s peacock (*AVB* 181).

Niobe is invoked by Achilles in the ceasefire which marks the end of the *Iliad* when he is about to deliver the corpse of Hector to Priam. Priam, bringing his ransom, asks Achilles to

¹³ *Odyssey* iv. 180–55. See *The Odyssey* translated by E. V. Rieu rev. D. C. H. Rieu in consultation with Dr Peter V. Jones (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 50.

¹⁴ ‘Pallas Athena in that straight back and arrogant head’ (*VP* 578). When they first met in 1889 she seemed a classical impersonation of the spring, ‘the Virgilian commendation “She walks like a goddess” made for her alone.’ (*Au* 123). Pallas Athene in Greek mythology was a virgin goddess of wisdom, of practical skills, the arts of peace and of prudent warfare. See Jeffares, ‘Pallas Athene Gonne’, *Tributes in Prose and Verse to Shotaro Oshima* (1970), 4–7.

fear the gods, and be merciful to me, remembering your own father, though I am even more entitled to compassion, since I have brought myself to do a thing that no one else on earth has done—I have raised to my lips the hand of the man who killed my son.' Priam had set Achilles thinking of his own father and brought him to the verge of tears. Taking the old man's hand, he gently put him from him; and overcome by their memories they both broke down. Priam, crouching at Achilles' feet, wept bitterly for man-slaying Hector, and Achilles wept for his father, and then again for Patroclus. The house was filled with the sound of their lamentation.¹⁵

Achilles invokes the story of Niobe who has seen a dozen of her children done to death and who is transformed into a statue of tears:

'There Niobe, in marble, broods on the desolation that the gods dealt out to her. So now, my royal lord, let us two also think of food. Later, you can weep some more for your son, when you take him in to Ilium. He will indeed be much bewept.'¹⁶

As he is, by the Trojan women, including Helen, who sheds tears

'of sorrow both for you [Hector] and for my miserable self. No one else is left in the wide realm of Troy to treat me gently and to befriend me. They shudder at me as I pass.' Thus Helen through her tears.¹⁷

The phantasmagoria which has interposed itself in Yeats's mind between the actual Maud Gonne and the allusory range of relevant classical types to which I gesture effects a conceptual leap from *lacrimae rerum*, the world's plenum of tears, to its personified 'greatness in tears'. This difference between *lacrimae rerum* and the noblest tragic human awareness of it is Yeats's invention, objectified in Yeats's final version: 'A girl arose that had red mournful lips': the 'girl' Yeats returns to in 'Long-legged Fly' 'part woman, three parts a child (*VP* 617). 'Arose'? From where? In the poet's mind's eye, a dream, a vision, or a memory of a 'stammering' schoolboy's texts, now an ever-present part of a poet's thinking?

¹⁵ *The Iliad* trans. E. V. Rieu (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950), 450-51. Michael Longley's 'Ceasefire' confers an Irish context on the reconciliation of Priam and Achilles and the return of Hector's body at the end of the *Iliad*, Irish context for this moment: 'I get down on my knees and do what must be done | And kiss Achilles' hand, the killer of my son' (*Collected Poems* [London: Cape, 2006], 225).

¹⁶ *The Iliad* trans. E. V. Rieu, 453-54.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 458.

Let me return to Yeats's authentic signature music in the last two lines, where emphasis and troubling polysyllables give us

and Doomed . . . labouring ships
Proud . . . murdered. . .

This achievement of a new iconography and the achievement of style makes one hungry for datable manuscript evidence. There are only two manuscripts in the history of this change, both at Emory University, both tucked into books formerly in Lady Gregory's library.¹⁸ Plate 1 shows the first of these, tipped into Lady Gregory's copy of *Poems* (1895).

A girl swept by with her red mournful lips
And seemed
~~Like all~~ the great ness of the world in tears,
~~mourning Odysseus & his scatterd ships~~
~~or mourning Priam dead among his peers.~~
Doomed like Odysseus & his scattered ship
And proud as Priam murdered with his peers.
altered at Coole—Autumn 1894 [pencil]

'Swept by' certainly suggests a goddess; 'scattered' performs much the same rhythmic function as the earlier 'labouring', but while it suggests the implacable hand of the Gods, it doesn't give us the human toil in response to the Gods. The statement, 'altered at Coole—Autumn 1894' is simply wrong. Yeats had never been to Coole in 1894, he was in Sligo in the autumn of 1894 wondering if he should propose to Eva Gore-Booth. He first met Lady Gregory in London in 1894 but did not go to Coole until 1896, (and then only for lunch with Arthur Symons whilst staying with Edward Martyn at Tulira). His regular sojourns at Coole for writing purposes did not begin until the following year, 1897.¹⁹

This revision brings the stanza very close to a second puzzle, another attempt to revise, tipped into Lady Gregory's copy of *Poems* (1904), also now at Emory (Plate 2).

¹⁸ I am indebted to Ron Schuchard and his tireless librarians for these images.

¹⁹ George Bornstein is not detained by the incorrect date in W. B. Yeats, *The Early Poetry: vol. II: 'The Wanderings of Oisin' and Other Early Poems to 1895: Manuscript Materials* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 288.

A girl swept by with her red mournful lips
 lips,
 And seemed the great ness of the world in tears, tears,
 Doomed like Odysseus' hurricane driven ships
 And proud as Priam murdered with his peers
 peers.

altered in 1924 [pencil]

This slip tipped in to the 1904 edition is itself pasted onto a torn-off printed slip bearing a part of line 10 ('stars in the') as it stood in all editions from 1895-1924, but almost certainly from uncorrected proof of *Early Poems and Stories* (1925).²⁰ Here there is corroborating evidence to verify the date: Yeats wrote to his wife from Coole about this change, likely to have been made on 12 November 1924, telling her that he had revised this 'absurd old' poem into a 'finer' thing (*CL InteLex* 4675, 13 November, 1924). There is one conclusion to be drawn: in reworking the poem in 1924 Yeats drew upon the redrafting wrongly dated 1894.

There are several questions to be asked about these *pentimenti*, with tentative conclusions as follows:-

- (i) Are the first inked change and its pencilled annotation made at the same time? No. The annotation is wrong.
- (ii) Whose hand is that of the annotator on the revision dated '1894'? I believe it to be Lady Gregory's, and Colin Smythe, James Pethica and Ron Schuchard support this view. The hand and other circumstances including the inaccuracy of the dating suggest 'much later', probably in the 1920s.
- (iii) When was the change filed in the 1895 copy of *Poems*? Unknown, but the book has been used to file a number of such scraps. It is possible that this happened before the spring of 1899 when the next edition was published. If so, the filing is explained, because the 1895 edition was the latest printing. The stanza is struck out in pencil in the copy.
- (iv) Was the annotation added then, or later? Not known.
- (v) Why did Lady Gregory misremember when Yeats first went to Coole? Probably simple inaccuracy, just as in *Seventy Years* she remembered that Yeats had first come to that lunch from Tulira in 1895 instead of 1896.
- (vi) Why is the 1924 revision filed in a copy of *Poems* (1904) instead of

²⁰ The lineation shows it is not from any published edition.

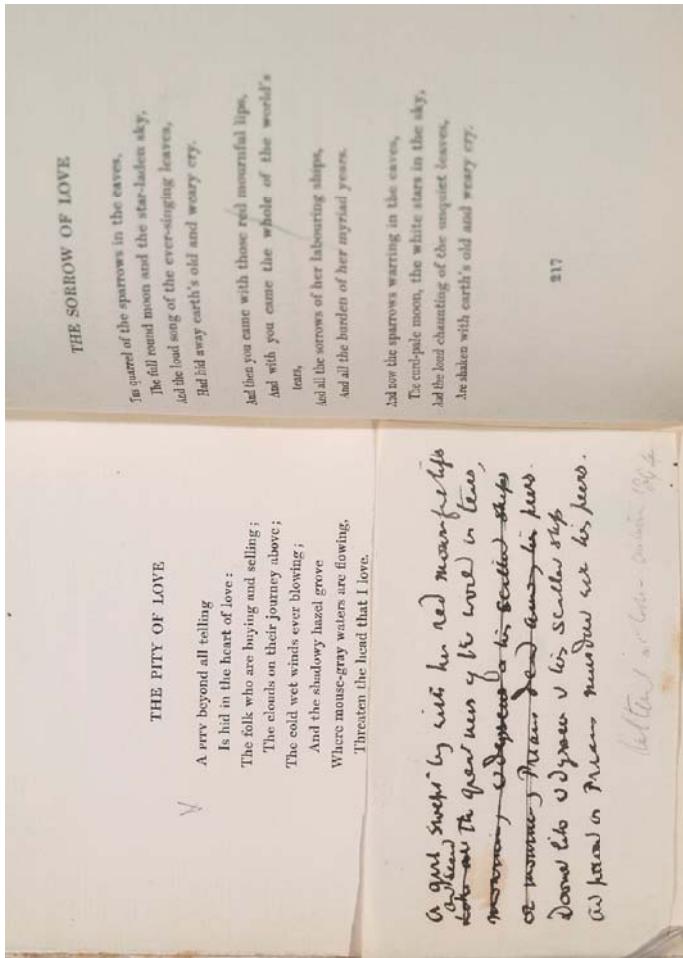


Plate 1. Yeats's holograph revision to 'The Sorrow of Love' tipped in to Lady Gregory's copy of *Poems* (1895) and misdated, probably by her, in the Robert W. Woodruff Collection, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.



THE SORROW OF LOVE

This quarrel of the sparrows in the eaves,
The full round moon and the starladen sky,
And the loud song of the ever-singing leaves,
Had bid away earth's old and weary cry.

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

And all the trouble of her labouring ships,
And all the trouble of her myriad years.

And now the sparrows warring in the eaves,
The curd-pale moon, the white stars in the sky,

And the loud chanting of the unquiet leaves,
Are shaken with earth's old and weary cry.

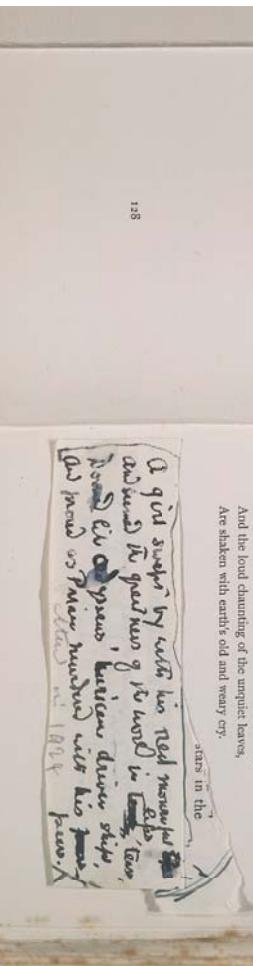


Plate 2. Yeats's holograph revision in another of Lady Gregory's copies of *Poems*, that of 1904, also now in the Woodruff Collection at Emory and altered in 1924 as marked in pencil. This slip is pasted onto a torn-off printed slip bearing a part of line 10, almost certainly from an uncorrected proof of *Early Poems and Stories* (1925).

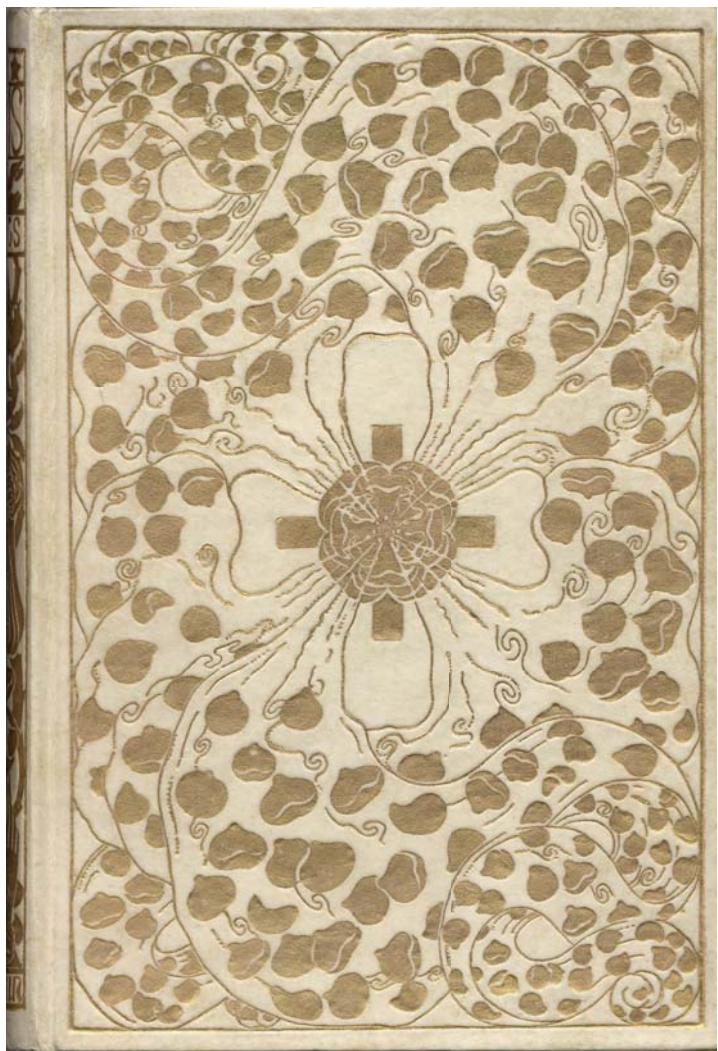


Plate 3. Top board of Lady Gregory's white and gold copy of *Poems* (1904) now in the Robert W. Woodruff Collection, Emory.

murder *murder*
~~letter written in 1824~~ "letter in 1824"

Plate 4. Close-up comparison of the two tipped in revisions as in Plates 1 and 2.

Poems (1924)? Probably because the 1904 copy was a trophy copy, bound in white parchment, one of only a handful ever bound thus (Plate 3).

(vii) Did the same hand make both annotations? Here the doctors disagree. While everyone agrees that the first annotation is Lady Gregory's, of the second some experts allow that it could be Yeats's, largely on basis of similarities between letter forms in both the pencilled and inked inscriptions (Plate 4, closeup). There are manifest differences between the two instances of 'a' and 'd' in altered (cf., 'd' in 'murdered'), and the '4' in each. Of course, it also seems less likely that Yeats would pencil annotations to his own changes, and the space and samples are too limited to admit of certainty. If both were done by Lady Gregory, then clearly they were done with different pencils and so probably at different times.

In 1924 Yeats unquestionably took up the earlier revision, dated only tentatively to 1895–99, a date corroborated on the basis of handwriting. I cannot explain why it had not been incorporated into the 1899 edition, except to suggest that Yeats was as yet unsatisfied with it. Marooned in a copy of *Poems* 1895, it remained out of the line of textual descent until 1924: but, fundamentally the 1924 version is directly reworked from the nineties versions.

It is now possible to distinguish more clearly the implications of these various textual layers. The objectification of the 'girl', the move from an allegory of *lacrimae rerum* into the embodiment of human agency in response to that aspect of the human condition, is early. The use of repetition (mourning, mourning) was also early, and probably preceded 'trouble, trouble'; the unresolved problem might be the triplet 'mournful, mourning, mourning'. Various alternatives to the original 'labouring ships' proved rhythmically satisfactory according to the template of Yeats's music but lacked the human agency against the gods' implacability of the original 'labouring ships', and he clung to that key word, leaving the more 'fate-driven' qualifiers, 'scattered' and 'hurricane-driven' in MS drafts only.

This brings us to the greatest triumph of the revision: 'murdered', in which we hear the bell-note of Yeats, the troubling polysyllable in a rhythmically emphatic position. If Yeats had actually arrived at 'murdered' in the late 1890s, this rejected revision suddenly became urgent in early November 1924 when the 'growing murderousness of the world' was much on his mind (*Au* 192). The cruelty of the Black and Tans, and the later intimate viciousness of the Irish Civil War as

witnessed by Yeats himself leave their mark on many of the poems revised in 1924 for *Early Poems and Stories*, e.g., the rewritten ‘The Dedication of a Book of Stories from the Irish Novelists’ or ‘The Lamentation of the Old Pensioner’, where sentimentality yields to passionate sentiment.

Thus far, then, biography serves its turn: Senator Yeats, the poet of ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’ whose bridge at Ballylee has been blown up in 1922 and whose Merrion Square house has been shot up (George Yeats was slightly injured), wishes to extirpate sentimentality. ‘... I am exceedingly lively . . . To rewrite an old poem is like dressing up for a fancy dress ball . . . I have just turned an absurd old poem of mine called “The Sorrow of Love” into a finer thing’.²¹ His turn from the vague and stately 1899 ‘troubled’ version to the explicit ('doomed', 'murdered') may be a return, but, whenever Yeats hit on that word 'murder', the murder of Priam in Book 2 of the *Aeneid* was in his mind. Priam is murdered with his family, not, in any strict sense, his peers.²² How did Yeats get to peers (via 'pears') and 'years'? The answer lies, I think, in that phantasmagoria (for that is his word), into which recollection of classical texts faded for the poet: creative forgetting rather than the anxiety of influence. The rhyme is found in George Chapman's translation of Bk III of the *Iliad*, where Homer describes the entrance of Helen onto the battlements of Troy. Priam and the other Trojans too old for battle have taken their seats for the single combat proposed between Paris and Menelaus as a way of resolving the entire dispute. ‘Shadow[ing] her graces with white veils’, in George Chapman's 1598 translation, she accompanies her women folk to the towers of Troy where Priam and his grave counsellors have a ring-side seat for the single combat of Paris and Menelaus in the famous ‘teichoskopia’ scene.

Thus went she forth, and took with her her women most of name,
 Æthra, Pitthëus' lovely birth, and Clymene, whom fame
 Hath for her fair eyes memorised. They reached the Scaeán towers,
 Where Priam sat, to see the fight, with all his counsellors;
 Panthous, Lampus, Clytius, and stout Hicetaon,
 Thymœtes, wise Antenor, and profound Ucalegon:

²¹ CL InteLex 4672 [12 November, 1924], 4675 13 November [1924].

²² See *Aeneid*, II, 505-60.

All grave men; and soldiers they had been, but for age
 Now left the wars; yet counsellers they were exceeding sage.
 And as in well-grown woods, on trees, cold spiny grasshoppers
 Sit chirping, and send voices out that scarce can pierce our ears
 For softness, and their weak faint sounds; so, talking on the tower,
 These seniors of the people sat; who when they saw the power
 Of beauty, in the queen, ascend, even those cold-spirited peers,
 Those wise and almost withered men, found this heat in their years
 That they were forced (though whispering) to say: 'What man can blame
 The Greeks and Trojans to endure, for so admired a dame ,
 So many miseries, and so long? In her sweet countenance shine
 Looks like the Goddesses. And yet (though never so divine)
 Before we boast, unjustly still, of her enforced prise,
 And justly suffer for her sake, with all our progenies,
 Labour and ruin, let her go; the profit of our land,
 Must pass the beauty.²³

I think it a memory of Priam's elderly *peers* with their piping voices and faint stirrings of passion inappropriate for their *years* which comes into Yeats's mind as he finds 'tears' and 'peers' to replace 'tears' and 'years'. The new rhyme takes us beyond *lacrimae rerum* (years of tears), and into a conjunction which imbricates a little further the meanings of the text it supplants. The lesson for commentators working in the Jeffares tradition is that accounting as minutely as possible for the poet's reading can be reconciled with surviving manuscript evidence for his development of texts.

CELTIC TITANISM

The 'lips | ships' rhyme stands in all versions of the poem. Yeats was wedded to it. He clearly took his ships from Marlowe's 'face that

²³ Homer's *Iliad* translated by George Chapman, with an introduction by Henry Morley (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1884), BK III, 141-60, 42-43. Emphases added.

²⁴ *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus* V, i, 94-95. Perhaps from A. H. Bullen's edition, *The Works of Christopher Marlowe* (London: John Nimmo, 1885), I, 275. But for the fact that Tennyson's 'lips' are not those of the sea, there is a possible echo of 'Locksley Hall' (but see also POSTSCRIPT, below, 55).

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
 And our spirits rush'd together at the touching of the lips.

launched a thousand ships | And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?'.²⁴ The root-tip of the rhyme is in *The Island of Statues* of 1885, an Arcadian play strewn with numerous indulgent Trojan references.²⁵ One statue wakes, having been asleep since Aeneas roved 'with hungry heart'

. . . with all his ships
I saw him from sad Dido's shores depart,
Enamoured of the waves' impetuous lips (*VP* 677).

The 'lips of the sea' are Yeats's image, not Virgil's, More enamoured of the sea as a conquest intermediary between himself and that of his destiny than he is of the Carthaginian Queen, 'pius' Aeneas must leave Africa in order that Rome be founded. The sea's lips show an interest aspirational rather than real on Yeats's part. Rhyme itself is formative: 'Lips' and 'ships' becomes something of a poetic idea, or foreconceit, for lyric situations. This rhyme is reused in another early

²⁵ It seems that two shepherds' rivalry for Naschina must be settled by force of arms. Meanwhile her true lover, Alminton, seeks an enchanted flower and is himself enchanted to a stone, joining numerous other questers who 'chose the wrong flower' in centuries-long sleep. Naschina disguised as a shepherd reaches the island, the flower is found, the enchantress vanquished, the sleepers awake. One has been asleep since Aeneas roved 'with hungry heart'

Come forth: the morn is fair; as from the pyre
Of sad Queen Dido shone the lapping fire
Unto the wanderer's ships, or as day fills
The brazen sky, so blaze the daffodills;
As Argive Clytemnestra saw out-burn
The flagrant signal of her lord's return,
Afar, clear-shining on the herald hills,
In vale and dell so blaze the daffodills;
As when upon her cloud-o'er-muffled steep
Oenone saw the fires of Troia leap,
And laugh'd, so, so along the bubbling rills
In lemon-tinted lines, so blaze the daffodills (*VP* 645).

And:

Ah! while I slumbered,
How have the years in Troia flown away?
Are still the Achaians' tented chiefs at bay?
Where rise the walls majestic above
The plain, a little fair-haired maid I love (*VP* 679).

poem, 'The Rose of Battle' of 1892, where *The sad, the lonely, the insatiable* are enjoined by the Rose of the World to 'Turn if you may from battles never done', And these include those who come

*in laughter from the sea's sad lips,
And wage god's battles in the long grey ships (VP 114).*

The 'Rose of Battle' is the 'Rosa Mundi', all roses are the Rose, which is envisaged as 'suffering with man and not as something pursued and seen from afar' (VP 842). 'Beauty grown sad with its eternity' thus actually embodies these ships (as in 'The Sorrow of Love', which was originally entitled 'They went forth to the Battle, but they always fell' (a quote from Macpherson's *Ossian*). Here, I suggest, Yeats is turning a private frame of reference to the Trojan war to Celtic account as he moves from the sprinkling of fanciful classical allusions in unsatisfactory early works, towards the discovery of an individual voice.

The spur is Celtic, and titanic. Many would assume that it took Maud Gonne, Yeats's Helen or Dido, to turn his attention from the metaphorical lips of the sea to human lips, however red and mournful. But no, the first female lips associated with warlike ships in Yeats are in fact those of an 'amorous demon thing' in *The Wanderings of Oisin*. Here are the lines Yeats intended should open editions of his collected poems.

S. Patrick You who are bent, and bald, and blind,
With a heavy heart and a wandering mind,
Have known three centuries, poets sing,
Of dalliance with a demon thing.

By line 19, Oisin is describing how he

... found on the dove-grey edge of the sea
A pearl-pale, high-born lady, who rode
On a horse with bridle of findrinny;
And like a sunset were her lips,
A stormy sunset on doomed ships; .
A citron colour gloomed in her hair,
But down to her feet white vesture flowed,
And with the glimmering crimson glowed
Of many a figured embroidery;

And it was bound with a pearl-pale shell
 That wavered like the summer streams,
 As her soft bosom rose and fell.

S. Patrick You are still wrecked among heathen dreams
 (VP 2-4).

Oisin is indeed immersed in his own story, just as Aeneas always sees himself *sub specie aeternitatis*, from a perspective both within and yet above his own circumstances. When Aeneas in the Carthaginian temple looks at the painting of the wreck of Troy, he is already a character in a legend, just as S. Patrick knows Oisin from a three hundred year old legend. Pius Aeneas dismisses his *lacrimae rerum* because ‘this fame of ours will bring thee some relief’: his fame has travelled before him, and is for him to contemplate. The same is true of Oisin but he takes a simpler attitude:

But the tale, though words be lighter than air,
 Must live to be old like the wandering moon (VP 3).

Now let us peel back the text to 10 January 1889, when the poem is first published. There the enchantress’s

. . . eyes were soft as dewdrops hanging
 Upon the grass-blades’ bending tips,
 And like a sunset were her lips,
 A stormy sunset o’er doomed ships;
 Her hair was of a citron tincture,
 And gathered in a silver cincture (VP 3).

Yeats’s triple rhyme marks a major conjunction—there are very few in Yeats’s poems—of Trojan and Celtic doom-eagerness (‘doomed ships’, ‘stormy sunset’, ‘gloomed in her hair etc’). These particular ‘doomed ships’ appear to have been blown off course coming home from Troy, but Yeats’s source is in fact *The Land of Youth* by Michael Comyn, a very late Ossianic poem from the middle of the 18th century, edited by Bryan O’Looney and printed in the *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*. O’Looney’s translation of Comyn’s Irish, presented in the *Transactions* in facing-page layout, the hanging indents of the English quatrains faithfully following the Irish, runs as follows.²⁶

²⁶ III, 1859, 237.

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.

A gold ring was hanging down
 From each yellow curl of her golden hair;
 Her eyes blue, clear, and cloudless,
 Like a dew drop on the top of the grass.

Redder were her cheeks than the rose
 Fairer was her visage than the swan upon the wave
 And more sweet was the taste of her balsam lips
 Than honey mingled thro' red wine

A garment wide, long, and smooth,
 Covered the white steed;
 There was a comely saddle of red gold,
 And her right hand held a bridle with a golden bit.

Here in one page of Michael Comyn are Niamh's horse, findrinny (red gold) and those 'balsam' lips. Compare, too, 'Her eyes blue, clear, and cloudless, | Like a dew drop on the top of the grass' with Yeats's 1889 'soft as dewdrops hanging | Upon the grass-blades' bending tips'. Yeats deleted the triplet rhyme in 1895, but he never forgot the image, as 'Gratitude to the Unknown Instructors' first published in *Words for Music Perhaps* (1932) reveals.

What they undertook to do
 They brought to pass;
 All things hang like a drop of dew
 Upon a blade of grass (*VP* 505).

Separate elements of the lips/ships rhyme and the 'labouring' rhetoric turn up in other early poems.

Who dreamed that beauty passes like a dream?
 For these red lips, with all their mournful pride,
 Mournful that no new wonder may betide,
 Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam,
 And Usna's children died.

We and the labouring world are passing by:
 Amid men's souls, that waver and give place

Like the pale waters in their wintry race,
Under the passing stars, foam of the sky,
Lives on this lonely face (*VP* 111-12).

Here the Greek Helen-and-Paris story, which brings the ‘funeral gleam’ to Troy on the one hand, and the Irish Deirdre-and-Naoise story, which brings great suffering to Ulster in the Red Branch cycle on the other, are yoked together with more violence than syncretism. This brilliant stroke is dissipated, however, by the third stanza.

Bow down, archangels, in your dim abode:
Before you were, or any hearts to beat,
Weary and kind one lingered by His seat;
He made the world to be a grassy road
Before her wandering feet (*VP* 112).

Yeats had recited a two stanza version to George Russell after he and Maud Gonne had returned from a walk in the Dublin mountains in October 1891 when she was in Dublin, for Parnell’s funeral and mourning the death of her son, Georges, and when ‘The Sorrow of Love’ was first drafted.²⁷ Yeats was worried because she had been exhausted by walking on the rough mountain roads, and added this stanza, which Russell thought meaningless and sentimental. He would tell the story to illustrate how fine poetry ‘can be ruined by the intrusion of the transient and incidental’, or so E. R. Dodds told the story to Derry Jeffares (*NC* 27).

The sentimentality comes as Yeats implicitly identifies Maud Gonne with the Virgin Mary, born without original sin because God overleaps history and takes the benefits of the Crucifixion before it has happened (as it were) to construct the world for the weary and kind woman with wandering feet, drawing on the Immaculate Conception, a late antique doctrine which became papal dogma only in 1854 (ll. 11-14).²⁸ The Classical/Celtic reading of one myth by another is weakened by this third, Christian belief structure. (One of

²⁷ The episode must be of October 1891, when Yeats and Russell were living in a Theosophical commune at 3 Upper Ely Place, Dublin. On the highly charged meeting of Yeats and Maud Gonne at Kingstown Pier on 10 October, 1891, see *Mem* 47-8 and *Life* 1, 115-17.

²⁸ The Catholic Cathedral in Sligo city was consecrated in 1874 and dedicated to the Immaculate Conception.

those wandering feet has some miles to go before it ends up in 'The Grey Rock').

Poor Maud Gonne. As she stepped out of that hansom cab in Bedford Park on 30 January 1889, did she know what pre-existent phantasmagoria she was stepping into? *The Wanderings of Oisin* where Virgilian lips and Homeric ships had been brought to bear on Yeats's Ossianic sources had itself been published on 10 January 1889, just three weeks before Yeats's Pallas Athene, his Venus, his Dido, his Niamh arrived. Yet, these are her 'red mournful lips' in all versions of 'The Sorrow of Love'. It is she who turns the 'famous harmony' of nature to the 'lamentation' whereby 'man's image and his cry'—*lacrimae rerum*—are composed by nature instead of blotted out by it.

Clearly, well before Yeats consciously or deliberately associated Troy with Maud Gonne, or his own emotional life, the fascination with the type had obsessed him:-

I was twenty-three years old when the troubling of my life began. . . . Presently she drove up to our house in Bedford Park I had never thought to see in a living woman so great beauty. It belonged to famous pictures, to poetry, to some legendary past. A complexion like the blossom of apples, and yet face and body had the beauty of lineaments which Blake calls the highest beauty because it changes least from youth to age, and a stature so great that she seemed of a divine race. Her movements were worthy of her form, and I understood at last why the poet of antiquity, where we would but speak of face and form, sings, loving some lady, that she paces like a goddess. I remember nothing of her speech that day except that she vexed my father by praise of war, for she too was of the Romantic movement and found those uncontrovertible Victorian reasons, that seemed to announce so prosperous a future, a little grey. As I look backward, it seems to me that she brought into my life in those days—for as yet I saw only what lay upon the surface—the middle of the tint, a sound as of a Burmese gong, an overpowering tumult that had yet many pleasant secondary notes.²⁹

²⁹ 'I felt in the presence of a great generosity and courage, and of a mind without peace, and when she and all her singing birds had gone my melancholy was not the mere melancholy of love. I had what I thought was a "clairvoyant" perception but was, I can see now, but an obvious deduction of an awaiting immediate disaster' (*Mem* 40-42).

By the time this is rehandled in *Autobiographies*, Maud Gonne ‘seemed a classical impersonation of the Spring, the Virgilian commendation “She walks like a goddess” made for her alone’.

She vexed my father by praise of war, war for its own sake, not as the creator of certain virtues but as if there were some virtue in excitement itself. I supported her against my father . . . man young as I could not have differed from a woman so beautiful and so young. To-day, with her great height and the unchangeable lineaments of her form, she looks the Sibyl I would have had played by Florence Farr, but in that day she seemed a classical impersonation of the Spring, the Virgilian commendation ‘She walks like a goddess’ made for her alone. Her complexion was luminous, like that of apple-blossom through which the light falls, and I remember her standing that first day by a great heap of such blossoms in the window’ (*Au* 123).

Now let us go back to Aeneas’s meeting with Venus Aphrodite, shortly after he has arrived on the African coast.

She said, and turning away, shone radiant with her rosy neck, and from her head ambrosial locks breathed divine fragrance: her robe hung flowing to the ground, and by her gait the goddess stood confessed. The hero, soon as he knew her for his mother . . . pursued her as she fled . . .³⁰

The ‘red mournful’ pre-Raphaelite lips may draw their hue from this rosy memory: Aeneas’s *mother*, is consistently described as a virgin huntress. Here (in Dryden’s translation) she flaunts her

. . . neck resplendent, and dishevelled hair,
Which, flowing from her shoulders, reached the ground,
And widely spread ambrosial scents around:
In length of train descends her sweeping gown,
And by her walk the Queen of Love is known.³¹

Yeats always remembered Maud Gonne coming into his life with the walk of Virgil’s goddess, against a background of apple blossom that must, given the time of the year, have actually been almond blossom.³² It is not merely that he sees her *through* the Virgil which, as

³⁰ *Aeneid*, l. 402-05, Davidson edition, 116-17 (YL 2203).

³¹ Virgil’s *Aeneid* translated by John Dryden, with an introduction by Henry Morley (London: George Routledge and Sons, Limited, 1891), 21.

a schoolboy he had translated. She had arrived to fulfill a role he had created for her in his work, walking into his script as a goddess walks, with her shape-changing ability to recall associated types. Venus is soon supplanted by Dido who walks into Aeneas's life as he broods on Venus Aphrodite and the depiction of Penthesilea, the warrior queen, in the Troy painting (*Aeneid* 1, ll 491-95).

These wondrous scenes while the Trojan prince surveys, while he is lost in thought, and in one gaze stands unmoved; Queen Dido, of surpassing beauty, advanced to the temple, attended by a numerous retinue of youth. As on the banks of Eurotas, or on Mount Cynthus' top, Diana leads the circular dances, round whom a numerous train of mountain nymphs play in rings; she bears her quiver on her shoulder, and moving majestic, she towers above the other goddesses, while silent rapture thrills Latona's bosom; such Dido was, and such, with cheerful grace, she passed amid her train, urging forward the labour and her future kingdom.³³

Yeats redeploys 'Eurotas' grassy banks' in Sparta for his 'Lullaby' which decorously recalls not the rape, but the bridal sleep of Leda and the 'holy bird' and compares it to that of Paris and Helen (VP 522). 'Lips' and 'Ships': Yeats's mind set was ready for Maud Gonne, he had got his formative rhyme four years before, he had redeployed it with reference to Niamh, well before he had linked either the mythical or the real figure with his own project. Doom-eager then, he remembered nearly fifty years later the 'old themes' of Oisin:-

But what cared I that set him on to ride,
I, starved for the bosom of his faery bride?³⁴

³² See *Life* 1, 88.

³³ *The Works of Virgil* (Davidson translation), 120.

³⁴ VP 629. *The Countess Cathleen* predates *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, the play he wrote with Lady Gregory.

And then a counter-truth filled out its play,
The Countess Cathleen was the name I gave it;
She, pity-crazed, had given her soul away,
But masterful Heaven had intervened to save it.
I thought my dear must her own soul destroy,
So did fanaticism and hate enslave it,
And this brought forth a dream and soon enough
This dream itself had all my thought and love (VP 629-30).

Starved? well, yes, he had been, until Maud Gonne appeared with the walk of a queen, Venus Aphrodite, Pallas Athene, Penthesilea the warrior-queen, Dido, Niobe, Helen, Diana of the Archer Vision, Niamh – she is all of them and none: his syncretism is extraordinary: he had never expected to see ‘in a living woman so great beauty. It belonged to famous pictures, to poetry, to some legendary past’ he wrote. Maud Gonne is that ‘living beauty’ (*VP* 333–34). Her quasi-supernatural grandeur finds its way into the closing lines of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, the play in which she took the title role in 1902.

Peter [to Patrick, laying a hand on his arm]. Did you see an old woman going down the path?

Patrick. I did not, but I saw a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen.³⁵

Lips come before ships, Love before War. When the Shan van Vocht transformed herself into Cathleen ni Houlihan, an Irish Venus Aphrodite, Stephen Gwynn in the audience foresaw the Easter Rising.³⁶

Moreover, ‘lips’ and ‘ships’ prefigure exile. Yeats’s self-confessed ‘attendant lord’, the London journalist Henry Nevinson, believed that Yeats, in inner ‘perpetual banishment’ moved ‘about the common world as [a] native[]s of a land which [he had] . . . never seen with bodily eyes’, feeling for it ‘the same desire as Ulysses felt when, in the midst of kings’ palaces or the enchantments of a lovely witch, he longed always to see the smoke leaping up from Ithaca.’ This is the Irish ‘ancestral country of the soul’, ‘in the West, under the sunset, like all things of longing . . . Tirnanog . . . Hi Brazil—islands like the Greek islands of the Blessed’, ‘that Land of Heart’s Desire, the Danaan land to which Niamh on a fairy horse bore the last of the Fenian Knights, the Innisfree of the soul, the Happy Townland which is the world’s bane’. To Nevinson, the Irish ‘know that their native country is still in existence, if only they could reach it . . . Mr Yeats himself is far happier than others in having an earthly home as

³⁵ *VPI* 231. Maud Gonne played the title role in Yeats and Lady Gregory’s play *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902). Yeats described her playing the part ‘very finely, and her great height made Cathleen seem a divine being fallen into our mortal infirmity’ (*VPI* 233).

³⁶ Stephen Gwynn, *Experiences of a Literary Man* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1926), 204–05.

well, to which he can turn the longings of an exile.' So Nevinson reviews the 1908 *Collected Works*, remembering the psalm 'By the Waters of Babylon I sat down and wept' for its 'wrath and longing of exiles. For there is a spirit of exile with which some men are born, and even in their own native country they do not escape the torment of its savage indignation.'³⁷

HOMER IS MY EXAMPLE

What, then, of Homer? Plate 5 is blown up from a tiny thumbnail sketch by Jack B. Yeats, and pasted into a copy of *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1900).³⁸

Since I was a boy I have always longed to hear poems spoken to a harp, as I imagined Homer to have spoken his, for it is not natural to enjoy an art only when one is by oneself. Whenever one finds a fine verse one wants to read it to somebody, and it would be much less trouble and much pleasanter if we could all listen, friend by friend, lover by beloved (*E&I* 14).

When was the sketch done? Who was reading? And which version? Who else was present? Was there music?

Yeats lacked, said John Eglinton loyally, 'the patience and docility required in the early stages of the study of Greek and Latin'.³⁹ Charles Johnston was more forthright: 'he was no good at all at languages, whether ancient or modern.' Borrowing from Ben Jonson on Shakespeare, his school friend Johnston observed that Yeats left the High School in Dublin with 'small Latin and less Greek'. Yeats would cheat when asked to translate Greek from sight by laying his crib inside his book.

He just about managed to stumble through his Homer, partly with his father's scholarly help, partly by the aid of a bad translation. Here, in the tale of Odysseus and the Cyclops, he found the wonderful word 'yeanling'

³⁷ [Henry Woodd Nevinson], 'By the Waters of Babylon', *Nation*, 17 October, 1908, p. 122.

³⁸ Eva French's copy, now in the Woodruff Library, Emory University.

³⁹ John Eglinton, in *Erasmian* (Dublin) xxx (June 1939), 11-12, reprinted in *I&R* 1, 3-4.



Plate 5. 'W. B. Y. listening to Homer', undated (c. 1887), by Jack B. Yeats, pasted into a copy of *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1900), Woodruff Collection, Emory.

for a young lamb, and presently brought it out triumphantly in class, rendering a famous passage: 'And he placed a yeanling under each!' This won him the title of Yeatling, which stuck for a while, but for most of the time he was simply Willie Yeats.⁴⁰

Johnston's memory for the rarest word in Yeats is wonderfully useful: so rare is the word 'yeanling' that a brief glance at the *OED* proves that it was William Cowper's 'elaborate Miltonic' translation from which Yeats stole.⁴¹ Cowper had translated what is now numbered IX.245 as 'As he milked his ewes . . . all in their turns, her yeanling he gave to each' instead of 'all in their proper order, putting her young to each'. In the same situation, many of us have been at the mercy of some literal translation interlineated in our schoolbooks by a previous owner. Yeats turned to a poet for help.

Even such words as 'yeanling', then, are certain good. Yeats's cheating offered 'unfailing delight' to the classics master, George Wilkins, 'a cruel man to the rest of us', says Eglinton, 'who sat quivering in all his fat while Yeats did his turn', translating 'with the crib laid inside his book for all to see' . . . 'I can still see the doubtful look which would come over Yeats's face when he became aware of how his efforts were being received' (*I&R* 5).

When reading aloud as a young man of twenty, Yeats read Chapman with his fourteeners. The heptameter line, familiar in classical Greek and Latin verse (where it is comic) always seems about to break at the end of the first four feet into a ballad meter, the common measure of hymn books, the basis of Yeats's obsession with ballad form. It can still sound inherently comic today, especially in trochees, and Shakespeare parodied it in the play within *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Katharine Tynan had her portrait painted by JBY in 1885 and recalls how 'sometimes after lunch, in a quiet hour, Willie would read poetry for us. I heard Chapman's "Homer" in that way. Once I nodded, and would have dropped asleep if I had not laughed. After that

⁴⁰ Charles Johnston, in *Poet Lore* 2 (June 1906), 102-12, rptd. in *I&R* 6.

⁴¹ Matthew Arnold: 'Between Cowper and Homer is interposed the mist of Cowper's elaborate Miltonic manner, entirely alien to the flowing rapidity of Homer' (*Essays Literary and Critical* [London, J. M. Dent, 1906], 216).

I had my early afternoon cup of tea to keep me wakeful'.⁴² Clearly they listened as 'friend by friend' rather than as 'lover by lover' (*Ex* 221, 313; *E&I* 14, 199; *VP* 323). Two years later, William Morris's translation into fourteeners appeared. Yeats's sister who worked with May Morris recalled that a 'parrot . . . when he was translating Homer, speaking the lines aloud, would follow him up and down the stairs imitating the murmur of the verses. "He is always afraid", she said once, "that he is doing something wrong, and he generally is"' (*Mem* 20). The fourteeners in BK II of *The Wanderings of Oisin* show how Yeats was drawn to this measure, though their rhythmical intricacy suggests that Morris had displaced Chapman.

Fourteeners persist in the heroic farce, *The Green Helmet*, and in the last stanza of 'Vacillation', with irregular alexandrines. *The Odyssey* was Iseult Gonne's favourite reading in 1908 and there are scores of references to Homer throughout Yeats's letters and prose.⁴³ These include numerous encounters with modern efforts to dramatize Homer, such as John Todhunter's *Helena in Troias*, in which Maud Gonne had wished to play, before Todhunter refused permission (*Mem* 41), or Robert Bridges' *The Return of Ulysses* which made Yeats 'tremble with excitement': the 'gathering passion overwhelms me, as it did when Homer himself was the singer' (*E&I* 199).

Like Matthew Arnold, Yeats admired the rapidity of Homer, and his aptness for oral delivery. He chose a passage from Morris's translation for Florence Farr to chant in the psaltery experiments.

And he caught up a swift arrow that lay bare upon the board,
He laid it on the bow-bridge and the nock, and the string he drew;
And thence, from his seat on the settle, he shot a shaft that flew
Straight aimed—and of all the axes missed not a single head!
From the first ring through and through them and out at the last it sped!

⁴² Both in *The Bookman* (Oct 1893, 13-14) and in her *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences* (1913), rptd. *CH* 179.

⁴³ For an early interview Yeats sits with 'a volume of Homer before him' (*UP* 1 298). In an early review Yeats refers to the Butcher, Lang and Leaf translation of the *Odyssey* (*UP* 1 410). Yeats's first reference in letters comes in Feb 1894 when he had borrowed Charles Weekes's copy of an unknown edition and had left it at 56 North Circular Road, Dublin: thus while he is in Paris with Maud Gonne seeing *Axel* for the first and only time, he asked Jos. Quinn to sent it on to Charles Weekes, who was inquiring 'in an almost heart broken fashion about his Homer' (*CL* 1 379).

At the back of these experiments was a communal sense of audience that Yeats developed from the last line of Lionel Johnson's 'Trentals' in his *Poems* (1895), 'Lover by lover, friend by friend'. Yeats's 'friend by friend, lover by lover' comes to stand for his new, reformulated 'spiritual democracy'.⁴⁴ In *The Adoration of the Magi*, which James Joyce knew off by heart and said was a story that one of the great Russians might have written, the unnamed narrator of *Rosa Alchemica* and *The Tables of the Law* is visited by three old men from the western islands.⁴⁵ The three old brothers

had lived in one of the western islands from their early manhood, and had cared all their lives for nothing except for those classical writers and old Gaelic writers who expounded an heroic and simple life. Night after night in winter, Gaelic story-tellers would chant old poems to them over the poteen; and night after night in summer, when the Gaelic story-tellers were at work in the fields or away at the fishing, they would read to one another Virgil and Homer, for they would not enjoy in solitude, but as the ancients enjoyed (*Myth* 2005, 202).

When the 'oldest of the old men' looks 'out on the grey waters, on which the people see the dim outline of the Islands of the Young' he sees them as 'the Happy Islands where the Gaelic heroes live the lives of Homer's Phaeacians' (*ibid.*). Such Homeric allusions were not a matter merely of interest to scholars such as D'Arbois de Jubainville. Yeats's interest in Celtic *Immrama*, voyage or sea tales (such as those of Maeldun, Oisin, etc.) involving excursions to the other world is obviously excited by his schoolboy exposure to Homer and Virgil. Poems from *The Wanderings of Oisin* to *The Shadowy Waters*, even to 'Cuchulain Comforted' with its echoes of Aeneas in the Underworld, come to mind. Yeats tells us in *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939) that 'the music of the beggarman' is Homer's music' (*VPI* 1052), and, sure enough, he makes much of Irish popular poets' quests for a Trojan frame for Irish troubles in *aisling* poetry.

⁴⁴ 'Mr. W. B. Yeats in Aberdeen', *The Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 13 January, 1906, 3.

⁴⁵ Warning Yeats of his 'treacherous gift of adaptability' James Joyce remarked that *The Adoration of the Magi* 'shows what Mr. Yeats can do when he breaks with the half-gods'. See *Two Essays. A Forgotten Aspect of the Irish University Question* by F. J. C. Skeffington and 'The Day of the Rabblement' by James A. Joyce (Dublin:Gerrard Bros., [1901]). Joyce is probably recalling Tolstoi's 'The Three Mendicants' of 1886): see *Myth* 2005, 420 n. 5.

Yeats thinks about these poetic quests in 'Dust hath Closed Helen's Eye' (its title from Thomas Nashe's 1592 poem about the plague, 'Brightness falls from the air | Queens have died young and fair | Dust hath clos'd Helen's eye'), the most beautiful of the additions to *The Celtic Twilight*, and first published in 1900. Mary Hynes of Ballylee is celebrated, a peasant woman of legendary beauty, of whom Yeats and Douglas Hyde gathered oral records, as is the love of her blind poet, Antony Raftery (1779-1835) a local Homer in Yeats's estimation. Yeats notes that the 'poor countrymen and countrywomen in their beliefs, and in their emotions, are so many years nearer to that old Greek world, that set beauty beside the fountain of things, than are our men of learning' (*Myth* 2005, 14). Homer and Virgil were taught in Irish hedge schools. Right from the earliest of Lady Gregory's versions of the Hanrahan stories, the hedge school-master carries his 'big Virgil and his primer in the skirt of his coat' (*VSR* 85, 93-94). Such learning paid off: the blind Raftery's 'Mary Hynes or the Posy Bright' which Yeats quotes in the essay was collected and translated for him by Lady Gregory who had traced a manuscript book containing versions of seventeen of Raftery's songs (*Diaries* 201). Some of the poem was not to Lady Gregory's taste, and she cut classical allusions where Raftery seemed to her

caught in the formulas imported from Greece and Rome; and any formula must make a veil between the prophet who has been on the mountain top, and the people who are waiting at its foot for his message. The dreams of beauty that formed themselves in the mind of the blind poet become flat and vapid when he embodies them in the well-known names of Helen and Venus.⁴⁵

Thus the well known verses

Going to Mass by the will of God,
The day came wet and the wind rose;
I met Mary Hynes at the cross of Kiltartan,

⁴⁵ *Poets and Dreamers: Studies and Translations from the Irish by Lady Gregory including Nine Plays by Douglas Hyde*, with a foreword by T. R. Henn (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1974), 27. See *Myth* 2005 15, 227 n. 11.

And I fell in love with her then and there.
 I spoke to her kind and mannerly,
 As by report was her own way;
 And she said, 'Raftery, my mind is easy,
 You may come to-day to Ballylee.'

have had excerpted from them a stanza (now found only in Douglas Hyde's 1903 *Songs Ascribed to Raftery*) wherein this 'Posy Bright' of Ballylee surpasses Deirdre, Venus and 'Helen by whom Troy was destroyed.' (p. 333).

Yeats chooses to recover all this material and to thrust it back into 'The Tower', returning to these stories of a village beauty and her 'blind, rambling celebrant. In particular, he restores Raftery's comparison between Mary Hynes and Helen of Troy;

Strange, but the man who made the song was blind;
 Yet, now I have considered it, I find
 That nothing strange; the tragedy began
 With Homer that was a blind man,
 And Helen has all living hearts betrayed (VP 410-11).

Thinking about Raftery's blindness had led Yeats to the 'Discoveries' essay, 'Why the Blind Man in Ancient Times was made a Poet', where in 'primitive times the blind man became a poet, as he became a fiddler in our villages, because he had to be driven out of activities all his nature cried for, before he could be contented with the praise of life' (E&I 277-78). 'Dust hath clos'd Helen's Eye' itself explains that 'that old Greek world' set 'beauty beside the fountain of things'. Mary Hynes had, in the view of the poor countryfolk, clearly "seen too much of the world", but, 'when they tell of her' they

blame another and not her, and though they can be hard, they grow gentle as the old men of Troy grew gentle when Helen passed by on the walls (Myth 2005, 18).

Yeats refers to the moment we have already looked at in Bk III of the *Iliad*, when Helen walks on the walls of Troy, and he took the matter up, too, in 'The Bounty of Sweden' (Au 561-62). In contrast to Chapman's, here is Pope's translation as those old grasshoppers

'[I]ean'd on the walls and bask'd before the sun':
 These, when the Spartan queen approach'd the tower,
 In secret owned beauty's power:
 They cried . . .
 'She moves a goddess, and she looks a queen!'⁴⁶

From here to ll. 11-20 of 'Long-legged Fly', is only a short step.

That the topless towers be burnt
 And men recall that face,
 Move most gently if move you must
 In this lonely place.
 She thinks, part woman, three parts a child,
 That nobody looks; her feet
 Practice a tinker shuffle
 Picked up on a street.
Like a long-legged fly upon the stream
Her mind moves upon silence (VP 617).

Or to 'Quarrel in Old Age'

All lives that has lived;
 So much is certain;
 Old sages were not deceived:
 Somewhere beyond the curtain
 Of distorting days
 Lives that lonely thing
 That shone before these eyes
 Targeted, trod like spring (VP 503-04).

VIRGIL AGAIN

I began by looking at the refurbishment of an 'absurd old poem' into a 'finer thing' and the recovery of a perhaps ancient intention for *Early Poems and Stories* (1925). A key passage in the setting copy for the republication of *The Adoration of the Magi* (1896) in the same book (the first time that the poems and the prose had appeared

⁴⁶ *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. Alexander Pope, ed. T. Buckley (London: Warne, 1874); 55-6; YL 905. Andrew Lang bases 'Helen on the Walls' on this episode: see *Rhymes à la Mode* (London: Kegan Paul, 1885) 118, also *Au* 561; *CW3* 411.

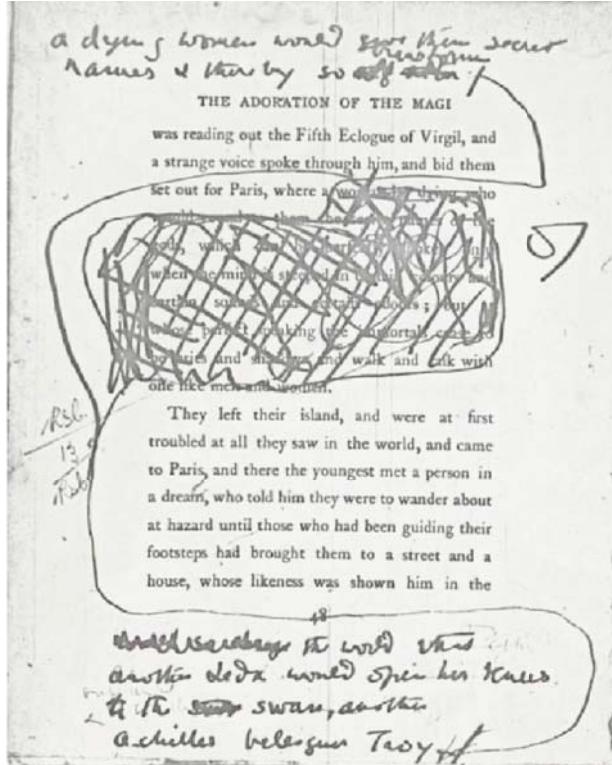


Plate 6. Yeats's holograph revisions in the setting copy of 'The Adoration of the Magi' for *Early Poems and Stories* (1925). Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

together) is found in Plate 6.

The old men are bidden by a mysterious voice to travel to Paris to attend the deathbed of an Irish prostitute. In that early version, first published in 1897, she whispers to them the secret names of the immortal Irish gods just before she expires. This rather vigorously cross-hatched revision of the 1904 text shows Yeats deleting that passage, and offering instead:

a dying woman would give them secret names & thereby so transform the world that another Leda would open her knees to the swan, another Achilles beleaguer Troy (*Myth* 2005, 202; *VSR* 166–67; 269).

The return of the Celtic gods belonged to the era of Yeats's Celtic Mystical Order. The change is one of iconography: now instead of divulging the secret names of Celtic gods the prostitute gives birth to a unicorn and offers only paradoxical names “Dear bitterness’, O solitude, O terror” (*VSR* 171). Virgil's prophecy is hardened, and its compass in time lengthened: the rape of Leda replaces the 1897 version's ‘another Argo shall carry heroes over the deep, and another Achilles beleaguer another Troy’ (*VSR* 169 v.) which loosely translates ll. 31–6 of Virgil's *Eclogue IV*.

Pauca tamen suberunt priscae vestigia fraudis,
 quae temptare Thetin ratibus, quae cingere muris
 oppida, quae iubeant telluri infindere sulcos.
 alter erit tum Tiphys et altera quae vehat Argo
 delectos heroas; erunt etiam altera bella 35
 atque iterum ad Troiam magnus mittetur Achilles.

‘There will then be another Tiphys, and another Argo to waft chosen heroes: there shall be likewise other wars: and great Achilles shall once more be sent to Troy’.⁴⁷

New writing impinges on old. ‘Leda and the Swan’ had been first drafted on 16 Sept 1923, with Yeats staying up until 3 am to get a version of it done, and it had been first published in the *Dial* of June 1924 and again in that short-lived adventure of Francis Stuart and

⁴⁷ As translated in Yeats's copy of *The Works of Virgil, literally translated into English Prose, with notes* by C. Davidson: a new edition, rev., with additional notes by Theodore Alois Buckley (London: George Bell & Sons, 1875; YL 2203, p. 12).

others, *To-morrow*, in August 1924. As Yeats laboured over the proofs of *Early Poems and Stories*, he was also desperately finishing the first version of *A Vision* for which 'Leda' functions as the proem to Book III, 'Dove or Swan'. The 'annunciation that founded Greece' is imagined by Yeats as having been 'made to Leda . . . from one of her eggs came Love and from the other War', 'Leda, War and Love; history grown symbolic, the biography changed into a myth'.⁴⁸

A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead (*VP* 441).

So obsessed was Yeats with this *topos* that the rape of Leda is now introjected back into Virgil's *Eclogue IV*. This Ledaean obsession perhaps springs from the sprightly preface to Oliver Gogarty's *An Offering of Swans and Other Poems* (August 1923), and it might be followed through through the 'Two Songs from a Play' drafted in May 1925 to 1931 when *The Resurrection* is revised for *Stories of Michael Robartes and his Friends*.

I saw a staring virgin stand
Where holy Dionysus died,
And tear the heart out of his side,
And lay the heart upon her hand
And bear that beating heart away;
And then did all the muses sing
Of Magnus Annus at the spring,
As though God's death were but a play.

Another Troy must rise and set,
Another lineage feed the crow
Another Argo's painted prow
Drive to a flashier bauble yet.
The Roman Empire stood appalled:
It dropped the reins of peace and war
When that fierce virgin and her Star

⁴⁸ CVA 181, 214. The quoted passages compress somewhat drastically Yeats's larger historical argument. For the dating of the draft to 24 May 1925, see *The Resurrection: Manuscript Materials* edited by Jared Curtis and Selina Guinness (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), xxvi-xxvii.

⁴⁹ VP 437-8. The three stanza, two part version had appeared in *October Blast* (1927) and *The Tower* (1928).

Out of the fabulous darkness called⁴⁹

The vital point is that Yeats's obsession with a cyclical theory of history implicit in the Cumaeian prophecy had been with him since 1896. The top line of the page in Plate 6 has one of the old men falling sleep while 'reading out the 'Fifth Eclogue of Virgil' (a schoolboy howler, of course Yeats means *Eclogue IV* the Pollio *Eclogue*).⁵⁰ After the reverence of the old men by the bedside of the dying 'priestess' of the old gods we hear that the 'old things shall be again, and another Argo shall carry heroes over the deep, and another Achilles beleaguer another Troy' (*VSR* 169 v.) which loosely translates ll. 31-6 of Virgil.⁵¹ In short, Yeats renewed himself by rereading himself. The old inflects the new as the new inflects the rewriting of the old: rereading shows him writing while discovering his intentions for what to write. *Early Poems and Stories* compelled such self-imbrication, and not merely because of the co-presence in that volume of the early verse and prose.⁵² It was for Yeats (as he said), 'difficult to get back into the atmosphere of things written so long ago'.⁵³ But, finishing *A Vision*, he needed to refurbish himself, which 'ma[de] as much as I can of this new wave of interest in my work' (i.e., that new interest consequent on the award of the Nobel Prize (1923)).⁵⁴

TRAGIC JOY: HOMER AND VIRGIL

When one follows the 'revisionary ratios' of certain poems one discovers 'hidden roads' that lead from poem to poem in ways unac-

⁵⁰ Yeats might be getting his own back on Virgil here because one of the old men falls asleep while reading it.

⁵¹ *VP* 441. In rather happier vein, the closing chorus of Shelley's *Hellas* ('The world's great age begins anew'. etc.) offers a parallel to 'Two Songs from a Play'.

⁵² This was Yeats's and Macmillan's stratagem for defeating T. Fisher Unwin's claim on all editions of the early verse except those in 'collected editions' of the works. See letters from Yeats to his agent, A. P. Watt, and to Ernest Benn, 31 January and 2 February, 1923 (*CL InteLex*, 4277, 4280).

⁵³ Letter from Yeats to A. P. Watt quoted in a letter from Watt to Messrs. Macmillan, 19 August, 1924 (*CL InteLex* 4628).

⁵⁴ Quoted in a letter from Yeats to A. P. Watt, in a letter from Watt to Sir Frederick Macmillan, 20 November 1923 (*CL InteLex* 4405).

counted for in, and unfathomable by means of, Harold Bloom's Influence Theory. By looking at the hinterland of Yeats's thought rather than at (say) 'No Second Troy' or 'A Woman Homer Sung', I have turned this tribute to Derry Jeffares, rather against my will, into something of a Virgilian occasion. Having encapsulated *lacrimae rerum* in a simple but mysterious rhyme of 'lips' and 'ships', Yeats had to work out how, in a long writing life, to respond to Virgil's concept. I believe there are two defining moments, the first a matter of seeing clearly his own emerging poetic strength, the second a conceptual refinement of that aesthetic into an ethic, largely because he himself became interested, just as Virgil had been, in the larger rhythms of human destiny. The first such moment came when Ezra Pound, who, with Sturge Moore, had worked over the manuscripts of 'The Two Kings',⁵⁵ decided to disparage that poem in a review (whilst praising 'The Grey Rock', the other half of the opening narrative diptych of *Responsibilities* for its 'curious nobility' despite its 'obscur[ity]').

. . . it is impossible to take any interest in a poem like *The Two Kings*—one might as well read the *Idyls* [sic] of another

⁵⁵ 'I have had a fortnight of gloom over my work—I felt something wrong with it. However on Monday night I got Sturge Moore in and last night Ezra Pound and we went at it line by line and now I know what is wrong and am in good spirits again. I am starting the poem about the King of Tara and his wife again, to get rid of Miltonic generalization.' 'I am doing nothing but write poetry for the new book for you but it is slow work always. I finished a longish story in verse as I thought last week & yesterday decided to begin it all over again. One cannot help this but the more time I have the better the book will be. I have plenty of unwritten poems arranged in my head & waiting their turn to be written. . . Just as I have started seeing people again having been bored by sitting here so often, unable to work because of my sight in the evenings, 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. (Yeats's letters to Lady Gregory, 1 and 3 January, 1913, and to Lily Yeats, 1 January, 1913 (*CL InteLex* 2051-3)).

Pound remarked, displaying an extraordinarily deaf ear to Tennyson as well as to Yeats.⁵⁶ John Butler Yeats was livid:

. . . what the devil does Ezra Pound mean by comparing ‘The Two Kings’ with Tennyson’s *Idylls?* *The Two Kings* is immortal, and immortal because of its *intensity* and *concentration*. It is so full of the ‘tears of things’ that I could not read it aloud . . . In *The Two Kings* there is another quality often sought for by Tennyson, but never attained, and that is *splendor of imagination*, a *liberating splendor*, cold as sunrise. I don’t agree with Ezra Pound.⁵⁷

As Yeats ever after remembered, the phrase gave him the *donnée* for ‘The Fisherman’ (*E&I* 523):

Maybe a twelvemonth since
Suddenly I began,
In scorn of this audience,
Imagining a man,
And his sun-freckled face,
And grey Connemara cloth,
Climbing up to a place
Where stone is dark under froth,
And the down-turn of his wrist
When the flies drop in the stream;
A man who does not exist,

⁵⁶ *Poetry* IX, Dec. 1916, 150-51. Pound had his own fish to fry in the review, wondering aloud whether Yeats could qualify as an Imagist, but had been present when Yeats had been working on an early draft of ‘The Two Kings’ when Yeats had summoned both Pound and Sturge Moore to help him get rid of ‘Miltonic generalization’. See Donald T. Torchiana and Glenn O’Malley (eds.) ‘Some New Letters from W. B. Yeats to Lady Gregory’ (*loc. cit.*), p. 14. The same problem of Miltonic influence had beset Keats in his attempts at epic poetry: see Robert Gittings (ed.) *The Letters of John Keats A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) p. 292.

⁵⁷ *LWBY* 1. 289. John Butler Yeats returned to the attack in a further letter of 14 August, 1914, characterising Pound as sharing with most Americans, but especially American women, a desire to live a ‘surface life’ which ‘shuts them out of the world of dream and desire’. Not for them the shaping power of imagination. They are exiles consoling themselves as they can, by saying things which are to convince themselves and others that they are superior beings. . . So you see why I prefer your *Two Kings*, which I cannot read without tears, the intensity instantly assuaged by the rhythms of art, and the tears of sorrow mingling with the tears of beauty’ (*ibid.*, p. 301). Denis Donoghue finds these conversations in late 1914 formative of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*. See ‘The Myth of W. B. Yeats’, *New York Review of Books*, 19 February, 1998, 17-19.

A man who is but a dream;
 And cried, 'Before I am old
 I shall have written him one
 Poem maybe as cold
 And passionate as the dawn' (*VP* 348).

In 1930, taking intimate revenge on Virgil, he drafted a letter to his son's schoolmaster, telling him that Michael Yeats, then 'aged between nine and ten'.

should begin Greek at once and be taught by the Berlitz method that he may read as soon as possible that most exciting of all stories, the *Odyssey*, from that landing in Ithaca to the end. Grammar should come when the need comes. As he grows older he will read to me the great lyric poets and I will talk to him about Plato. Do not teach him one word of Latin. The Roman people were the classic decadence, their literature form without matter. They destroyed Milton, the French seventeenth and our own eighteenth century, and our schoolmasters even to-day read Greek with Latin eyes. Greece, could we but approach it with eyes as young as its own, might renew our youth. . . . If he wants to learn Irish after he is well founded in Greek, let him — it will clear his eyes of the Latin miasma. If you will not do what I say, whether the curriculum or your own will restrain, and my son comes from school a smatterer like his father, may your soul lie chained on the Red Sea bottom (*Ex* 230-31).

I turn now to just one late poem, 'The Gyres'.

.....
 Things thought too long can be no longer thought,
 For beauty dies of beauty, worth of worth,
 And ancient lineaments are blotted out.
 Irrational streams of blood are staining earth;
 Empedocles has thrown all things about;
 Hector is dead and there's a light in Troy;
 We that look on but laugh in tragic joy.

.....
 What matter? heave no sigh, let no tear drop,
 A greater, a more gracious time has gone;

.....
 What matter? out of cavern comes a voice,
 And all it knows is that one word "Rejoice!" (*VP* 564-65)

Think about the rhyme of ‘Troy’ and ‘joy’. Troy, synonymous with destruction, is even enclosed within the word ‘Destroy’.⁵⁹ ‘Destruction is the life-giver!’ says Martin Hearne in *The Unicorn from the Stars* (1908), and that play’s ‘brazen winged beast’ ‘[a]fterwards described in my poem “The Second Coming” was ‘associated with laughing, ecstatic destruction’ (*VP* 669, 932). The development of an ethic (which is also an aesthetic) with which to confront the idea that things ‘live each others death, die each other’s life’ (*AVB* 197) is a relatively late articulation of a matter long latent in Yeats’s thinking. Tragic joy is there in ‘Man is in love, and loves what vanishes, what more is there to say?’, in ‘Let all things pass away’, in ‘Their eyes mid many wrinkles, their eyes, | Their ancient glittering eyes are gay’ (*VP* 429-30; 567).

The Chinamen carved in Yeats’s little mountain of lapis lazuli are like the old men on the walls of Troy, whose joy inheres in the contemplation of unmanageable events. Yeats’s ‘tragic joy’ in the contemplation of ‘irrational streams of blood’ staining the earth, numb nightmare riding like Fuseli’s dream, ‘blood and mire’ further staining the sensitive body is congruent with Aeneas’s finding of *lacrimae rerum* in a painting of the sack of Troy in a Carthaginian temple, when Hector really *is* dead, there has *been* a light in Troy, Priam has been murdered, and Penthesilea charges. Yeats’s mastery of his forebears informs his self-delineation against that Virgilian and Homeric hinterland, his idea develops out of Virgil’s, and it privileges Homer.

In ‘Vacillation’ VIII Heart asks ‘What theme had Homer but original sin?’ and the full voice of the last stanza responds (in loose fourteeners), ‘Homer is my example, and his unchristened heart’ (*VP* 503). The initiative of Priam in forcing ritual onto Achilles to ran-

⁵⁹ Yeats may have been vestigially aware of this sonic accident. See for instance the strange resonance in ‘The Circus Animals’ Desertion’, where not the least of the ‘countertruths’ discerned about Maud Gonne is the notion that ‘fanaticism and hate’ could ‘destroy’ the soul of the woman frequently envisaged as Helen of Troy.

She, pity-crazed, had given her soul away,
But masterful Heaven had intervened to save it.
I thought my dear must her own soul destroy,
So did fanaticism and hate enslave it (*VP* 629-30).

som the body of Hector, Odysseus's wily cunning and resourcefulness, these Homeric human virtues are exalted over the wooden duty of 'pius' Aeneas. Aeneas weeps ready tears at the inevitability of tragedy and longs for salvation, Yeats unflinchingly transumes tears. Tragedy must be 'a joy to the man who dies' (*E&I* 523). Homer's unchristened heart is preferred to Virgil's proto-Christian heart, original sin notwithstanding. Yeats commented to Olivia Shakespear, sending her the first draft of the penultimate stanza of 'Vacillation', 'heroic choice . . . Live tragically but be not deceived . . . I shall be a sinful man to the end, & think upon my death bed of all the nights wasted in my youth.' (*CL InteLex* 3 January, 1932).

Yeats's greatest theme is human embodiment, agency (in the sense of Choice) in the wider destinies imposed upon us by Chance. His last letter to Lady Elizabeth Pelham

'I know for certain that my time will not be long . . . 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 . . . (*CL InteLex* 7632).

may be contrasted with Virgil's two shapes for history. The *Aeneid* is a backformation of Rome: from its opening lines, Rome is foretold and is to be fulfilled from tragedy, and the poem justifies the ways of the gods to Romans in a culminative shape.

But according to the Pollio *Eclogue*, in a larger view, history is cyclical: in the last age of the Cumæan sybil's prophecy, the 'great cycle of periods begins anew'. Though that *Eclogue* has been read as promising the coming of a Messiah and a period of peace, that culmination must be seen within the larger, replicative pattern of the precession of the equinoxes, or at least as Yeats reads the passage.

According to Homer's paradigm, however, human battle is endless (and its rehearsal is self-delighting). *The Iliad* ends only with an 11 day ceasefire to allow the funeral of Hector. It is rather like the endless series of perfect fights in *The Herne's Egg*. Love, too, is a

'brief peace between opposites'. Many believe that the real ending of the *Odyssey* is BK 23.296, with Odysseus and Penelope 'blissfully [lying] down on their own familiar bed', another brief peace. If you think it ends when 'The Feud is Ended' at the end of Bk 24, then 'Pallas Athene, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, still using Mentor's form and voice for her disguise, establishes peace between the two sides (Odysseus and the suitors). There is no reason to assume it will last. (Yeats, incidentally, liked this last book, taking the squeaking of the bats for 'The Phases of the Moon' from its opening words, (which he would also have found in *The Republic* BK 2.)

How does Yeats square the circle between destiny and unchristened endless battle, chance and choice, and the human joy in 'lasting, tireless strength' (*VPI* 660)? The answer, I think, is dictated for him by the vast cyclical pattern of history imagined for *A Vision*. He thus votes for the larger Virgilian paradigm, the cyclical shape of the Pollio *Eclogue*. In the last age of the Cumæan sybil's prophecy, the 'great cycle of periods begins anew', all things will 'run | On that unfashionable gyre again'. Apparent culminations must be seen within the larger, replicative pattern of the precession of the equinoxes.

'No Second Troy' of December 1908 is Yeats's least revised poem: with four rhetorical questions there is no 'singing amid uncertainty' here. Had there been a second Troy, he implies, Maud Gonne would have filled as many roles in the drama as possible: Pallas Athene, Venus, Dido, Helen. But the poem is refuted by 'Two Songs from a Play': 'another Troy must rise and set | Another lineage feed the crow': the Roman Empire will stand appalled by the forces marshalled by the odour of Christ's blood, and his introduction to *The Resurrection* (1931) insists that civilisation is 'about to reverse itself' and the certainty afforded by symbolic patterns in history (*VPI* 931). Victorian christianised *lacrimae rerum* is abandoned for tragic joy, the ultimate assertion that we must try to embody truth, even when we cannot know it. Even when the Homeric high horse is riderless, Homeric 'self-delight' commands some such self-mastery for an Irish poet in the twentieth century.

POSTSCRIPT

The ‘Lips and Ships’ rhyme provokes the question: when did Yeats first read Sheridan Le Fanu’s ‘The Legend of the Glaive’? In *The Poems* of J. S. Le Fanu, ed. Alfred Perceval Graves (London: Downey, 1896), 108, one finds

Fionula the Cruel, the brightest, the worst,
 With a terrible beauty the vision accurst
 Gold filleted, sandalled, of times dead and gone—
 Far looking, and harking, pursuing, goes on;
 Her white hand from her ear lifts her shadowy hair.
 From the lamp of her eye floats the sheen of despair;
 Her cold lips are apart, and her teeth in her smile
 Glimmer death on her face with a horrible wile.
 Three throbs at his heart—not a breath at his lip,
 As the figure skims by like the swoop of a ship . . .

Yeats’s copy is stamped ‘With Downey and Co’s Compliments’ (YL 1098). An excerpt containing this passage is to be found in Stopford A. Brooke and T. W. Rolleston (eds.), *A Treasury of Irish Poetry* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1900), 190, a volume to which Yeats himself was a contributor. ‘The Legend of the Glaive’ had been first published over the name ‘Hyacinth Con Carolan’ in the *Dublin University Magazine* (of which Le Fanu was proprietor and editor) in February, 1863 (210-16). Ignoring for the moment the famous resonance of the Irish Gothic ‘terrible beauty’ in Yeats’s mind (*VP* 392-44; *Au* 287), ‘shadowy hair’ argues for an early acquaintance with Le Fanu’s poem. *The Shadowy Waters* may have been started in 1883, and by 1885 ‘long . . . hair’ ‘blown | In shadowy dimness’ had appeared in the *Dublin University Review* text of *The Island of Statues* (*VP* 670). ‘The shadowy blossom of my hair’ in the verses from ‘The Rose of Shadow’ (first published in *The Speaker*, 21 July, 1894; *VSR* 230) and ‘your dim shadowy hair’ in ‘The Twilight of Forgiveness’ in *The Saturday Review* (2 November 1895) text of what became ‘The Lover asks Forgiveness because of his Many Moods’ (*VP* 163v.) also predate the 1896 issue of Le Fanu’s *Poems*, while ‘lips are apart’ finds an echo in ‘The Faery Host’ in *The National Observer* 7 October, 1893), later ‘The Hosting of the Sidhe’ (*VP* 140 & v.)

Yeats and the Colours of Poetry

Terence Brown

IN 1910 THE SCHOLAR and critic Edward Dowden, Professor of English Literature in the University of Dublin (a post W. B. Yeats cast eyes upon in that year when its holder became unwell) included an essay on Walter Pater in a collection of his essays entitled *Essays Modern and Elizabethan* (the essay itself probably dates from 1902).¹ In this the critic who as a Shakespearian had endorsed Bolingbroke in contrast to the poetic King Richard (drawing Yeatsian disdain in his essay ‘At Stratford-on-Avon: see *E&I* 104–06), engaged in a rehabilitation of the Oxford aesthete which might equally have irritated the poet. The drift of Dowden’s essay was an attempt to rescue Pater from his reputation for decadence, from his critics and his admirers who thought the whole of Pater’s philosophy was encompassed in the famous conclusion to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, with its evocative call to achieve success in life by burning amid the flux like a ‘hard, gem-like flame’. Dowden, in his characteristically feline fashion, averred: ‘I cannot entirely go along with that enthusiastic admirer who declared—surely not without a smile of ironic intelligence—that the trumpet of doom ought to have sounded when the last page of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* was complete’.² Rather, Dowden explores Pater’s early and later

¹ On 10 July, 1902 Dowden wrote to Professor Martin Sampson ‘It is a good and pleasant thing that you think my Pater right, for you know Pater. He seems to me a very sure-footed critic, because he was so patient in his study, never writing until he had filled himself with his theme’. See Elizabeth H. Dowden and Hilda M. Dowden (eds.), *Letters of Edward Dowden And His Correspondents* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1914), 320.

work to insist, in a way one can imagine Yeats thinking was unduly moralistic,

Assuredly he never regarded that view of life which is expressed in the *Conclusion to Studies in the History of the Renaissance* as mere hedonism, as a mere abandonment to the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. No: looking back, he perceived that his aim was not pleasure, but fullness and vividness of life, a perfection of being, an intense and as far as may be, a complete experience; that this was not to be attained without a discipline, involving some severity . . .³

Later in the essay Dowden even has Pater as admirer of a Platonic austerity and astringency.

Dowden's essay is in fact a subtly argued defence of Pater as a kind of aesthetic moralist, for whom ways of seeing have ethical implications in as much they inform modes of being in the world. Dowden for all his subtlety (he admits he sometimes uses Pater's words and he certainly echoes his subject's elaborate stylistic mannerism in his essay; the text overall indeed reads like one of Pater's *Imaginary Portraits*), may overstate his case. However his sense that seeing has ethical implications is a suggestive one, while his awareness that seeing and colour are crucial to understanding the trajectory of Pater's career as a writer is very illuminating. He writes with real acuity of the aesthete as a child for whom the eye must have been a special organ, continuing

If Pater is a seeker for truth, he must seek it with the eye, and with the imagination penetrating its way through things visible; or if truth comes to him in any other way, he must project the truth into colour and form . . .⁴

² Edward Dowden, *Essays Modern and Elizabethan* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd; New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1910), 14. The only authority for the famous comment of Oscar Wilde's that *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* is "my golden book . . . the very flower of decadence: the last trumpet should have sounded the moment it was written" is Yeats (in *The Trembling of the Veil*, 1922), who dates it to his first meeting Wilde at William Henley's: see *Au* 130. It therefore seems possible that Yeats is Dowden's oral source. Wilde's 'enthusiasm' for the book is undoubtedly, but his smile was surely a good deal less 'ironic' than Dowden assumed.

³ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

Or, as he repeats,

And remember that Pater's special gift, his unique power, lay in the eye and in the imagination using the eye as its organ. He could not disdain the things of sense, for there is a spirit in sense, and mind communes with mind through colour and through form.⁵

Indeed Dowden identifies the trajectory of Pater's career as involving changing attitudes to colour, as he forsakes 'the brilliantly-coloured, versatile, centrifugal Ionian temper of his earlier days towards the simpler, graver, more strictly ordered, more athletic Dorian spirit'.⁶

All of which sets one thinking of Yeats: the Yeats who began his adult life at art college in Dublin, whose father, brother and daughter were painters (although his daughter Anne started her career as an artist after her father's death, he did see her work as a theatre designer), who numbered artists and designers among his friends and acquaintances and who based a few key poems upon paintings and on the idea of painting; the Yeats whose early poetry is effulgent with colour and whose later work is strangely exiguous in colour terms. A telling poem in fact is 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory' written in 1917, with its tributes to Lady Gregory's artist/soldier son. Here Yeats links poetry and painting as a shared enterprise 'our secret discipline' in a poem entirely bereft of colour adjectives apart from its poignant question in the penultimate stanza 'What made us dream that he could comb grey hair?' (*VP* 326-27). The poem speaks of 'cold Clare rock and Galway rock and thorn' and refers to 'that stern colour' which, with a 'delicate line', constitute their shared secret discipline, but chooses not to mention any actual colours. And this in a poem that speaks of some 'old picture-book', that honours 'all lovely intricacies of a house', 'All work in metal or in wood | In moulded plaster or in carven stone' and exults in 'the delighted eye' (*VP* 325-27). And thinking of this curious self-denial in a poem so absorbed by the art of painting as well as design, we recall how in three late poems ('Parnell's Funeral', 'Three Songs to the One Burden' and 'The Circus Animals' Desertion') when

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

Yeats refers to a ‘painted stage’ or a ‘painted scene’, it is without any colour references (*VP* 542, 630, 608). Stranger still, in ‘The Municipal Gallery Revisited’ Yeats manages to describe a series of canvases without suggesting that pictures in galleries involve colour. Indeed the reference in the poem’s second stanza to an Abbot or Archbishop ‘with an upraised hand | Blessing the Tricolour’ highlights the visual parsimony in colour terms in respect of what the poet calls in stanza three ‘My permanent or impermanent images’ (*VP* 601-02).

It was not always thus. In those editions which print Yeats’s poems in the volume arrangement he himself preferred, we find on the first pages of Yeats’s poetic oeuvre, the following lines, from the beginning of *The Wanderings of Oisin*, the long narrative poem which the poet presented to the public in his first collection in 1889:

And found on this dove-grey edge of the sea
 A pearl-pale, high born lady, who rode
 On a horse with bridle of findrinny;
 And like a sunset were her lips,
 A stormy sunset upon doomed ships;
 A citron colour gloomed in her hair,
 But down to her feet white vesture flowed,
 And with the glimmering crimson glowed
 Of many a figured embroidery;
 And it was bound with a pearl-pale shell
 That wavered like the summer streams,
 As her soft bosom rose and fell. (*VP* 3-4)

The colours here are obviously drawn from the Pre-Raphaelite palette with vivid ‘crimson’ and ‘citron’ contrasting in their exotic intensity with the pastel and white of the other effects. This becomes the basis of the poem’s iterated coloration: ‘purple’, ‘red’, ‘blue’, ‘green’, ‘silver’, ‘gold’, ‘golden’, the repeated ‘crimson’, along with ‘saffron’ (orange yellow, etymologically deriving from the French and Arabic) contrast with mixed tints, while the ubiquitous ‘white’ and the idea of ‘whiteness’ suggest the Pre-Raphaelite technique of laying down a white base on the canvas so that the enamelled brightness of its coloured pigments will be the more intense. White indeed seems to be a kind of default setting in the poet’s visual awareness in

this poem, reached for when the spectrum is transcended in moments of transport ('O, had you seen beautiful Niamh grow white as the waters are white' *VP* 54). White, too, manages to generate an erotic charge in *The Wanderings of Oisin* (the hero lies in Niamh's 'white' arms) as somehow the source and consummation of all the colours that crowd its poetic canvas (anticipating Yeats's ardent love poem, 'The White Birds', published three years later, with its 'blue star' and 'white birds on the foam of the sea' *VP* 121-22).

Colour in *The Wandering of Oisin* however risks seeming merely decorative as it often did in the kind of art the Pre-Raphaelite school and the Arts and Craft movement associated with William Morris (whose evening Yeats attended in his early London years when he was at work on the poem) made fashionable in Victorian England. One could imagine the poem inspiring a tapestry to be hung in some faux-medieval, celticised, Gothic revival hall. Within a few years of the publication of *The Wanderings of Oisin*, Yeats would become, by contrast, an adherent of doctrines in which colour played a more integral part.

Yeats as a young poet became a symbolist through his readings in Shelley and Blake, through his study of ritual magic in the Order of the Golden Dawn (note 'Golden') and through his friendship with Arthur Symons, author of the *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, who introduced him to the experiments of French poets such as Verlaine and Mallarmé. In Yeats's essays on the subject we see how colour played its part in his espousal in the 1890s of a doctrinaire symbolist aesthetic.

In 'Symbolism in Painting' the poet asserted:

All art that is not mere story-telling, or mere portraiture, is symbolic, and has the purpose of those symbolic talismans which medieval magicians made with complex colours and forms, and bade their patients ponder over daily, and guard with holy secrecy; for it entangles, in complex colours and forms, a part of the Divine Essence (*E&I* 148).

And Yeats associates this medieval adeptship with such symbolists as Keats and de l'Isle-Adam, Verlaine and Maeterlinck and with such artists as Blake, Calvert, Rossetti, Whistler, even with the 'black and white' works of Beardsley and Ricketts. The admission of the latter

two, Beardsley and Ricketts, to a putative symbolist collective indicates that while colour plays its significant part in the others' achievement, form is salient as well. Be that as it may, it is pertinent that when Yeats two years later published a companion paper on 'The Symbolism of Poetry', it is colour, not form, that primarily intrigues him. We note that after two introductory paragraphs he begins his discussion of the topic by asserting:

There are no lines with more melancholy and beauty than these by Burns:-

The white moon is setting behind the white wave,
And Time is setting with me, O!

and these lines are perfectly symbolical. Take from them the whiteness of the moon and of the wave, whose relation to the setting of Time is too subtle for the intellect, and you take from them their beauty (*E&I* 155; see also *CL2* 297 & n).

We note once more the poet's fascination for 'whiteness'.⁷ Later in the essay, having affirmed as if reciting a symbolist creed that 'All sounds, all colours, all forms either because of their preordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions' (*E&I* 156-57), Yeats expatiated on how colours function as symbols in poetry. It is a fascinating passage worth quoting at length:

If I say 'white' or 'purple' in an ordinary line of poetry, they evoke emotions so exclusively that I cannot say why they move me; but if I bring them into the same sentence with such obvious intellectual symbols as a cross or a crown of thorns, I think of purity and sovereignty. Furthermore, enumerable meanings, which are held to 'white' or to 'purple' by bonds of subtle suggestion, and alike in the emotions and the intellect, move visibly through my mind, and move invisibly beyond the threshold of sleep, casting lights and shadows of an indefinable wisdom on what had seemed before, it may be, but sterility and violence (*E&I* 161).

It seems apt that Yeats should have chosen 'white' here as one of the colours the symbolic import of which he wished to ponder, for it is ubiquitous in his early poetry. Beauty in these finely-wrought lyrics is 'white beauty' ('He remembers Forgotten Beauty', *VP* 156).

⁷ A footnote to the text of *Essays and Introductions* reads 'Burns actually wrote:- "The wan moon is setting ayont the white wave," but Yeats's version has been retained for the sake of his comments'. Yeats's mis-recollection intensifies whiteness in Burns's imagery.

Dawn comes on as ‘white moths were on the wing’ (*VP* 149) and dark begins to lighten in ‘The Song of Wandering Aengus’; the ‘ger-eagle flies, | With heavy whitening wings’ (*VP* 146-775) in “The Unappeasable Host”. ‘To Some I have Talked with by the Fire’ ends with a ‘white hush’ and a ‘flash of . . . white feet’ (*VP* 137). Set against the recurrence of ‘white’ in these poems are such colours as ‘rose’ ‘red’, ‘ruby’, ‘silver’, ‘gold’, ‘russet’, ‘crimson’, ‘green’, ‘blue’, ‘azure’, ‘violet’, ‘purple’ (noon is a ‘purple glow’ in perhaps the best-known of Yeats’s poems of this period, ‘The Lake Isle of Innisfree’).⁸ In the elaborate, carefully constructed stanzas deployed in these works these colours do not seem merely decorative in the way they had tended to do in *The Wanderings of Oisin*. Rather they seem present as properties expected to work their symbolic passage along with the poems’ contrived structures and their sounds (we recall that Yeats in ‘The Symbolism of Poetry’ had invoked ‘all sounds, all colours, all forms’ as the basis of symbolism). The effect is a kind of stately ritualizing of reality, in which the world becomes mediated in rhythm, colour and masterful formal contrivance: ‘*Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days! | Come near me while I sing the ancient ways*’ (*VP* 100). White, and the colours that so contrast with it in these poems seem modes of liturgical power, part of the magical energy they can release, when read or heard. White and fully realized colouration constitute, I suggest, a kind of static antithesis in the continuous present tense of so many of the poems, in the timeless zone of permanent being to which they seem to aspire. Between white and such a colour as ruby, or gold, however, there are also half-tints, pastels, such as ‘peal-pale’, ‘dove-grey’, ‘mouse-grey’, ‘cloud pale’. They seem the colour equivalent in the world of Yeats’s early poems of such repeated terms as ‘wandering’, ‘glimmering’, ‘glittering’, as if to suggest that the poised apposition of white and full colours in the Yeatsian cosmos has an excluded middle where process and change can operate, transformation (the theme of some key poems such as ‘The Song of Wandering Aengus’) can occur; one thing become

⁸ *VP* 117. In a BBC broadcast of 28 February 1935, Yeats conceded that this was an ‘obscurity’. I must have meant by that the reflection of heather in the water: see <http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoem.do;jsessionid=7630A4C511F02AFE7B82337E4C624EC2?poemId=1689>.

another, the world dissolve and become an essence, sound, colour, form vanish on an instant to become a transcendent white.⁹

In the context of Yeats's highly-coloured early books the reader notes with some surprise how frequently the word 'grey' occurs. Amid the whites, the reds and golds, the saffrons indeed of *The Wanderings of Oisin*, it can seem simply to take its place alongside the use of pastel and mixed tints, that I refer to above, neither the one thing nor the other, neither black nor white, in the dim light cast in the Celtic twilight atmospherics of the poems. But from early on 'grey' in Yeats's verse is sometimes vested with the kind of full-blown symbolic presence that white and red, for example, are allowed to possess.¹⁰ 'The grey wolf' (43) in 'The Madness of King Goll' is made kin, in the force-field of the poetry, of the Druid 'grey, wood-nurtured, quiet-eyed' in 'To The Rose Upon the Rood of Time' who 'cast round Fergus dreams and ruin untold' (VP 84, 100-01). In 'Fergus and the Druid' he is a 'thin grey man half lost in gathering night' in a poem in which the imagined speaker comes to know 'how great webs of sorrow | Lay hidden in [a] small slate-coloured thing!' (VP 102-04). In 'The Man Who Dreamed of Faeryland' a 'lug-worm with its grey and muddy mouth' sings of a transcendent dimension, while in the apocalyptic 'The Valley of the Black Pig' grey and the sunset are raised to talismanic heights:

We who still labour by the cromlech on the shore,
The grey cairn on the hill, when day sinks drowned in dew,
Being weary of the world's empires, bow down to you,
Master of the still stars and of the flaming door. (VP 127, 161)

Dowden's essay on Walter Pater, with which we began, argues that the shape of that writer's career involved a transition in his sensibility from sensuous love of colours and dyes to something more like the austerity and astringency of Platonic idealism (Dowden depended for this thesis on the Pater's late work *Plato and Platonism*)

⁹ I base my ideas here on J. Hillis Miller's remarks about colour in Yeats's early poetry in his *Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth-Century Writers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 68-130 at 75-76.

¹⁰ From 1895 through to the 1924 reprinting of the seventh edition of *Poems*, the spelling 'gray' was preferred by certain of Yeats's English publishers.

which for Pater, Dowden noted, ‘is distinguished less by colour than by a pervasive light’.¹¹ Had he been reading Yeats carefully in the fifteen years since he had engaged in a notable controversy with him about the possibility of an Irish literature in the English language, then he might have noticed that a similar transition had taken place in the Irish poet’s verse. For, as is well-known, after about 1900 Yeats’s poetry underwent a striking stylistic revision to make it more syntactically energetic, less rhythmically liturgical and more dramatic. Some of this purging of his poetic involved the eschewal of the kind of colour effects that so distinguished his early work. Yeats himself thought this process had begun following the completion of ‘The Wanderings of Oisin’. He recalled how ‘dissatisfied with its yellow and its dull green, with all that overcharged colour inherited from the romantic movement’, he reshaped his style, ‘deliberately sought out an impression as of cold light and tumbling clouds’ (*Au* 74). By 1901 he was writing of how he had found his ‘verses too full of the reds and yellows Shelley had found in Italy’ (*E&I* 5). Padraic Colum recalled being told by Yeats how he was ‘trying to get out of his poems the reds and yellows that Shelley had brought back from Italy. Henceforth he was going to try to put into his poems the grays of the west of Ireland, the stones and clouds that belonged to Galway.’¹² An indication of what this involved can be seen if we compare *The Wanderings of Oisin* with a subsequent narrative poem ‘Baile and Aillinn’, composed in 1901 and first published in 1902. The former poem, as we saw, is replete with colouration, the latter by contrast is almost bereft of colour, only allowing it to surface in proper names (such as the ‘White Horn’ and the ‘Brown Bull’), in a reference to ‘long grass-coloured hair’ (*VP* 190: throughout his career Yeats’s retained his poetic fascination with hair colour), a ‘gold chain’, a ‘ruddy’ body, and ‘white wings’ (102) in its 207 lines (*VP* 190, 194, 195, 197). But there is a ‘grey rush when the wind is high’, a ‘grey rush under the wind’ echoed by ‘grey reeds’, and a ‘grey bird’ (*VP* 189-92). The result is that the latter poem, as compared with the former possesses greater narrative force, and that its most striking visual effects are

¹¹ Dowden, *Essays Modern and Elizabethan*, 21.

¹² Padraic Colum, ‘Reminiscences of Yeats’, *Tri-quarterly* 4 (1965, 71-76 at 75; cf., *I&R* 2, 210).

those of light and shade, of luminosity (in one telling image the poem describes ‘birds lost in the one clear space | Of morning light in a dim sky’ *VP* 195), which anticipates later poems by Yeats which are irradiated by light, such as ‘The Cold Heaven’ and ‘Paudéen’.

We know that as early as 1897, before the publication of his most opulent volume *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) Yeats had been interested in the concept of aesthetic austerity with respect to colouration. The writings of William Blake on art had stimulated him to reflect on this idea. In ‘William Blake and His Illustrations to the *Divine Comedy*’ he quoted favourably from Blake’s ‘Descriptive Catalogue’ to the effect that “The great and golden rule of art, as well as of life, is this: that the more distinct, sharp and wiry the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp, the greater is the evidence of weak imagination, plagiarism, and bungling” (*E&I* 120). He quotes Blake with approval when the English poet/artist identifies “the hard and wiry line of rectitude” and notes that ‘He even insisted that “colouring does not depend upon where the colours are put, but upon where the lights and dark are put, and all depends on form or outline” (*E&I* 120-21). Yeats concludes of Blake’s ‘Opinions Upon Art’: ‘His praise of a severe art had been beyond price had his age rested a moment to listen . . .’ (*E&I* 121). In 1897, *The Wind Among the Reeds* still to come, Yeats was not prepared fully to concede to Blake and to forsake art that ‘wraps the vision in lights and shadows, in iridescent or glowing colour, until form be half lost in pattern . . .’ (*E&I* 121). Yet one cannot but read in Yeats’s admiration for Blake’s commendation of the sharp and wiry bounding line the seeds of his own mature poetic, when form would not be ‘half lost in pattern’ and severity of vision would become a Yeatsian hallmark, expressed in a sinewy syntax, that highlights as it works across stanzaic structure, form rather than mere metrical pattern, in a poetry of markedly limited colouration. And in Yeats’s mature poetry although he does not forsake the symbolist convictions he acquired as a young man, it is form and sound that he largely depends upon from that trio of elements (‘all sounds, all colours, all forms’) he had identified in the ‘The Symbolism of Poetry’. We note in this regard that Yeats’s mature and late poetry exploits and experiments with many traditional forms and relishes

complex poetic sound effects and cadences and is full of references to sound of all kinds, from the scream of a peacock to a great cathedral gong.

The colour ‘grey’, already deployed with symbolic valency in the early verse, is, nonetheless a crucial constituent of Yeats’s mature art, where its symbolic power is retained and augmented, in a way that is not the case with the many other colours that shine out, gleam, glow or glimmer in the early poetry. As George Bornstein has stated: ‘the powerful gray of Ireland overcame the pretty red and yellow of Italy’.¹³ So one can point to its association with a moment of occult revelation in ‘The Double Vision of Michael Robartes’ with its setting ‘On the grey rock of Cashel’ (*VP* 382) or with spiritual self-questioning in ‘Ego Dominus Tuus’, which is enacted ‘On the grey sand beside the shallow stream’ under Thoor Ballylee (*VP* 367). We could note how the fisherman in the poem of that name ‘goes | To a grey place on a hill | In grey Connemara clothes’ to arrive at a place ‘Where stone is dark under froth’, as if he is so at one with his landscape that he can be a proper audience for the poet’s severe art, ‘cold and passionate as the dawn’ (*VP* 345-46). We could note too the ‘grey gull’ in ‘On a Political Prisoner’ that provokes the poet to recall how he had seen Constance Gore-Booth in her girlhood as a ‘rock-bred, seaborne bird: | . . . Upon some lofty rock’ (*VP* 397).

It is ‘grey’ in Yeats’s volume *Responsibilities* (1914) that I will briefly concentrate on, however, in conclusion. I do this since it is in that volume that I think that the use of the colour word ‘grey’ as a symbolic expression of Yeats at his most severe as a poet becomes evident. And in doing so it links the stark, cartoon-like outlines of many poems in that volume with the idea ‘of the hardy and wiry line of rectitude’ Yeats had noted Blake extolling, the Blake who thought form more important than the placing of colour in painting. And it reminds us too that, as Dowden noted of Pater, that how a man chooses to see the world, how he employs his eye, has ethical as well as aesthetic implications, is indicative of an achieved way of being human.

The first poem in the collection, a mythic tale of gods and humans in ancient Ireland recounted for the dead poets of Yeats’s youth, is entitled

¹³ George Bornstein, *Yeats and Shelley* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 122.

'The Grey Rock' and is set at the Craig Liath near Killaloe, Co. Clare, the house of the legendary Aoife, or Aoibheal of the Grey Rock. Its geography is one of 'grey rock and the windy light' (*VP* 275) which establishes the imaginative atmospherics, as it were, of the volume as a whole in which stones, rocks, thorn-trees, wind, cold desolate places constitute the objective correlative (to use T. S. Eliot's symbolist and expressionist term) of a mood of acerbic disdain for social and aesthetic mediocrity:

Amid a place of stone,
Be secret and exult,
Because of all things known
That is most difficult.
(‘To a Friend whose Work has come to Nothing’, *VP* 291)

The effect is to suggest an astringent austerity of mood and poetic tone. The grey colouration of many of the many poems is linked too with the idea of cleansing salt in the wind that blows over rocky landscapes, intensifying the sense that the poet's presence in the volume is that of an excoriating critic of a debased social order. 'To a Shade' has the ghost of Parnell return to Dublin to 'drink of that salt breath out of the sea | When grey gulls flit about instead of men, | And the gaunt houses put on majesty' (*VP* 292). And in 'September 1913', one of Yeats's best-known poems, the poet asks, setting the sacrificial heroism of the past against a depleted present: "Was it for this the wild geese spread | The grey wing upon every tide...?" (*VP* 290)

Yeats's Shakespeare

'There is a Good Deal of my Father in it'

Denis Donoghue

I

THE WORD 'Shakespeare' does not appear in any of Yeats's poems or plays, but 'Shakespearean' does, in 'Three Movements', a poem included in *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems* (Dublin, 1932) and *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (New York, 1933 and London, 1934). It consists of three lines:

Shakespearean fish swam the sea, far away from land;
Romantic fish swam in nets coming to the hand;
What are all those fish that lie gasping on the strand? (*VP* 485)

Most readers probably find the poem obscure; they wonder what 'Shakespearean' means, and what 'Romantic' means and what 'those fish' denote in the allegory, if the poem is an allegory. They want to have these obscurities clarified, if only for the satisfaction of moving on to the next poem in the *Collected Poems*. Presumably there are readers who don't find the obscurity a nuisance; they appreciate it as an extreme form of discretion on Yeats's part. They may recall that Elizabethan rhetoricians had four words for this figure, they called it *aenigma*, *noema*, *syllogismus*, or *intimatio*. In *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* Rosemond Tuve explains that there were several ways of 'beautifying the subject', one of which was precisely by withholding ornamentation from it. By happy choice she quotes 'Three Movements' to illustrate Yeats's use of enigma, even though few readers would now recognize that this is what he is doing:

A great many figures other than those I have examined were thought beautiful for their lack of elaboration. Such figures were neither more nor less ‘ornaments’ of a poem than were the obvious or the detailed figures, and all found their chief beauty in their suitableness. I quote three lines from Yeats, chiefly to underline this difference in critical vocabulary, with which we must reckon; it would seem to us a misuse of language to comment on Yeats’s ‘beautifying of his subject, through the figure *aenigma*’, yet this is a normal Elizabethan commendation of just such uses of just such figures.

Tuve then quotes ‘Three Movements’ and says:

This tripartite image would have been called *aenigma* by the slower-minded and *allegoria* by the quick. If anyone doubts that it ‘beautifies the subject’, let him try to state Yeats’s idea without it.¹

The idea is not at all clear, but there is satisfaction in trying to work it out. If you like the poem by admiring its decorum, you take pleasure in the demands it makes on your quickness: you have to be quick to see what the three lines are doing together. The poem is authoritative, but not perspicuous. The theme is evidently some form of cultural crisis in the twentieth century, but to make sense of it you have to discover or intuit not only what ‘Shakespearean’ and ‘Romantic’ mean, but what the unspecified referent is in the third line, probably the suppressed word ‘Modern’. The more genial aspect of the crisis is expressed in ‘The Nineteenth Century and After’, a poem of four lines, close to ‘Three Movements’ in *Words for Music Perhaps* and *The Winding Stair*, that makes the best of the conditions at large:

Though the great song return no more
There’s keen delight in what we have:
The rattle of pebbles on the shore
Under the receding wave. (*VP* 485)

That, too, is *allegoria*, but in a different mood: the sensation of hearing pebbles rattling on the shore is to be enjoyed, assuming we know what it is we are enjoying and the allegory in play.

¹ Rosemond Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery: Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-Century Critics* (1947; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 143–44.

Readers who find ‘Three Movements’ opaque generally go to A. Norman Jeffares’s *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats* (1984) for help. Some readers resent the necessity of going outside the poems, even for the boon of enlightenment. Hugh Kenner, who did not resent having to decipher Pound’s *Cantos*, apparently thought it more than flesh could bear when the necessity of annotating Yeats’s difficult poems arose. ‘The unspoken premise of Yeats criticism’, he claimed, ‘is that we have to supply from elsewhere—from his life or his doctrines—a great deal that didn’t properly get into the poems: not so much to explain the poems as to make them rich enough to sustain the reputation’.² I do not recall that Professor Jeffares expressed any reluctance on the matter. I give his report on ‘Three Movements’ in full:

Yeats wrote a prose version of this poem in his White Manuscript book and dated it 20 January 1932; the poem is dated 26 January 1932 by [Richard] Ellmann (*The Identity of Yeats*, p. 267). It first appeared in *Words for Music Perhaps*.

- 1 *Shakespearean fish*: the prose draft reads: ‘Passion in Shakespeare was a great fish in the sea, but from Goethe to the end of the Romantic movement the fish was in the net. It will soon be dead upon the shore’. There is a kindred sentiment in the essay on Bishop Berkeley which begins, ‘Imagination, whether in literature, painting, or sculpture, sank after the death of Shakespeare’. (*Essays and Introductions*, p. 396).
- 2 *Romantic fish*: Shakespeare lived from 1564 to 1616; the romantic movement began in the late eighteenth century and continued in the nineteenth. Yeats described Lady Gregory and himself as ‘the last romantics’. (*The Poems: A New Edition*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (1984) p. 254).³

Jeffares’s aim was to help readers to construe the poem by removing the main obstacles. He did not recommend any particular interpretation. It was his practice to place selected relevancies in the vicinity of each poem, often companionable passages from Yeats’s poems, essays, speeches, and reviews, sometimes from *A Vision*. It was as if

² Hugh Kenner: ‘The Sacred Book of the Arts’: reprinted in John Unterecker (editor), *Yeats: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963) pp. 13–14.

³ A. Norman Jeffares, *A New Commentary on the Poems of W.B.Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 279–80.

he said: 'you will find it helpful if you let these correlative passages inhabit your mind while you're reading the poem. Of course these readings will not interpret it for you'. It is a mark of Yeats's books of poetry that one book often replies to its predecessor, corrects its extravagance, and speaks up for a rival set of values. Jeffares was alert to these nuances, but first he tried to guide Yeats's readers across the rough places of particular poems before letting them proceed on their own. In the present case, he did not think it his business to expound the differences between the poem and its prose version. Differences such as these: in the prose, two sentences imply one fish; in the verse, 'fish' is evidently plural throughout the three lines. In the verse, we have parallel lines, each of twelve syllables and seven spoken stresses. A masculine, monosyllabic, end-rhyme binds the three lines, and the metre in each line coincides with the syntax. There are no run-on lines. Each of the first two lines delivers a perception deemed to be beyond question. The first lines are in the indicative mood, past tense and present continuous respectively. The last line, as often in Yeats's poems, brings the poem to a formal but alarming end on a rhetorical question. The syntactical form that is least an ending—the rhetorical question—confounds the insistences that have preceded it. A rudimentary paraphrase might run: 'Shakespeare's heroes lived, acted, and suffered in conditions commensurate with the freedom of their passion. Romantic heroes (as in Goethe, Byron, Blake, and Shelley) lived their passion, subject entirely to the genius of their authors. In Romanticism the creative force posits itself at the centre of experience and goes out to the natural world from that certitude. What, I ask you, is happening to such passion now, in social and political conditions apparently lethal to it?' Even after this paraphrase, the poem remains to be read as a poem, not as a truncated essay.

The passage from Yeats's essay on Berkeley that Jeffares quotes is too brief to be decisive, but when readers read the whole essay, they sense amid further opacities that at least a few sentences clarify the decline, as Yeats saw it, from the Renaissance to modernity. The paragraph that Jeffares quotes in part reads in full:

Imagination, whether in literature, painting, or sculpture, sank after the death of Shakespeare; supreme intensity had passed to another faculty; it was as though Shakespeare, Dante, Michelangelo, had been reborn with all their old sublimity, their old vastness of conception, but speaking a harsh, almost unintelligible, language. Two or three generations hence, when men accept the inventions of science as a commonplace and understand that it is limited by its method to appearance, no educated man will doubt that the movement of philosophy from Spinoza to Hegel is the greatest of all works of intellect. (*E&I* 396)

Yeats meant Idealism, the philosophy that tries to make one's consciousness account for the whole of one's experience. In Cassirer's version: 'Idealists want to transform the passive world of mere *impressions*, in which the spirit seems at first imprisoned, into a world that is pure *expression* of the human spirit'.⁴ It was the only force that Yeats thought capable of resisting the Empiricism he hated and feared:

When I speak of idealist philosophy I think more of Kant than of Berkeley, who was idealist and realist alike, more of Hegel and his successors than of Kant, and when I speak of the romantic movement I think more of Manfred, more of Shelley's Prometheus, more of Jean Valjean, than of those traditional figures, Browning's Pope, the fakir-like pedlar in *The Excursion*. (*E&I* 405)

As for modernity, those fish gasping on the strand:

The romantic movement with its turbulent heroism, its self-assertion, is over, superseded by a new naturalism that leaves man helpless before the contents of his own mind. One thinks of Joyce's *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, Pound's *Cantos*, works of an heroic sincerity, the man, his active faculties in suspense, one finger beating time to a bell sounding and echoing in the depths of his own mind; of Proust who, still fascinated by Stendhal's fixed framework, seems about to close his eyes and gaze upon the pattern under his lids. (*E&I* 405)

The only cure for this helplessness, Yeats thought, was a Philosophy of the Act, adumbrated by the later Berkeley and articulated—though he does not name him in this essay—by Giovanni Gentile.

⁴ Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), I, 81.

Only where the mind partakes of a pure activity can art or life attain swiftness, volume, unity; that contemplation lost, we picture some slow-moving event, turn the mind's eye from everything else that we may experience to the full our own passivity, our personal tragedy . . . (*E&I* 409)

II

What then does ‘Shakespeare’ mean in Yeats’s structure of values? Even if we have some notion of ‘Shakespearean fish’—but how securely have we got this notion?—we can hardly eke it out to the extent of gaining access to Yeats’s Shakespeare. We should try another way.

Scholars of Yeats seem to agree that Yeats received his first sense of Shakespeare from his father, John Butler Yeats, presumably in early conversations with him in Dublin and London. Our main authority for this conclusion is William M. Murphy, who maintains that the ideas expressed in Yeats’s essay on Shakespeare, ‘At Stratford-on-Avon’, ‘are completely his father’s, though not specifically acknowledged’.⁵ John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard, the editors of *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats: Volume Three, 1901–1904*, agree with Murphy that Yeats’ views on Shakespeare, ‘and especially on *Richard II*, are almost identical with those his father had advanced in an argument with [Edward] Dowden in 1874’ (*CL3* 74n). I demur at Murphy’s word ‘completely’, and remain unappeased by the editors’ concessive ‘almost’. Murphy also says that in the dispute with Dowden ‘JBY passed his judgments on to his son, who assimilated them so completely that when he expressed them publicly a couple of decades later he forgot where he had received them’.⁶ This is not quite true. Murphy himself notes that Yeats wrote, in John Quinn’s copy of *Ideas of Good and Evil* (the 1908 edition), ‘I think the best of these Essays is that on Shakespeare. It is a family exasperation with the Dowden point of view which rather filled Dublin in my youth. There is a good deal of my father in it, though nothing is just as he

⁵ William M. Murphy, *Prodigal Father: The Life of John Butler Yeats (1839–1922)* (Ithaca and London, 1978), 563 n.

⁶ *Ibid.* 100.

would have put it'.⁷ But there is much evidence for Murphy's initial claim. Building on Phillip L. Marcus's *Yeats and the Beginning of the Irish Literary Renaissance* (1970), he elucidates further the context of Yeats's sense of Shakespeare in early disputes between John B. Yeats and his friend Dowden, the young Professor of English at Trinity College, Dublin, and later an eminent scholar of Shakespeare, Shelley, and other writers. They disagreed first about Wordsworth, then about Shakespeare. In later years John Yeats thought his friend a provincial and let the communications lapse.

I give the dispute in its main outline. In March 1874, hearing of the success of Dowden's lectures on Shakespeare, John Yeats wrote to congratulate him. In reply, on March 17, Dowden made the mistake of giving him the gist of his next lecture, on *Richard II*:

In K[ing] Richard II Shakspere represents the man with an artistic feeling for life, who isn't an artist of life. 'The artist of life is efficient and shapes the world and his destiny with strong creative hands. Richard likes graceful combinations, a clever speech instead of an efficient one, a melodious passion instead of one which achieves the deed . . . If things can be arranged so as to appeal gracefully or touchingly to his esthetic sensibility, he doesn't concern himself much more about them. And so all of life becomes unreal to him through this dilettantism with life.'⁸

The word 'dilettantism' may have struck a nerve in Yeats's father, who had reason to fear that he himself was a dilettante by comparison with the prolific Dowden. John Yeats immediately denounced Dowden's values, in relation to *Richard II*, as 'a sort of splenetic morality that would be fitter in the mouth of the old gardener'. He maintained, in effect, that lost causes are invariably the better ones. Bolingbroke was only 'stronger in prudence' than Richard. Richard 'had a more mounting spirit, his disdain was nobler, his mirth more joyous, his happiness had a more untiring wing'.⁹ Not that John Yeats had any hope of changing Dowden's mind. Dowden already believed that 'for [JBY] the ethical disappears in the aesthetic'.¹⁰ Gratified by that disappearance, he did not feel impelled to reconsider his view of the history plays. In *Shakspere—A Critical Study of*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 589–90n, referring to Wade 80, p.90.

⁸ Quoted in Murphy, 98–9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

His Mind and Art (1875) he described Richard as boyish, unreal, lacking in authority and ‘executive power’, a mere aesthete, an amateur in the mode of self-presentation:

Life is to Richard a show, a succession of images; and to put himself into accord with the aesthetic requirements of his position is Richard’s first necessity. He is equal to playing any part gracefully which he is called upon by circumstances to enact. But when he has exhausted the aesthetic satisfaction to be derived from the situations of his life, he is left with nothing further to do. He is an amateur in living; not an artist.

Dowden conceded Richard’s charm of person and presence: ‘Hotspur remembers him as “Richard, that sweet, lovely rose”. But a king who rules a discontented people and turbulent nobles needs to be something more than a beautiful blossoming flower’.¹¹ It followed that Henry V ‘is Shakspere’s ideal of the *practical* heroic character’. But this character is not ‘the highest ideal of Shakspere, who lived and moved and had his being not alone in the world of limitation, of tangible, positive fact, but also in a world of the soul, a world opening into two endless vistas—the vista of meditation and the vista of passion’. For these vistas, we must go to the tragedies and *The Tempest*:

In these Shakspere is engaged in a series of studies not concerning success in the mastery of events and things, but concerning the higher success and the more awful failure which appear in the exaltation or the ruin of a soul.

So in *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Othello*, *Coriolanus*, and *Timon of Athens*:

And, after exhibiting the absolute ruin of a life and of a soul, Shakspere closed the wonderful series of his dramatic writings by exhibiting the noblest elevation of character, the most admirable attainment of heart, of intellect, of will, which our present life admits, in the person of Prospero. What more was left for Shakspere to say?¹²

¹⁰ Edward Dowden, *Fragments from Old Letters E.D. to E.D.W: 1869-1892* (London: Dent, 1914), 55.

¹¹ Edward Dowden, *Shakspere—A Critical Study of His Mind and Art*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper, 1918), 172-73.

¹² *Ibid.*, 66-67.

If JBY had two or three reasons for being angry with Dowden, his son had ten. After a first period of social amenity, Yeats became convinced that Dowden was his enemy, an obstacle to his cultural and national motives. Dowden was a Unionist, an Imperialist, the most visible image of the deplored Trinity College, a famous scholar-critic ostentatiously indifferent to the work of Irish Cultural Nationalism to which Yeats had set himself. Dowden liked one or two Celtic legends, that of Deirdre for instance, and he was on visiting terms with some Irish writers, but he told Aubrey de Vere, in a letter of 13 September 1882, that he was ‘infinitely glad that I spent my early enthusiasm on Wordsworth and Spenser and Shakespeare, and not on anything that Ireland ever produced’.¹³ He also committed the indelicacy of urging the young poet Yeats to read George Eliot. Like Matthew Arnold, Dowden thought that Irish writers should be content to find their destiny by submerging themselves in the greater literature of England, where their small voices would be heard to advantage. In this respect as in his work on Shakespeare—whom in his published work he preferred to call Shakspere—Dowden was immensely influential. John Eglinton wrote of him: ‘he may even be said to have imposed his conception of Shakespeare on modern criticism’.¹⁴ It is no surprise, then, that Yeats attacked Dowden in several essays, speeches, and letters to the Editor. The attack was unfair, because Dowden was not entirely the hot gospeller of success that Yeats made him out to be. It is much to his credit that he was one of the first readers of Whitman in Europe. But Yeats was not deflected from rebuke: ‘The more I read the worse does the Shakespeare criticism become’, he told Lady Gregory, ‘and Dowden is about the climax of it. I[t] came out [of] the middle class movement & I feal (sic) it my legitimate enemy’ (*CL3* 61). In ‘Ireland after Parnell’—the second book of *The Trembling of the Veil* (1922)—Yeats took the freedom of Dowden’s death to list some of the grievances he cherished against him:

¹³ Edward Dowden, *Letters of Edward Dowden and His Correspondents* (London: Dent, 1914), 184.

¹⁴ John Eglinton, Preface, in *Letters of Edward Dowden and his Correspondents*, supra, xi-xvi (p. xiii).

Edward Dowden, my father's old friend, with his dark romantic face, the one man of letters Dublin Unionism possessed, was withering in that barren soil. Towards the end of his life he confessed to a near friend that he would have wished before all things to have been the lover of many women; and some careless lecture, upon the youthful Goethe, had in early life drawn down upon him the displeasure of the Protestant Archbishop. And yet he turned Shakespeare into a British Benthamite, flattered Shelley but to hide his own growing lack of sympathy, abandoned for like reason that study of Goethe that should have been his life-work, and at last cared but for Wordsworth, the one great poet who, after brief blossom, was cut and sown into planks of obvious utility. (*Au* 235)

Two sources of grievance can be added. Dowden refused to help the Irish Literary movement even to the extent of conceding that others might take it seriously. And when Wilde fell into disgrace and Yeats asked various Irish writers for letters of sympathy, 'I was refused by none but Edward Dowden, who gave me what I considered an irrelevant excuse—his dislike for everything that Wilde had written' (*Au* 287).

III

On 22 April 1901, Yeats went up to Stratford-upon-Avon and lodged at the Shakespeare Hotel for a week so that he could attend the Benson Festival of Shakespeare's History Plays. He saw six of the eight: *King John*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV, Part II*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI, Part II*, and *Richard III*. In his spare time in the Library he read enough Shakespeare criticism to keep him exasperated. He had looked for an opportunity to write an essay on Shakespeare. While the experience of the history plays was fresh in his mind, he wrote 'At Stratford-on-Avon' and published it in two parts in *The Speaker*, May 11 and 18. The essay is in six sections. The first is in praise of Stratford, its 'quiet streets, where gabled and red-tiled houses remember the Middle Ages' and one reads in the Library 'with its oak-panelled walls and leaded windows of tinted glass'. The second part disapproves of the 'half-round theatre' and the Naturalism of its sets, and, for contrast and exemplification, speaks warmly of Gordon Craig's scenery for the Purcell Operatic Society's production of *Dido*

and *Aeneas* in London a month or so previously. In the theatre of Naturalism, Yeats says, ‘illusion comes to an end, slain by our desire to increase it’. In the third section, he moves closer to his hatreds, embodied for the moment in George Eliot and the Utilitarian critics of Shakespeare who worked in her shadow. He has not yet named Dowden, but the word ‘efficiency’ indicates that he has him in view:

Because reason can only discover completely the use of those obvious actions which everybody admires, and because every character was to be judged by efficiency in action, Shakespearian criticism became a vulgar worshipper of success. (*E&I* 103)

Yeats is writing as a scholar of Blake. He is also, instructed by Symons’s *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), an adept of the vision according to which the palpable world is no longer a reality, and the unseen world no longer a dream. In Yeats’s version:

In *La Peau de chagrin* Balzac spends many pages in describing a coquette, who seems the image of heartlessness, and then invents an improbable incident that her chief victim may discover how beautifully she can sing. Nobody had ever heard her sing, and yet in her singing, and in her chatter with her maid, Balzac tells us, was her true self. He would have us understand that behind the momentary self, which acts and lives in the world, and is subject to the judgment of the world, there is that which cannot be called before any mortal judgment seat, even though a great poet, or novelist, or philosopher be sitting upon it. (*E&I* 102)

Reading a few books on Shakespeare—or at least turning them over in the Library—Yeats concluded that they conspired in an antithesis, ‘which grew in clearness and violence as the century grew older, between two types, whose representatives were Richard II, ‘sentimental’, ‘weak’, ‘selfish’, ‘insincere’, and Henry V, ‘Shakespeare’s only hero.’ Gervinus was guilty, but Dowden was closer to the scene and could not be left out of the rebuke:

. . . Professor Dowden, whose book I once read carefully, first made these emotions eloquent and plausible. He lived in Ireland, where everything has failed, and he meditated frequently upon the perfection of character which

had, he thought, made England successful, for, as we say, ‘cows beyond the water have long horns’. He forgot that England, as Gordon has said, was made by her adventurers, by her people of wildness and imagination and eccentricity; and thought that Henry V, who only seemed to be these things because he had some commonplace vices, was not only the typical Anglo-Saxon, but the model Shakespeare held up before England; and he even thought it worth while pointing out that Shakespeare himself was making a large fortune while he was writing about Henry’s victories. (*E&I* 104)

In Dowden’s successors, the celebration of Henry V went further, ‘and it reached its height at a moment of imperialistic enthusiasm, of ever-deepening conviction that the commonplace shall inherit the earth, when somebody of reputation, whose name I cannot remember, wrote that Shakespeare admired this one character alone out of all his characters’ (*E&I* 104-05).

‘I cannot believe’, Yeats says in the fourth part of the essay, ‘that Shakespeare looked on his Richard II with any but sympathetic eyes’. Richard is shown to fail, ‘a little because he lacked some qualities that were doubtless common among his scullions, but more because he had certain qualities that are uncommon in all ages’ (*E&I* 106). To suppose that Shakespeare preferred the men who deposed his king ‘is to suppose that Shakespeare judged men with the eyes of a Municipal Councillor weighing the merits of a Town Clerk’. On the contrary, Shakespeare:

saw indeed, as I think, in Richard II the defeat that awaits all, whether they be artist or saint, who find themselves where men ask of them a rough energy and have nothing to give but some contemplative virtue, whether lyrical fantasy, or sweetness of temper, or dreamy dignity, or love of God, or love of His creatures. (*E&I* 107)

Shakespeare meditated ‘as Solomon, not as Bentham meditated, upon blind ambitions, untoward accidents, and capricious passions, and the world was almost as empty in his eyes as it must be in the eyes of God’. To support this sad, beautiful verdict, Yeats quoted in full sonnet LXVI, ‘Tir’d with all these, for restful death I cry’.

In the fifth part of the essay, Yeats brings forward the notion that ‘there is some one myth for every man, which, if we but knew it, would make us understand all he did and thought’. Shakespeare’s

myth, ‘it may be, describes a wise man who was blind from very wisdom, and an empty man who thrust him from his place, and saw all that could be seen from very emptiness’. The myth can be seen, he thinks, in Hamlet, Fortinbras, ‘Richard III, that unripened Hamlet, and [in] Henry V, that ripened Fortinbras’. Henry’s purposes ‘are so intelligible to everybody that everybody talks of him as if he succeeded, although he fails in the end, as all men great and little fail in Shakespeare’. It is not clear how Shakespeare’s myth is fulfilled in these antitheses, but we may as well take Yeats’s word for it.

In the last part of the essay Yeats refers, evidently with some misgiving, to the stories than came into English literature from Italy in the Renaissance:

And yet, could those foreign tales have come in if the great famine, the sinking down of popular imagination, the dying out of traditional fantasy, the ebbing out of the energy of race, had not made them necessary? [...] Shakespeare wrote at a time when solitary great men were gathering to themselves the fire that had once flowed hither and thither among all men, when individualism in work and thought and emotion was breaking up the old rhythms of life, when the common people, sustained no longer by the myths of Christianity and of still older faiths, were sinking into the earth. (*E&I* 109-10)

Before concluding the essay, Yeats inserted two sentences of explanatory intention that could only be speculative, lacking evidence in their favour. He was not scholar enough to verify them: he could only posit them because of his great desire that they would be found true:

The courtly and saintly ideals of the Middle Ages were fading, and the practical ideals of the modern age had begun to threaten the unuseful dome of the sky; Merry England was fading, and yet it was not so faded that the poets could not watch the procession of the world with that untroubled sympathy for men as they are, as apart from all they do and seem, which is the substance of tragic irony. (*E&I* 106)

Yeats returned to the motif a few months later, in his essay on Spenser, where he tried to keep Shakespeare and Spenser in Merry England, an England mostly Norman, Angevin, and officially French, and in which there is a quarrel to the death ‘with that new Anglo-Saxon nation that was arising amid Puritan sermons and

Marprelate pamphlets'. The new nation 'had driven out the language of its conquerors, and now it was to overthrow their beautiful haughty imagination and their manners, full of abandon and willfulness, and to set in their stead earnestness and logic and the timidity and reserve of a counting-house' (*E&I* 364-365). Chaucer, Shakespeare, and—equivocally, because he wanted to justify himself to his new masters—Spenser were on the merry side, Langland and Bunyan on the Puritan side. Shakespeare, his commitment to the Tudor myth a strained sentiment far short of conviction, gave his heart to the defeated side and found for its poor victims the most poetic lines, *Richard II* the most blessed in that respect.

IV

Yeats's sense of Shakespeare was equivocal. Shakespeare was indisputably a great writer, but he was born too late, he should have come into the world with Chaucer. Yeats writes, in 'The Trembling of the Veil':

[William] Morris had never seemed to care greatly for any poet later than Chaucer and though I preferred Shakespeare to Chaucer I begrudged my own preference. Had not Europe shared one mind and heart, until both mind and heart began to break into fragments a little before Shakespeare's birth? [. . .] If Chaucer's personages had disengaged themselves from Chaucer's crowd, forgot their common goal and shrine, and after sundry magnifications became each in turn the centre of some Elizabethan play, and had after split into their elements and so given birth to romantic poetry, must I reverse the cinematograph? (*Au* 191, 193)

Each of these sundry magnifications becomes a great character in a play by Shakespeare—Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth, Ophelia—but there is loss, too. In Phase 20 of *A Vision*—Shakespeare's phase—'Unity of Being is no longer possible, for the being is compelled to live in a fragment of itself and to dramatise that fragment' (*AVB* 148). As he put it in the first version of *A Vision*:

Like the phase before it, and those that follow it immediately, [it is] a phase of the breaking up and subdivision of the being. The energy is always seeking those facts which being separable can be seen more clearly, or expressed

more clearly, but when there is truth to phase there is a similitude of the old unity, or rather a new unity, which is not a Unity of Being but a unity of the creative act. He no longer seeks to unify what is broken through conviction, by imposing those very convictions upon himself and others, but by projecting a dramatization or many dramatizations. He can create, just in that degree in which he can see these dramatizations as separate from himself, and yet as an epitome of his whole nature. (*AVA* 70-71)

Phase 20 is exemplified by Shakespeare, Napoleon, and Balzac, but mostly by Shakespeare. It is some consolation to Yeats that the groundlings in Shakespeare's theatre could still 'remember the folksongs and the imaginative folk-life', but their sense of those communal experiences could only be residual.¹⁵ Shakespeare's fools and their songs are, as Peter Ure pointed out, 'the vestiges of the old world of unity before the Renaissance scatterings', but they are desperate with a sense of loss and dread: that is why the heroic figures they pester can't abide their pointed nonsense.¹⁶ Meanwhile the hero's imagination—the 'violence within' as Wallace Stevens called it—responds with force nearly equal and opposite to the violence it has to endure: nearly, but not quite, there is always the winner, death. 'Shakespeare's persons, when the last darkness has gathered about them, speak out of an ecstasy that is one-half the self-surrender of sorrow, and one-half the last playing and mockery of the victorious sword before the defeated world' (*E&I* 254). The ecstasy is a play of mind and spirit. Yeats assimilates these beautiful defeated heroes to the tragic joy of 'The Gyres' and 'Lapis Lazuli,' but they still issue from a broken time. In 1906 Yeats wrote:

One of the means of loftiness, of marmorean stillness, has been the choice of strange and far-away places for the scenery of art, but this choice has grown bitter to me, and there are moments when I cannot believe in the reality of imaginations that are not inset with the minute life of long familiar things and symbols and places. I have come to think of even Shakespeare's journeys to Rome or to Verona as the outflowing of an unrest, a dissatisfaction with natural interests, an unstable equilibrium of the whole European mind that would not have come had John Palaeologus cherished, despite that high and heady look, copied by Burne-Jones for his *Cophetua*, a hearty disposition to fight the Turk. (*E&I* 297)

¹⁵ Yeats, *Plays and Controversies* (New York: Macmillan, 1924) p. 86; *EX*, 139-140.

¹⁶ Peter Ure, *Yeats and Anglo-Irish Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1974), 212-13.

V

None of these sentiments is beyond the range of John B. Yeats's rhetoric. I am willing to believe that father and son had many conversations leading to John Yeats's assertion many years later—long after 'At Stratford-on-Avon'—on the subject of 'Elizabethan ways':

There is another thing to be noted about Elizabethan ways. Getting a living was then a comparatively easy thing; they had not that absorption to interrupt their dreams, and here again let me add, that a people who do not dream never attain to inner sincerity, for only in his dreams is a man really himself. Only for his dreams is a man responsible—his actions are what he must do. Actions are a bastard race to which a man has not given his full paternity.¹⁷

Otherwise put, in the poet's terms: 'In dreams begins responsibility' (*VP* 269).

But two other influences are demonstrable: Emerson's essay on Shakespeare in *Representative Men* (1876) and Pater's 'Shakespeare's English Kings' in *Appreciations* (1889). Yeats alludes to each in different essays. Emerson's Shakespeare is the genius of universality; there is no talk of the Tudor myth, Queen Elizabeth, or Henry V, but much brooding on the symbolic reach of entities:

Shakespeare, Homer, Dante, Chaucer, saw the splendor of meaning that plays over the visible world; knew that a tree had another use than for apples, and corn another than for meal, and the ball of the earth, than for tillage and roads: that these things bore a second and finer harvest to the mind, being emblems of its thoughts, and conveying in all their natural history a certain mute commentary on human life. Shakespeare employed them as colors to compose his picture. He rested in their beauty; and never took the step which seemed inevitable to such genius, namely to explore the virtue which resides in these symbols and imparts this power:—what is that which they themselves say? He converted the elements which waited on his command, into entertainments. He was master of the revels to mankind.¹⁸

¹⁷ J. B. Yeats, *Letters to His Son W.B.Yeats and Others 1869–1922*, ed. by Joseph Hone (London: Faber and Faber, 1944), 189.

¹⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Representative Men* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 216–17.

In his essay on Spenser, Yeats says that Spenser should not have occupied himself with moral and religious questions: ‘he should have been content to be, as Emerson thought Shakespeare was, a Master of the Revels to mankind’ (*E&I* 368). As such a master, Shakespeare would be impartial in his performances, not a propagandist for this or that regime but sympathetic to all, the victorious and the defeated alike.

Pater’s essay was more pervasive than Emerson’s in Yeats’s meditations at Stratford. He must have been turning over the pages of *Appreciations* or recalling a paragraph from an early reading. The sentence I have in part quoted reads in full:

I cannot believe that Shakespeare looked on his Richard II with any but sympathetic eyes, understanding indeed how ill-fitted he was to be king, at a certain moment of history, but understanding that he was lovable and full of capricious fancy, a ‘wild creature’ as Pater has called him. (*E&I* 105)

Pater called him that, in one of the several passages in which he maintains that Shakespeare’s concern is not with kingship but with the irony of it: ‘the irony of kingship—average human nature, flung with a wonderfully pathetic effect into the vortex of great events; tragedy of everyday quality heightened in degree only by the conspicuous scene which does but make those who play their parts there conspicuously unfortunate; the utterance of common humanity straight from the heart, but refined like other common things for kingly uses by Shakespeare’s unfailing eloquence [...].’¹⁹ The refining act of consciousness makes space, I assume, for the unofficial, antinomian values that otherwise would be suppressed by the official ones. Pater speaks of ‘the person and story of Richard the Second, a figure—that sweet lovely rose—which haunts Shakespeare’s mind, as it seems long to have haunted the minds of the English people, as the most touching of all examples of the irony of kingship’.

Toward the middle of ‘Shakespeare’s English Kings’ Pater breaks into an expostulation, a tone unusual for him:

¹⁹ Walter Pater, *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style* (London: Macmillan, 1944), 193.

No! Shakespeare's kings are not, nor are meant to be, great men: rather, little or quite ordinary humanity, thrust upon greatness, with those pathetic results, the natural self-pity of the weak heightened in them into irresistible appeal to others as the net result of their royal prerogative. One after another, they seem to lie composed in Shakespeare's embalming pages, with just that touch of nature about them, making the whole world akin, which has infused into their tombs at Westminster a rare poetic grace. It is that irony of kinship, the sense that it is in its happiness child's play, in its sorrows, after all, but children's grief, which gives its finer accent to all the changeful feeling of these wonderful speeches:—the great meekness of the graceful, wild creature, tamed at last—'Give Richard leave to live till Richard die!'²⁰

VI

Yeats's Shakespeare, it begins to appear, is an antinomian at heart and on principle, even if by force of necessity he is enough of a Tudor mythographer to satisfy the authorities. According to the *OED*, an antinomian is a person who believes that the moral law is not binding on Christians, under the 'law of grace'. In *The Renaissance* and again in *Gaston de Latour* Pater explains what he takes the word to mean:

One of the strongest characteristics of that outbreak of the reason and the imagination, of that assertion of the liberty of the heart, in the middle age, which I have termed a medieval Renaissance, was its antinomianism, its spirit of rebellion and revolt against the moral and religious ideas of the time. In their search after the pleasures of the senses and the imagination, in their care for beauty, in their worship of the body, people were impelled beyond the bounds of the Christian ideal; and their love became sometimes a strange idolatry, a strange rival religion.

He associates it with the survival of the pagan gods, such as 'that ancient Venus, not dead, but only hidden for a time in the caves of the Venusberg, [and] those old pagan gods still going to and fro on the earth, under all sorts of disguises':

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 207.

And this element in the middle age, for the most part ignored by those writers who have treated it preeminently as the 'Age of Faith'—this rebellious and antinomian element, the recognition of which has made the delineation of the middle age by the writers of the Romantic school in France, by Victor Hugo for instance in *Notre-Dame de Paris*, so suggestive and exciting—is found alike in the history of Abelard and the legend of Tannhäuser. More and more, as we come to mark changes and distinctions of temper in what is often in one all-embracing confusion called the middle age, that rebellion, that sinister claim for liberty of heart and thought, comes to the surface.

Aucassin and Niccolète contains the most complete example of this antinomian spirit, but it is also found in the Albigensian movement, 'connected so strangely with the history of Provençal poetry', in the Franciscan order, 'with its poetry, its mysticism, its "illumination", from the point of view of religious authority, justly suspect', and in 'the thoughts of those obscure prophetic writers, like Joachim of Flora, strange dreamers in a world of flowery rhetoric of that third and final dispensation of a "spirit of freedom", in which law shall have passed away'.²¹ Pater also ascribed the antinomian disposition to his own Marius the Epicurean, who discovers that to move in the outer world of other people, as though taking it at their estimate, would be possible only as a kind of irony.

In Shakespeare the antinomian element may be found, if one considers the plays under the guidance of John B. Yeats and Pater, in his sympathy for the defeated, the distinctive poetry and pathos he writes for them, his tenderness toward lost causes known to be lost, certain traces of his Catholic associations, and the fact—which Pater notes in 'Shakespeare's English Kings',—that while Shakespeare 'was not wanting in a sense of the magnanimity of warriors' and records monumentally enough 'the grandiose of war' as in Vernon's speech in the first part of *Henry IV* (IV.1.97-106)—

All furnish'd, all in arms;
All plum'd like estridges that with the wind
Bated like eagles having lately bath'd;
Glittering in golden coats, like images;

²¹ Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry: The 1893 Text*, ed. by Donald L. Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 18-19.

As full of spirit as the month of May,
 And gorgeous as the sun at midsummer;
 Wanton as youthful goats, wild as young bulls.
 I saw young Harry, with his beaver on,
 His cuisses on his thighs, gallantly arm'd,
 Rise from the ground like feathered Mercury [. . .]

—there is always the afterthought, the figure of tragic irony, this time from Hotspur—

No more, no more: worse than the sun in March,
 This praise doth nourish argues. Let them come;
 They come like sacrifices in their trim [. . .] (IV.1.111-13)²²

VII

But a question arises: were not John B. Yeats, Emerson, and Pater superseded in the end, as presences in Yeats's sense of Shakespeare, by Nietzsche? In September 1902, eighteen months or so after Stratford, John Quinn sent Yeats his own copy of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and impersonal copies of *The Case of Wagner* and *The Genealogy of Morals*. For several months Yeats appears to have read nothing but Nietzsche, 'that strong enchanter', as he called him in a letter to Lady Gregory. Nietzsche entered upon Yeats's stream of consciousness, and never left it. When death and dying came into his imagination—as it inescapably did in his late years—Nietzsche was never far off, summoned to help him transform his fear into ecstasy. We can be sympathetic toward this device or not. T. S. Eliot said that 'Nietzsche is the most conspicuous modern instance of cheering oneself up', a remark provoked by Eliot's reflection on Othello's last speech, 'Soft you; a word or two before you go'. Cheering oneself up seemed to him a symptom of *bovarysme*, 'the human will to see things as they are not', a stoical attitude 'the reverse of Christian humility'.²³ A more sympathetic reader of Yeats would report, without adjudicating the point, that what appealed to

²² Pater, *Appreciations*, 199.

²³ T. S. Eliot, 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca', in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 126-40 (p. 131-32).

Yeats most powerfully was Nietzsche's figure of the hero, adept of risk, bringing to bear upon his circumstances sufficient intensity of consciousness to defeat them or to be greatly defeated by them. In *The King's Threshold* he has Seanchan, dying, say:

I need no help,
He needs no help that joy has lifted up
Like some miraculous beast out of Ezekiel
[. . .]
Dead faces laugh. (*VP* 309)

In his last poems Yeats brought Shakespeare and Nietzsche together, as if talk of the will-to-power and the tragic hero found fulfillment only in Shakespearean tragedy. In these poems, Nietzsche indeed displaces Pater and Emerson: companioned by Blake and Heraclitus, he dominates the scene. Yeats's Shakespeare is still antinomian, finding in that doom enough resilience and intensity—it could not be held without them—to confront whatever violence life might enforce. In 'Lapis Lazuli' the words 'gay' and 'gaiety' have to do most of the heroic, Nietzschean work of insistence, building castles under Vesuvius:

All perform their tragic play,
There struts Hamlet, there is Lear,
That's Ophelia, that Cordelia;
Yet they, should the last scene be there,
The great stage curtain about to drop,
If worthy their prominent part in the play,
Do not break up their lines to weep.
They know that Hamlet and Lear are gay;
Gaiety transfiguring all that dread [.] (*VP* 565)

Jeffares, elucidating 'Lapis Lazuli', draws attention to a passage in Yeats's 'A General Introduction for My Work' (NC 364) including:

The heroes of Shakespeare convey to us through their looks, or through the metaphorical patterns of their speech, the sudden enlargement of their vision, their ecstasy at the approach of death; 'She should have died hereafter', 'Of many thousand kisses, the poor last', 'Absent thee from felicity awhile'. They have become God or Mother Goddess, the pelican, 'My baby at my breast', but all must be cold; no actress has ever sobbed when she

played Cleopatra, even the shallow brain of a producer has never thought of such a thing. The supernatural is present, cold winds blow across our hands, upon our faces, the thermometer falls, and because of that cold we are hated by journalists and groundlings. (*E&I* 522-23)

'Cold' corresponds in the audience to 'gay' in Shakespeare's heroes and heroines, a sense amounting to a conviction of 'the sudden enlargement of their vision, their ecstasy at the approach of death'; or the approach of a vision of death, mimed indeed but still to be believed in—lived through—for as long as the play lasts. There are at least two ways of interpreting 'Gaiety transfiguring all that dread'. It can mean that the momentary self, as Yeats called it, passes beyond its worldly state into a hidden or sublime form, perhaps the form of wisdom. In October 1909, Yeats wrote of this in his journal:

Saw *Hamlet* on Saturday night, except for the chief 'Ophelia' scenes; missed these, as I had to be away for a while at the Abbey, without regret. I know not why, but their pathos, as it [is] played, always leaves me cold. I came back for *Hamlet* at the grave, where my delight begins again. 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. Has not that threshold always been terrible, even crime-haunted? Surely Shakespeare, in those last seeming idle years, was no quiet country gentleman, enjoying, as men like Dowden think, the temporal reward of an unvalued toil. Perhaps he sought for wisdom in itself at last, and not in its passionate shadows. Maybe he had passed the threshold, and none the less for Jonson's drinking bout. Certainly one finds here and there in his work—is it not at the end of *Henry VI*, for instance—praise of country leisure sweetened by wisdom. (*Au* 522-23)

This may entail no more, and no less, than the conversion of passion into the skill of music; as Pater says in 'Shakespeare's English Kings':

As in some sweet anthem of Handel, the sufferer, who put finger to the organ under the utmost pressure of mental conflict, extracts a kind of peace at last from the mere skill with which he sets his distress to music.²⁴

Or it may mean that the momentary self, by sublime negligence, achieves what Giorgio Agamben calls 'a self-forgetting in the proper'—which I construe as the proper of the tragic form, the whole in

²⁴ Pater, *Appreciations*, 208.

which every part—every part of feeling and dread—is at once lost and saved.²⁵

The conversion of passion into music, fear into ecstasy, was a late accomplishment in Yeats. When Edmund Wilson published *Axel's Castle* in 1931, he was justified in saying that ‘even the poetry of the noble Yeats, still repining through middle age over the emotional miscarriages of youth, is dully weighted, for all its purity and candor, by a leaden acquiescence in defeat’.²⁶ But in the few remaining years of Yeats’s life, and with the provocation of Nietzsche, he transfigured that dread. Not without cost: some of these poems rant and rage more than is good for them, but the best of them—‘The Statues’ and ‘Cuchulain Comforted’—are justly Nietzschean.

VIII

In ‘The Tragic Theatre’ (1910) Yeats wrote that ‘there is an art of the flood, the art of Titian when his *Ariosto*, and his *Bacchus and Ariadne*, give new images to the dreams of youth, and of Shakespeare when he shows us Hamlet broken away from life by the passionate hesitations of his reverie’ (*E&I* 242). Reverie is Yeats’s word for the mind when it is minding its own business, indifferent to the world’s. It occurred to him often, and most tellingly on 26 September 1937 when he attended a performance of *Richard II* at the Queen’s theatre in London. Displeased with it—although John Gielgud played Richard, Michael Redgrave Bolingbroke, and Peggy Ashcroft Queen Isabel—he complained to Dorothy Wellesley on 29 September that ‘the modern actor can speak to another actor, but he is incapable of revery [sic]. On the advice of Bloomsbury he has packed his soul in a bag & left it with the bar-attendant’. And then he put a question to Lady Dorothy: ‘Did Shakespeare in *Richard II* discover poetic revery?’ (*CL InteLex* 7079).

The question comes as close as we are likely to come to Yeats’s

²⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 98.

²⁶ Edmund Wilson, *Literary Essays and Reviews of the 1920s and 30s*, ed. by Lewis M. Dabney (New York: Library of America, 2007), 835.

Shakespeare. In effect, it anticipates by more than sixty years Harold Bloom's claim, in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1999), that Shakespeare invented us by inventing 'human inwardness', 'personality', and the ability to change by overhearing ourselves thinking. 'Overhearing his own reverie', Bloom says of Richard II in a marginal tribute to Yeats's reading of that pathetic king and dazzling metaphysical poet, 'Richard undergoes a change'.²⁷ The human quality that Bloom adds to Yeats on reverie is that of a character's listening to himself and completing, sometimes in action, sometimes in failure, his own rhetoric. Listening to oneself and turning the listening into theatre make a nuance in the understanding of reverie. Yeats's sense of reverie makes it an intrinsic form of consciousness: it is never clear what the mind in reverie is thinking about, except that it has exempted itself from conditions and circumstances. Yeats described it most fully in 'The Irish Dramatic Movement', where he distinguished it from the common understanding of thought as the efficient form of cognition. He referred to a man who had in mind, when he spoke of thought, 'the shaping energy that keeps us busy'. The obstinate questionings this man had most respect for were 'how to change the method of government, how to change the language, how to revive our manufactures, and whether it is the Protestant or the Catholic that scowls at the other with the darker scowl'. Another man had in mind 'thought as Pascal, as Montaigne, as Shakespeare, or as, let us say, Emerson, understood it—a reverie about the adventures of the soul, or of the personality, or some obstinate questioning of the riddle'. 'Many who have to work hard', Yeats continued, 'always make time for this reverie, but it comes more easily to the leisured, and in this it is like a broken heart, which is, a Dublin newspaper assured us lately, impossible to a busy man' (*Ex* 141). Reverie is Yeats's word for the antinomian form of thinking. In Shakespeare, as in Yeats, it is invariably found where the conditions it faces are the wrong ones, such that in weak spirits or in especially difficult times it makes the mind feel somewhat ashamed of itself. It achieves itself only when the conditions of its thinking are transcended. If we were to change 'broken away', in that quotation from 'The Tragic

²⁸ Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (London: Fourth Estate, 1999), 268.

Theatre', from the passive to the active voice, we would think again of Yeats's Nietzsche and give Yeats's Pater an edge he rarely had. Common to these several comparisons is Yeats's determination not to have Shakespeare—or himself—coincide with his time or act as its spokesman. Yeats considered himself, as he considered Shakespeare and to some extent Spenser, as a man born too late to find his proper company. 'If we would find a company of our own way of thinking, we must go backward to turreted walls, to Courts, to high rocky places, to little walled towns, to jesters like that jester of Charles V who made mirth out of his own death; to the Duke Guidobaldo in his sickness, or Duke Frederick in his strength, to all those who understood that life is not lived, if not lived for contemplation or excitement' (*E&I* 252). Sometimes the excitement was in a turn of phrase, as in one that often occurred to Yeats—his father read it to him in Dublin—when he thought of reverie or of its companion, style; Coriolanus's answer to one of the impudent servants in Aufidius's house who demands: 'Where dwellest thou?' To which Coriolanus answers: 'Under the canopy'. (IV.v.41) Reference to the canopy, the sky, rebukes the servant with an irony he could not be expected to appreciate. 'Under the canopy!', the servant repeats, 'Where's that?' The *OED* cites this to mean 'the overhanging firmament' and also gives Hamlet's 'this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire' (II.ii.311f.). Yeats referred to the episode in 'Reveries over Childhood and Youth'. 'I have seen *Coriolanus* played a number of times since then, and read it more than once, but that scene is more vivid than the rest, and it is my father's voice that I hear and not Irving's or Benson's' (*Au* 80). JBY's voice, reading high passages from *Coriolanus* and other plays and poems to his son in Dublin, stayed in the poet's mind even when other considerations entered to qualify his sense of Shakespeare.

IX

In 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca' (1927) T. S. Eliot noted that 'the last few years have witnessed a number of recrudescences of

Shakespeare'. Three of them held his attention:

There is the fatigued Shakespeare, a retired Anglo-Indian, presented by Mr. Lytton Strachey; there is the messianic Shakespeare, bringing a new philosophy and a new system of yoga, presented by Mr. Middleton Murry; and there is the ferocious Shakespeare, a furious Samson, presented by Mr. Wyndham Lewis in his interesting book, *The Lion and the Fox*.²⁹

It seemed to Eliot that 'one of the chief reasons for questioning Mr. Strachey's Shakespeare, and Mr. Murry's, and Mr. Lewis's, is the remarkable resemblance which they bear to Mr. Strachey, and Mr. Murry, and Mr. Lewis respectively'. 'I have not a very clear idea of what Shakespeare was like', he claimed, 'but I do not conceive him as very like either Mr. Strachey, or Mr. Murry, or Mr. Wyndham Lewis, or myself'.³⁰

It would be proper to add Yeats's name to these Shakespeareans, and to say that Yeats's Shakespeare bears a resemblance, remarkable or not, to Yeats. Like Shakespeare, Yeats was born out of his time: unity of the creative act had to make up for an impossible Unity of Being:

I see in Shakespeare a man in whom human personality, hitherto restrained by its dependence on Christendom or by its own need for self-control, burst like a shell. Perhaps secular intellect, setting itself free after five hundred years of struggle has made him the greatest of dramatists, and yet because an *antithetical* art could create a hundred plays which preserved whether made by a hundred hands or by one—the unity of a painting or of a Temple pediment, we might, had the total works of Sophocles survived—they too born of a like struggle though with a different enemy—not think him greatest (*AVI* 9).

Yeats did not think of Shakespeare, as he thought of Blake and Shelley, as kin to himself; though he claimed that Shakespeare's imagination, like Blake's and his own, was Celtic and had the Celtic susceptibilities. He would not concede to Dowden that Shakespeare was a comfortable Tudor. The aspects of Shakespeare which I have called antinomian—Pater's word—were also aspects of Yeats when

²⁹ Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 126.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 126.

he thought of himself as by native genius outside the law. Yeats and his Shakespeare moved, like Pater's Marius, in the external world and among other people only as a kind of irony. For that reason, Shakespeare was to Yeats 'always a tragic comedian'.³¹ And for that reason, I think, *Hamlet* and *Richard II* touched him more acutely than the other plays, each of their heroes being, as he said of Hamlet, 'a soul jagged & broken away from the life of its world'.³²

³¹ 23 February, 1910 to JBY (*L* 549, *CL InteLex* 1308).

³² 25 October, 1909 to John Martin Harvey (University of Delaware), *CL InteLex* 1222, and quoted in *Life* 1, 413.

What Raftery Built

Joseph Hassett

FOR NEARLY HALF a century, readers of Allan Wade's edition of Yeats's *Letters* have thought of Thoor Ballylee as a structure that 'Raftery built and Scott designed'. 'Raftery' was Wade's transcription of the name of the builder in the early version of 'To Be Carved On A Stone At Thoor Ballylee' that Yeats sent to John Quinn on July 23, 1918. According to Wade, Yeats told Quinn that, '[o]n a great stone beside the front door will be inscribed these lines':

I, the poet, William Yeats,
With common sedge and broken slates
And smithy work from the Gort forge
Restored this tower for my wife George;
And on my heirs I lay a curse
If they should alter for the worse,
From fashion or an empty mind,
What Raftery built and Scott designed. (*L* 651; cf., *VP* 406)

Readers of Wade's *Letters* have thus associated the builder of Yeats's restored tower with Antoine Raftery, the nineteenth century poet whose lyrics in Irish were translated into English by both Douglas Hyde and Lady Gregory, and whose 'Mise Raifteri An File' was long a staple of the Irish school curriculum.¹

The association seems apt because the vitality of Raftery's lyrics in the memories of the people near Ballylee was part of the tower's initial attraction to Yeats. In 'Dust Hath Closed Helen's Eye', first published in the *Dome* in 1899, and later included in the revised edi-

¹ Scott was William A. Scott (1871-1918), a prominent architect and Professor of Architecture in the National University of Ireland.

tion of *The Celtic Twilight*, Yeats tells of having ‘been lately to a little group of houses, not many enough to be called a village, in the barony of Kiltartan’ named Ballylee, where he heard Raftery’s poem in praise of Mary Hynes from an old woman who remembered both Raftery and Mary Hynes (*Myth* 2005, 18). This link to the last of the great wandering bards so impressed itself on Yeats’s imagination that it was still vivid when he recounted it in his lecture to the Royal Academy of Sweden upon receiving the Nobel Prize (*Au* 561).

On that memorable early visit to Ballylee, the old miller expanded on the assertion in Raftery’s poem in praise of Mary Hynes that ‘there’s a strong cellar in Ballylee’. The miller at Ballylee explained that the cellar was a hole where the river that ran beside Ballylee Castle sank underground, whence it flowed until it emerged in Coole Lake. ‘Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931’ tells the story:

Under my window-ledge the waters race,
Otters below and moor-hens on the top,
Run for a mile undimmed in Heaven’s face
Then darkening through ‘dark’ Raftery’s ‘cellar’ drop,
Run underground, rise in a rocky place
In Coole demesne, and there to finish up
Spread to a lake and drop into a hole,
What’s water but the generated soul? (*VP* 490)

Despite the richness of these associations with Raftery the poet, an examination of Yeats’s manuscript letter in the New York Public Library reveals that the letter referred to Rafferty—not Raftery. In fact, the builder who restored Yeats’s tower was Michael Rafferty of nearby Glenbrack, whose extensive correspondence with both W. B. and George Yeats is preserved in the National Library of Ireland (NLI MS 30,663.)

Wade was not the first to confuse the two names. Indeed, the nineteenth century Galway historian, James Hardiman, referred to Raftery as Rafferty on one of the manuscripts he deposited in the collection of the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin.² Although the two names are ‘sometimes confused,’ Raftery is ‘quite a different name’

² Criostoir O’Flynn, *Blind Raftery* (Indreabhan: An Chead Chlo, 1998), 25–26.

from Rafferty in Irish.³ Given Raftery's allure for Yeats, it is not surprising that Yeats himself was susceptible to the tendency to confuse Raftery with Rafferty. In a series of five letters to Lady Gregory in 1917 and 1918 in which Michael Rafferty uncannily appears in the midst of Yeatsian emotional crises, Yeats mis-identified Rafferty as Raftery in four of the five letters. On 12 August 1917, for example, Yeats, writing to Lady Gregory from Maud Gonne's home in France, reports on the status of his extraordinary wooing of Iseult Gonne: 'Iseult and I are on our old intimate terms but I don't think she will accept. She "has not the impulse." Finding himself in this state of equilibrium, Yeats quickly concludes that '[w]hatever happens there will be no immediate need of money, so please see that Rafferty goes to work at Ballylee. I told him to put 'shop shutters' on cottage but now I do not want him to put any kind of shutter without Scott's directions'.⁴

Nine days later, Yeats reports to Lady Gregory from Paris: 'No change here' respecting Iseult, but this news is relegated to a position of secondary importance to thanks 'for Rafferty's estimate', and word that Yeats was deferring final decisions on 'doors, etc.' until he heard from Scott, and thus '[i]f Rafferty has got to wait he will have plenty to do on roof, walls, etc., so Scott's advice will not be late' (*L* 630; *CL InteLex* 3312). In three letters in mid-September, Yeats reports to Lady Gregory that Iseult has declined his offer of marriage, but that he has 'decided to be what some Indian calls 'true of voice' and go 'to Mrs. Tucker's in the country on Saturday or Monday at latest and I will ask her daughter [Georgie Hyde-Lees] to marry me" (*L* 633). It is no understatement for Yeats to say that 'life is a good deal at white heat' (*L* 632-33; *CL InteLex* 3325, 3322).

Nonetheless, Rafferty is not far from centre-stage. He reappears in Yeats's letter to Lady Gregory of 29 October, 1917, which

³ Edward MacLysaght, *Irish Families* (Dublin: Hodges Figgis & Co. Ltd., 1957), 252-53.

⁴ *L* 628; *CL InteLex* 3300. Rafferty's ensuing bill shows that, like many before and after him, Yeats paid a price for his change in building plans. Rafferty's bill showed that he had proposed to supply and fix four new frames for the shutters 'but Mr. Yeats considered it best to have designs from the architect which changed the design and price from six pounds to 24 pounds, five shillings' (NLI).

recounts the incredible early days of his marriage, during which the ‘great gloom’ occasioned by his belief that he had ‘betrayed three people’—presumably George, whom he married, and Maud and Iseult Gonine, whom he did not—was displaced by advice conveyed through George’s automatic writing, ‘something very like a miraculous intervention’. Miracle or no, however, before the letter closes, Yeats has time to inquire ‘is Raftery at work on Ballylee?—if he is I will write to Gogorty [sic] and ask him to stir up Scott’ (*L* 633–34; *CL InteLex* 3350).

On 4 January 1918 Yeats reported further on the miracle of George’s automatic writing, telling Lady Gregory that ‘a very profound, very exciting mystical philosophy . . . is coming in strange ways to George and myself’ (*L* 643; *CL InteLex* 3384). The mystical philosophy, however, is not discussed until Yeats has first made clear that ‘there are various things Raftery can do at Ballylee’.

Yeats had barely settled into marriage when he shared a new crisis with Lady Gregory. Her son Robert was killed in action over Italy on 23 January 1918. Yeats wrote Lady Gregory on 22 February 1918 that he was ‘trying to write something in verse about Robert’, then quickly returned to the living with the news that ‘Raftery gets on slowly but fairly steadily with his work at Ballylee, and has just written that the rats are eating the thatch’ (*L* 646–7; *CL InteLex* 3410). In this, the last of the series of five letters to Lady Gregory mentioning Michael Rafferty, Yeats nearly gets the spelling right, writing Raftery for Rafferty (Berg).

Like the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth*, which, according to De Quincey, reestablishes ‘the goings-on of the world in which we live,’⁵ Rafferty’s recurring presence in the midst of Yeatsian emotional turmoil seems to anchor the agitated poet to reality. Perhaps Yeats saw Rafferty as an anchor because of the builder’s association with the tower, which Yeats regarded as a “rooting of mythology in the earth” (*TSMC* 114). Whatever the cause, Rafferty’s extensive correspondence, written in exceptionally beautiful penmanship, shows that, in fact, he was a strong and steady presence—a worthy anchor to real-

⁵ Thomas De Quincey, ‘The Knocking on the Gate in Macbeth’ (*London Magazine*, October 1823) in Bonamy Dobrée, ed., *Thomas De Quincey* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1965), 83.

ity. For example, Rafferty's letter of 20 January [1918] to Mrs. Yeats with respect to his hauling stone and slates from the old mill at Kenischa—which sheds light on the source of the 'old mill boards' and 'sea-green slates' referred to in the final poem (*VP* 406)—shows Rafferty's practicality and reliability. He advises that he will defer hauling the stone for the present because 'I don't like to start drawing them until the days get longer,' explaining 'I don't wish to be paying horse hire if I can help it till we have a longer day.' In the same letter, he expresses his satisfaction at the Yeatses having heeded his earlier advice to have the buildings insured. Moreover, he goes on to advise them 'to insure two workmen which would be a safety in case of accident, as the Workmens Compensation Act enable a workman to sue for damages if hurt while working.'

Rafferty's good sense sufficiently impressed Lady Gregory that she had cited him the previous summer in support of her advice to Yeats that he defer making decisions about remodeling the cottage at Thoor Ballylee until he resolved which of three possible candidates might be his wife. With characteristic tact, Lady Gregory had suggested 'that, with the prospect of your marriage questions being settled within the next few months, it seems a pity not to consult your "comrade's" inclinations before finally plumping into expense on the cottage work.'⁶ Yeats's ensuing marriage to George Hyde-Lees in October 1917 had a practical effect on the working arrangements with Rafferty. Lady Gregory—who had saluted Yeats's wedding by observing that his 'going into good hands' was 'really an ease to my mind' because she had 'often felt remorseful at being able to do so little for you'⁷—reported to Yeats shortly after his wedding that she had paid 'Raftery' on his account and suggested that 'I think it would be better for you to make payment directly to Raftery—having Georgie to write & do accounts for you.'⁸ This suggestion, and the assurance that she and Margaret believed Raftery 'to be quite honest' (*id.*), set in motion the extensive correspondence between Rafferty and George Yeats respecting the work at Thoor Ballylee.

Yeats himself was not exempt from the need to focus on the

⁶ ALS from AG to WBY, 13 June [1917] (Berg).

⁷ ALS from AG to WBY, Sunday 14th [October 1917?] (Berg).

⁸ ALS from AG to WBY, 22 Nov. [1917] (Berg).

details of the work. For example, in a letter dated 15 November [19__], Rafferty sent Yeats a drawing of how he intended to use one of the two mill stones, and sought Yeats's views.

I have the millstone set in hearth as shown by design. I think if the other one was put exactly in centre of castle floor with hole at centre of room, it would look well. Kindly give me your view on the matter.

Rafferty concludes by reporting that he 'had two horses one day drawing stone from Kenischa Mill,' promising to 'write again before the end of the coming week and let you know how the work is getting on,' and expressing his hope to hear of Mrs. Yeats's 'complete recovery by next letter'. All in all, Rafferty measures up to the standard he set for himself in a 24 November [1918] letter to Yeats, in which he notes the reason for his delay, but 'hope[s] however to give you satisfaction if I can do it by hard work.'

Throughout the extensive correspondence, there is no hint of anything that would support Yeats's comment, in his letter to Quinn, that Rafferty was 'a morbid man who cries when anything goes wrong.'⁹ To the contrary, Yeats's letter to George on 1 May, 1923 shows that Rafferty's wit soothed the agitated Yeats by explaining that an intruder at the vacant Thoor Ballylee was probably 'somebody who wants a job as caretaker.'¹⁰ Moreover, Rafferty's side of the correspondence shows a steady temper in the midst of an apparent dispute over the cost of the work. He advises that the high price of labour and materials is beyond his control, offers to work at a fixed price if the Yeatses supply the material, and establishes the upper hand in the negotiation by suggesting that Yeats might want to get 'prices from other builders for the work'.¹¹

Rafferty retained Yeats as a client, but lost his place in the final text of the poem. He survived, with his name spelled correctly,

⁹ L 651; CL *InteLex* 34650. Wade transcribes the portion of the letter identifying Rafferty as "the local builder" but omits, with an ellipsis, the comment quoted in the text. Wade also omits—apparently inadvertently, and without ellipsis—Yeats's comment on James Joyce that "I think him a most remarkable man."

¹⁰ ALS from WBY to GY, 11 May 1 [1924] (CL *InteLex* 4539). This and two other letters from WBY to GY refer to Rafferty as Raftery (CL *InteLex* 4517, 4539). Others spell his name correctly.

¹¹ ALS from Michael Rafferty to GY, n.d. (NLI).

through various drafts of the poem, only to be excised from the final draft and the text of the poem as eventually printed in *Michael Robartes And The Dancer*. One of the drafts, preserved inside the plastic cover of a Cuala Press volume in the possession of Michael Yeats,¹² differs significantly from the final poem in that it speaks of a joint restoration of the tower by ‘William Yeats & his wife George.’ Although true to the facts that Mrs. Yeats paid for the work of restoration (see L 647; CL InteLex 3410, and her cheques in the NLI) and engaged in much of the correspondence with Rafferty respecting the particulars of the work, this draft lacks the dramatic effect of the direct, first person assertion by Yeats in the final poem:

William Yeats & his wife George
 With smithy work from the Gort forge
 And wood from Coole & good brown sedge
 Restored this Tower. They call a curse
 On him who alters for the worst [alt worse]
 From fashion or a vulgar mind
 What Rafferty built & Scott designed.

The ‘joint restoration’ version also differs from the poem as sent to John Quinn in that it speculates about a generalized ‘him’ who might alter the tower for the worse, whereas the version sent to Quinn specifically contemplates that it might be ‘my heirs’ who would ‘alter for the worse.’¹³ Both Rafferty and the heirs appear in a handwritten text by a writer (other than Yeats) who counted the number of letters in each line, apparently with a view toward the carving of the lines on a stone.¹⁴ Perhaps driven by a need to shorten the poem to an appropriate size for carving on stone, Yeats’s final version omits any reference to the possibility of alteration of the tower, and focuses—more cleanly and simply—on the wish that ‘these characters remain |When all is ruin once again.’ (VP 406; Plate 7). The focus on the persistence of ‘these characters’ after the

¹² Thomas Parkinson and Anne Brannen, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer Manuscript Materials* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), xiii; 200, hereafter Parkinson.

¹³ The early draft also identifies “wood from Coole” and “good brown sedge” as ingredients in the restoration, rather than the “old mill boards and sea-green slates” of the final poem.

¹⁴ Parkinson, 198.

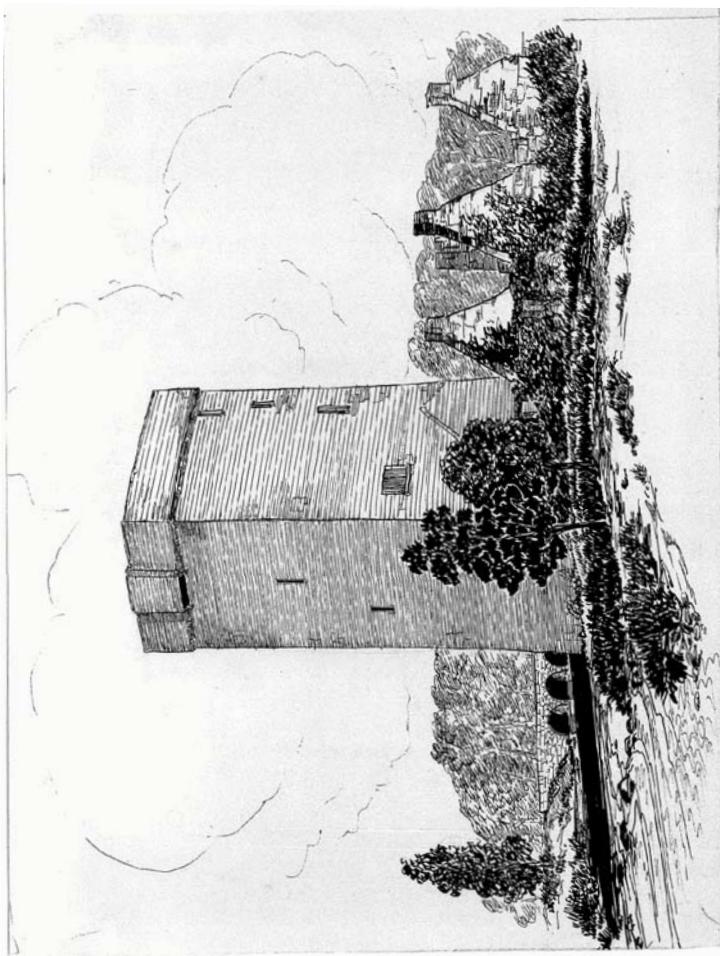


Plate 7. Thoer Ballylee, a pen and ink drawing by A. Norman Jeffares, 17 x 22.5 cm, private collection. This drawing was the basis of a chapter tailpiece vignette in *W. B. Yeats: Man and Poet* (London: Routledge, 1949).

inevitable ruin of the tower made for a better poem, but had the effect of excising both Rafferty and Scott from the text.

Rafferty does not reappear in the Yeats letters published by Wade. He does appear in nine additional letters contained in the Berg Collection, with his name spelled Raftery six times, Raferty four times and Rafferty three times. 'Raftery' makes a dramatic appearance in Lady Gregory's published journals, where she reports on 26 October 1922 that he 'had been shot in the shoulder' by one of two men whom he had knocked to the ground when he discovered them cutting 'four trees in the field just sold to Raftery, but that they thought was still ours.' A subsequent journal entry relates that 'Raftery . . . asked me to write a letter about his purchase of the field.'¹⁵ Interestingly, when Lady Gregory set out to write a formal letter with legal significance, she correctly identified her neighbour as Michael Rafferty.¹⁶ Rafferty quickly recovered. Lady Gregory's journal for 3 December recounts that:

Rafferty *walked* here this evening from his house. He had got leave to come back with his wife for Sunday, but has to go back tomorrow. He was afraid his youngest child would have forgotten him, but she held out her hands to him when he went in at the door and he is very happy. (*Journals* 419)

As fate would have it, Rafferty was drawn back to the stage of Yeats's published writings at another emotional juncture in Yeats's life—Lady Gregory's death in 1932. The occasion had a profound impact on Yeats. When Lady Gregory had had a near brush with death in 1909, Yeats told his journal that 'all day, the thought of losing her is like a conflagration in the rafters. Friendship is all the house I have.' (*Mem* 161) Yeats clearly saw the day of her death as a signal event, and wrote an essay on 'The Death of Lady Gregory' in which he recounted in careful detail all the events surrounding the death of the woman who had been so dominant a presence in his life.¹⁷ Once again, anchoring Yeats to the world of the living, there appeared at Coole, on the morning after Augusta Gregory's death,

¹⁵ Daniel J. Murphy, ed., *Lady Gregory's Journals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), I, 405, 418.

¹⁶ ALS from Lady Gregory to Michael Rafferty, 2 December, 1922 (Berg).

¹⁷ W. B. Yeats, 'The Death of Lady Gregory,' in *Lady Gregory's Journals*, II, 633.

her friend and neighbour, the builder of Thoor Ballylee, Michael Rafferty. Spelling his name ‘Raferty,’ and identifying him as ‘the builder & working mason—it was he who repaired Ballylee Castle for me,’ Yeats recounts how he, Rafferty and sculptor Albert Power paid their respects by ‘look[ing] at Lady Gregory’ and going round ‘the principal rooms.’¹⁸

An era had ended. Yeats’s relationship to the vicinity of Coole was severed. Michael Rafferty died in 1933 and is buried in the hauntingly beautiful cemetery at Kilmacduagh in the shadow, as fate would have it, of another tower, the round tower that Robinson Jeffers called ‘the great cyclopean-stoned spire | That leans toward its fall.’¹⁹ While peripatetic Yeats’s final resting place is uncertain, steady Michael Rafferty, anchor to reality, rests firmly in the earth near the two towers that defined his neighbourhood.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 635. The text refers to “Arther Power the sculptor,” but Albert Power, who sculpted a bust of Yeats (see L 627; *CL InteLex* 3284), is apparently intended.

¹⁹ Robinson Jeffers, ‘Delusion of Saints,’ in Jeffers, *Descent to the Dead* (New York: Random House, 1931), 19.

Portrait of George Yeats

Ann Saddlemeyer

It was in the early 1960s that Derry Jeffares and I first met, over coffee at Bewley's. The invitation came from him, who had heard of me from our mutual benefactor George Yeats. It cannot have been an easy encounter for either of us—a young scholar just embarking on my study of Synge's manuscripts, I still felt an interloper in the field of Irish studies: a Dubliner by birth and a Trinity graduate, he moved about the city and through the minutiae of Yeatsiana with comfortable insouciance. It was only when I later reported our meeting to George (still 'Mrs Yeats' to me despite her kindnesses) that she suggested Derry's sudden bursts of laughter were partially an attempt to overcome his own shyness. Perhaps to cement our relationship, she encouraged me to accompany Anne to hear Derry speak at the High School, then still at Harcourt Street where Yeats attended it, during the 1965 centenary celebrations.

George Yeats also commented on Derry's loyalty, a quality I quickly learned to value as our acquaintance grew into a friendship that, naturally, included his wife, Jeanne. By the end of that decade we were both involved in the construction of the International Association for the Study of Irish Literature, one of many projects he initiated to encourage the collaboration of scholars (and which he manoevered to have me elected an early chair). During the next decades we met frequently at Sligo and wherever Irish studies took us—Galway, Lille, Wuppertal, Graz, Monaco, Cork; on my first trip to Japan, Derry was there to greet me. We were both founding directors of Colin Smythe's remarkable publishing house, and he encouraged me to make the move across Canada to Toronto.

Throughout, Derry continued to play the dual roles of supportive mentor as well as friend. When we appeared together at the Synge centenary in 1971, the audience may have thought we were earnestly discussing arcane scholarly matters, but Derry captured the moment to persuade me that I must buy his late mother's Wicklow retreat—Glanmore Cottage in the centre of Synge country.¹ And of course he was right. As the years passed and other responsibilities made meetings less frequent, innumerable blue handwritten airmail letters would arrive with generous offers of advice and assistance, enlivened by descriptions of another energetic life filled with the joy of building walls, restoring roofs, and sharing Jeanne's love of animals.

But through more than forty years of collegiality, neither of us knew that, hidden away in a golden chest, was an image of the woman who had been responsible for our friendship. Nor would she have ever mentioned it. Probably only a month or two after her marriage in October 1917, a portrait of George Yeats had been painted by her husband's lifelong friend Edmund Dulac. Exhibited three years later at the Leicester Galleries, it was then presented to the Yeatses by the artist as a belated wedding gift, and has remained in the family ever since, revealed by accident when her children generously allowed me to rifle through their archives and possessions (Plate 8).

Marking as it does the transformation of Georgie Hyde Lees to George Yeats, this semi-fictional portrait tells us much not only of that auspicious period in her life but of George and Willy's consuming interests during the first years of their marriage.² Wearing a loose gown bordered with the endless knot, reminiscent of both the Celtic twilight and a medieval princess, around her neck a mandala pendant, and delicately holding a bunch of primulas, George is surrounded by imagery familiar to all readers of the poet—dark mysterious trees with glowing trunks, distant waters, and, prancing across the rocks towards her, a white unicorn.

¹ Now Seamus Heaney's 'place of writing': see above 11-14.

² Much of what follows was first presented as part of 'Seeking George—the Story of Mrs W. B. Yeats', a lecture to the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 7 October, 2002.



Plate 8. 'Mrs W. B. Yeats', by Edmund Dulac, exhibited at the Leicester Galleries, London, in June 1920, in the possession of the Yeats family, photograph by Nicola Gordon Bowe. All Dulac images © Marcia Geraldine Anderson, courtesy Hodder and Stoughton Ltd. All rights reserved.

DISCOVERIES; A VOLUME OF ESSAYS
BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS.



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Plate 9. Robert Gregory's design of the 'Charging Unicorn' first used on the title-page of *Discoveries* (1907). Private Collection.

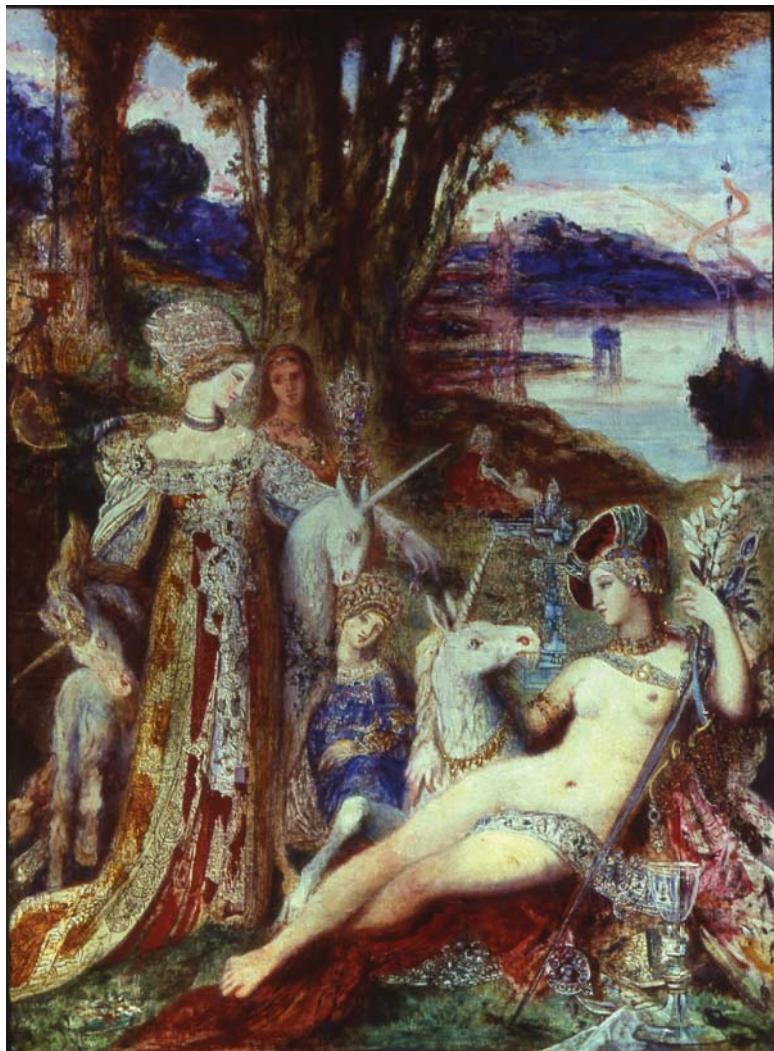
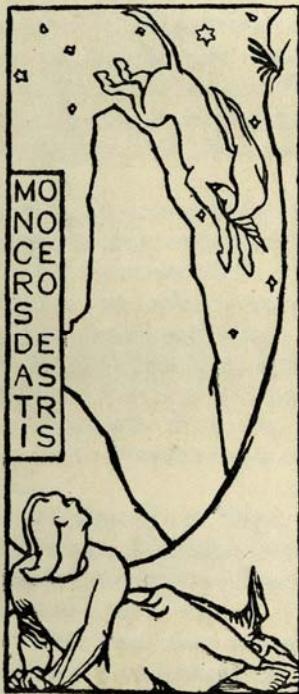


Plate 10. Gustave Moreau, 'Les Licornes' (c. 1885), in the Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris, and based on the 15th century tapestries then recently acquired by the Musée de Cluny, Paris (see Plate 12).
Photographer unknown.

REVERIES OVER CHILDHOOD AND
YOUTH BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS



THE CUALA PRESS
CHURCHTOWN
DUNDRUM
MCMXV

Plate 11. *Monoceros de Astris* by Thomas Sturge Moore, title-page
of *Reveries Over Childhood and Youth* (1915).
Private Collection.



Plate 12. Bookplate for George Yeats by Thomas Sturge Moore,
showing a round tower struck by lightning, releasing a white uni-
corn, Senate House Library, University of London.

The unicorn is second only to the young woman in the painting. This fabulous beast, familiar in heraldry, is also one of Yeats's most recognizable symbols. *The Unicorn from the Stars*, a three-act play written in 1907 in collaboration with Lady Gregory, has as hero a young visionary who awakens from a trance claiming to have ridden a white unicorn and eventually concludes that 'Where There is Nothing, There is God', itself the title of an earlier story by Yeats about the miraculous transmission of knowledge.³ As Ronald Schuchard reminds us (see pp. 140-41 below), Robert Gregory's design of the 'Charging Unicorn' (Plate 9), first appeared on the title-page of *Discoveries* (1907), and in Paris the following year Yeats had admired Gustave Moreau's 'Les Licornes' (Plate 10). Sturge Moore's leaping unicorn, *Monoceros de Astris* (Plate 11) had been commissioned for the title-page of *Reveries Over Childhood and Youth* (1915) and a further commission for George's bookplate featuring a unicorn leaping from a tower (Plate 12). Yeats admitted to his sister Lolly that the unicorn was symbolic of the soul in his 'mystical order': 'Monoceris de Astris' was in fact the emblematic name of the third grade of the occult Order of the Golden Dawn to which he and his young wife both belonged.⁴ The unicorn appears again in a much-worked-over comedy by Yeats, assisted by Ezra Pound, which received its first production in London early in 1919. In that play, *The Player Queen*, the poet Septimus drunkenly proclaims the chaste, noble and religious unicorn 'the new Adam', who will inaugurate a new era, for 'man is nothing till he is united to an image' (*VPI* 749).

The medieval suggestions in the painting are also, however, reminiscent of two sets of fifteenth-century Flemish tapestries depicting the hunt and pacification, in a secluded garden, of the fierce and free creature by a virgin. The so-called 'Red Series', now in Paris and known as the *Five Senses*, is dominated by the Unicorn in an attitude of devotion and intimacy, who with the lady is placed on a little dark blue island studded with flowers. In the panel celebrating 'Sight', that sense according to Plato's *Timaeus* that leads to spiritual knowl-

³ M2005 122-5, 328 n 1 & 330 n. 8.

⁴ CL InteLex 3787 [? September 1920]: see also M2005 424-25 n. 13.

⁵ *Timaeus* 47a-c, 90d.

edge,⁵ the lady is dressed in a costume similar to George Yeats's; the gentle unicorn, entranced, stares into her eyes, resting its forepaws on her lap (Plate 13). So enchanted by this particular tapestry was Rainer Maria Rilke, that he made it the subject of one of his Sonnets to Orpheus, written a few years after Dulac's portrait of George: As J. B. Leishman translates:

This is the creature there has never been.
They never knew it, and yet, none the less,
they loved the way it moved, its suppleness,
its neck, its very gaze, mild and serene.⁶

A second series of tapestries can be dated to the same period; known as 'the Blue Series' and now in the Cloisters Collection in New York, the seven panels also depict *The Hunt of the Unicorn*. Traditionally both these series of tapestries have been read in religious terms, with the unicorn representing Christ, 'symbolic of chastity and also an emblem of the sword or of the word of God',⁷ the virgin his mother. It was Tertullian who was one of the first commentators to insist that the Unicorn signified Christ; in Yeats's late play *Purgatory* the murderous Old Man seeks to unravel a philosophical problem by calling out, 'Go fetch Tertullian'.⁸

Inevitably the image of unicorn in the lap of the virgin came to represent the Annunciation, though some artists, notably da Vinci and Dürer, eschewed the theological interpretation. They have also been interpreted as celebrations of marriage between noble families. In Dulac's painting of Yeats's young wife, however, there is no Christian imagery, no sacred hunt, nor are George and the unicorn within a walled enclosure teeming with flowers and fountain. But the intention is unmistakeable—like the early tapestries, this is an epithalamium celebrating the wedding of the artist's friends (and to a slight extent, patrons). As is evident in Dulac's written dedication

⁶ See Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, trans. J. B. Leishman (London: Hogarth Press, 1936; 2nd ed., 1946), 95.

⁷ J. E. Cirlot, trans. Jack Sage, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 357.

⁸ *VPI* 1046. Tertullian (*ca.* 160-120 AD), coined the term 'the Trinity' and saw the unicorn as a symbol of Christ. *The Five Books of Quintus Sept. Flor. Tertullianus Against Macrin* identifies the stake if the Cross with the unicorn.



Plate 13. Red tapestry, 'La dame à la licorne', 15th century, Musée de Cluny, Paris. Photographer unknown, Public Domain.



Plate 14. 'Deer and Unicorn' wood-cut from *The Book of Lambspring*, reproduced in A. E. Waite's *The Hermetic Museum, Restored and Enlarged* (London: James Elliott & Co., 1893).

'To Mr and Mrs W B Yeats from their friend Edmund Dulac', the painting is literally a wedding gift to the couple, in recognition of the propitiousness of the marriage. It also acknowledges the dual power of their collaboration: in the *Book of Lambspring*, a rare Hermetic tract which the studious Yeatses certainly knew, an engraving depicts a deer and a unicorn standing together in a forest (Plate 14):

The Sages say truly
 That two animals are in this forest:
 One glorious, beautiful, and swift
 A great and strong deer;
 The other an unicorn. . . .
 If we apply the parable to our Art,
 We shall call the forest the Body. . . .
 The Unicorn will be the spirit at all times.
 The deer desires no other name
 But that of the Soul. . . .
 He that knows how to tame and master them by Art,
 To couple them together,
 And to lead them in and out of the forest,
 May justly be called a Master.⁹

Lest we have any further doubt as to the intention of Dulac's unicorn, however, the animal has a forelock strongly reminiscent of the independent black lock of hair that romantically falls from Yeats's forehead in most portraits. Nor should we overlook the fact that the horn-power is an expression of fruitfulness—there is acknowledgement here of the rightness of the marriage the painting celebrates, and promise of the family Yeats longed for (see, e.g., *VP* 403-06).

But the portrait is laden with even greater personal references. Dulac's unicorn prances (a favourite word of George's that eventually finds its way into Yeats's poetry) towards her across a field of black-green trees with shining trunks. In the Kabbalah and Pico della Mirandola's commentary, about which George had made copious notes during her early studies, the Tree of Life is a central image; the Kabbalah was also compulsory reading for the syncretist doctrine

⁹ See Plate 14 and *The Hermetic Museum Restored and Enlarged*, pref. A. E. Waite (London: James Elliott & Co., 1893), I, 280, and Giorgio Melchiori, *The Whole Mystery of Art* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 35-72 at 48-49.

of the Golden Dawn, and the Tree of Life, not surprisingly, is prominent in Yeats's early poetry. Druidic colleges were founded in woods or groves. In Chinese cultural tradition (about which Dulac knew a great deal) the unicorn, called Ch'i-Lin, is a heavenly creature that stands for the fourth element, the fertile earth; its five sacred colours are black, white, red, blue, yellow (reflected in the painting of George); and it has prophetic gifts.¹⁰

But the unicorn was also one of the animal symbols dominating the art of alchemy, again a subject familiar to occult societies; for the 13th century scholar and alchemist Albertus Magnus, it was the force driving Adam out of Eden and causing the Flood. Aristotle seems to have accepted the unicorn as a reality, as did his student Alexander the Great, the natural historian Pliny, and the Abbess Hildegard of Bingen (who emphasized the animal's healing properties and the relationship between the hot Unicorn—the Sun—and the cool maiden—the Moon, astrological symbols especially significant to the Yeatses). Belief in the existence of the unicorn—or at least the power of its horn—would persist from Julius Caesar and Marco Polo down to 19th century reports from Africa by David Livingstone and Francis Galton. It reappears in Winwood Reade's *The Martyrdom of Man* of 1862. George Yeats's copy, given to her in August 1924 by Reade's great-nephew Herbert V. Reade, an old family friend, is still in the Yeats Collection (YL 1730).

The young Mrs Yeats would have recognized all these symbols, for not only was she an artist herself, having studied at the same London art school attended by her father-in-law, but long before she married she was a serious student of Neoplatonism and medieval symbolism.¹¹ She had a strong command of medieval Latin (encouraged by her studies of Pico della Mirandola), and was at the same time reading extensively in contemporary literature—in five languages. Yeats respected her knowledge and wisdom; he would always consider her and Pound the touchstones of a younger critical generation. In addition she was a keen practising astrologer, and probably

¹⁰ Lise Gotfredsen, *The Unicorn* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1999), 12-13.

¹¹ A full discussion of George Yeats's studies and her personality can be found in my biography *Becoming George: The Life of Mrs W. B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); hereafter cited as *BG*.

more accurate than Yeats, who consulted her about his own charts. She also, like him, attended séances. They began to run into each other at the same séances: at one famous medium's sittings Yeats was expelled for being too critical; George later recalled with some satisfaction that he was furious when he later learned she had been allowed to remain in the circle. As soon as she reached the requisite age of eighteen she applied to the British Museum for a reader's ticket, stating her ambition to read 'all available literature on the religious history of the first 3 centuries AD'. Her favourite author seems to have been the psychologist William James, whom she considered a much better writer than his brother Henry. But her reading ranged through explorations of hermeticism, the Kabbalah, alchemy, astrology, ritual magic, and even Quietism; she polished up her medieval Latin with seventeenth-century works on magic, had her own copy of Hermes Trismegistus (in Italian), and after attending lectures by the theosophist George Mead, advanced to the works of Plotinus, Plato, and Iamblichus. At the same time she was studying other philosophers both medieval and modern, including *De Occulta Philosophia* by the sixteenth-century German astrologer and magician Cornelius Agrippa, and the works of Hegel and Benedetto Croce. Finally, when she turned twenty-one, Yeats sponsored her membership in the Order of the Golden Dawn. A 'quick study', she rapidly moved up the ranks of the occult society—similar in its hierarchical pattern to the Masonic Order, although far more generous to women—and by 1917 she was inducted into the inner order, and, like Yeats, lectured to neophytes. It had taken her less than three years to accomplish what had taken him twenty-two; when both left the Order they were only one grade apart.

Like the unicorn, George was naturally shy, private and dignified. She did not suffer fools gladly, was easily bored and hated 'small talk'; she 'hunger[ed]', as she put it, 'for a mind that has "bite"'.¹² But at the same time she was extremely sensitive to others and when relaxed a superb story-teller (often telling different versions depending upon her audience). However, her personal privacy was uppermost. While conscientiously preserving all the materials relating to

¹² W. B. Yeats and George Yeats, *The Letters*, ed. Ann Saddlemeyer, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 51.

her husband's life and work, she deliberately erased her own. Only age 46 when Yeats died in 1939, she controlled the papers for the next thirty years, deciding what would be released, what would not, destroying many of her own papers in the process. Cunningly she covered her own tracks, saying little or nothing about her place of birth, education, early life, father, brother, distinguished ancestry (on her mother's side she was descended from Baron Lord Erskine, briefly Lord High Chancellor of England, friend of Johnson, Burns, Sheridan, Fox, and—until he rashly pleaded on behalf of Queen Caroline—George IV).

She was equally subversive with her own voice—not only with the well-known example of her automatic writing, but with editorial and design matters, and her frequent criticism of Yeats's work. Even while building what the family referred to as the 'Yeats Industry' she tended to invoke and then hide behind what she claimed were the strictures of her late husband, brother-in-law, even (to his later astonishment) her teen-aged son. Perhaps her natural reserve was so strong she could not bear any public scrutiny; perhaps she was even more adept than her husband at creating a private mask, for by re-creating herself as George she proved a master of self-construction, a name change emphatically not WB's doing. Although he encouraged the alteration in name, she had experimented with 'George' several years before her marriage; Ezra Pound, who married her step-cousin and best friend Dorothy Shakespear, may have been the first to call her that.¹³

Again, the portrait offers still more revealing details. The primulas or primrose she delicately holds are the first flowers to lead the parade of spring blooms. The endless knot of the mandala around her neck is reflected in the mystery of the primula's five petals, which represent woman in birth, initiation, consummation, repose, and death. The lady in the tapestries is sometimes identified with love,

¹³ Although they had doubtless seen each other at the theatre and various social gatherings in London before then, it seems that George and WBY were formally introduced in May 1911 by Olivia Shakespear, whose brother had married George's mother, Mrs Ellen ('Nelly') Hyde Lees. Olivia Shakespear was therefore Georgie Hyde Lees's aunt by marriage and it was she who encouraged the Yeatses' union.

death, and rebirth, that is, the Triple Goddess. The Germanic earth goddess Bertha (or Hertha) was said to entice children into her enchanted halls by offering them beautiful primroses: few know that George was christened Bertha Georgie Hyde Lees (not Georgina, a scholarly invention).

There is a calmness and composure to the figure in the painting that contrasts strongly with the unicorn, caught in a state of immobility like a momentarily stilled rocking horse. As in photographs of the period the mouth though generous is firm, with just the possibility of a smile, and the painting reveals her beautiful glossy auburn hair, though not her high colouring (too high, some thought). But it is the eyes that catch and hold, in a penetrating gaze that looks into one's very soul—as they seemed to do in life. So striking were those eyes that, although her artist daughter and I both remember them as hazel in colour, even George's observant sisters-in-law thought them 'rather remarkable eyes of green-blue' as Dulac has also painted them; they are later variously described as 'really beautiful', 'piercing', 'sparkling', 'bright and darting', 'twinkling', 'glinting', 'scrutinizing', 'glittering', even 'terrifying'. Louis LeBrock had only seen one other pair with the same intensity—Pablo Picasso's. Although in the portrait it is white, the unicorn was traditionally described as having a red head and blue eyes, like George's in the painting; here her eyes, like those of the animal behind her, are fixed on another world.¹⁴ One might almost say that George is in a trance. And well she may be, for the primrose plant is a sedative.

Dulac, immersed in the occult and astrology, was the first to be told the story of George's automatic writing. Yeats's description of what happened on their honeymoon, when both were unhappy, is a

¹⁴ BG 34. For George Yeats's accounts see *CL InteLex* 3350, WBY to Lady Gregory, [29 Oct., 1917] and Virginia Moore, *The Unicorn: William Butler Yeats' Search for Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 253. Many others would, claiming that George is recalling her husband's research and previously published beliefs. I am sure the Yeateses would have delighted in the fact that the hippocampus—the portion of the cerebral cortex which controls the record of the stream of consciousness—is named after its resemblance to the seahorse, the legendary beast that drew Neptune's chariot. In their personal horoscopes 'that intreaguer Neptune' threatened to prevent their marriage and was always to be reckoned with. See also Cirlot, *ibid.*

familiar one: announcing that she felt ‘she had lived through this before’ and was impelled to write, while talking to him all the while (a favoured device among automatists so that the hand may remain independent of the conscious will), George put pencil to paper; ‘to her utter amazement’, Yeats said, ‘her hand acted as if “seized by a superior power”’. The loosely held pencil scribbled out fragments of sentences on a subject of which she was ignorant’. For some time Yeats’s fellow experimenter with mediums, Dulac could not doubt their story.¹⁵

Yet one more powerful image commands attention in the portrait; Thoor Ballylee is now inextricably entwined with our knowledge of the later poetry. Although Yeats had purchased the tower two years before his marriage, and proudly exhibited the photograph of its ruined but romantic state to a number of prospective brides, it was not until some months after their visit to the Dulacs that the new Mrs Yeats saw—and claimed—Ballylee. For George created more than a mystical marriage; she also designed an environment conducive to poetry. Each time they moved (and that was frequently during their lives together), it was George who made a physical world in which Willy could relax and write; she always decorated and painted his study and bedroom herself. Indeed, Thoor Ballylee was in many ways more hers than his; it was she who worked with the architect and builders, she who painted the ornate wooden ceiling of their bedroom with its symbolic Golden Dawn colours, she who ensured that where the poet worked was a continual and refreshing delight.

Again this was a natural extension of the Automatic Script, which devoted considerable time to the relationship between the spiritual and the material world, inner and outer nature, process and concept. The Communicators of the Automatic Script described Thoor Ballylee as a symbol ‘only in . . . abundant flowing life’ and warned ‘The tower is incomplete | Nothing it is not you alone but both’ (*YVP 1*, 394, 399). Willy might announce to the world that he had restored a tower for his wife George; but it was she who again and again re-created the appropriate milieu, as we know from WB’s delighted commentary in his letters. All the essential attributes of a family man’s happier dreams were prescribed by the Automatic

Script and produced by George.

All his happier dreams came true—
 A small old house, wife, daughter, son,
 Grounds where plums and cabbage grew,
 Poets and Wits about him drew . . . (VP 577)

That Edmund Dulac, one of Yeats's most trusted friends, should be informed of the Yeatses' occult experiments was only natural. They had certainly met by 1912. Shortly after the purchase of Ballylee he offered to go over to Ireland and design the renovations; later he instructed them as to what carpets to buy for Merrion Square. It is likely that George herself first encountered Dulac at one of Yeats's Monday evenings where she was brought by Ezra and Dorothy; or, through Pound, during the preparations for the April 1916 production of the first play modelled after the Japanese Noh, *At the Hawk's Well*, for which Dulac had been chief musician and designer. Yeats never forgot his mask for Cuchulain, a 'noble, half-Greek, half-Asiatic face, [which] will appear perhaps like an image seen in reverie by some Orphic worshipper' (E&I 221) Dulac's own image was that of centaur, the subject for which he designed a bedspread for Lily Yeats's Cuala embroideries section. A man of astounding versatility and zest (he died at 71 after a strenuous evening of flamenco dancing), French by birth though by now a confirmed Anglophil, Dulac understood Arabic and Chinese, was an authority on carpets and furniture which he also designed, illustrated books (including three of Yeats's), composed and directed the music to some of Yeats's later poems, wrote parodies and poetry himself, was a successful designer of the ballet, posters, stamps (including the coronation series for Elizabeth II), bank notes, tapestries, and drew caricatures as well as portraits (see Plate 15).

Like the early Yeats, Dulac in his work had strong connections with Pre-Raphaelitism and Orientalism as reflected in the peacock gowns, mysterious caves and palaces, ghostly fingered trees, lustrous greens and smoky oranges, brilliant blues (so well-known that they gave rise to the punning label *bleu du lac*). His portrait of George is strongly reminiscent of those of Laurence Housman (whom Georgie had known since childhood) in his *Stories from the Arabian Nights*

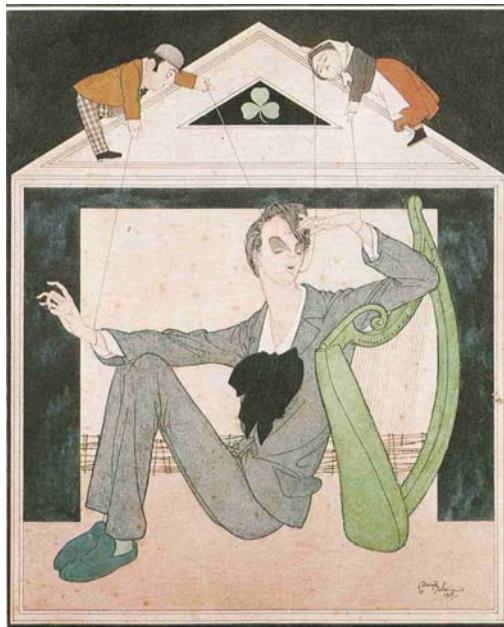


Plate 15. Edmund Dulac's pastel caricature of Yeats, 1915, Abbey Theatre, Dublin, photographer unknown.

(1907) which had first catapulted him to fame as a major illustrator.¹⁵ It was, in fact, in search of the significance of a golden chest in the Yeats household, that I first came upon his painting.

The legend of Sinbad the Sailor would feature in Yeats's courtship of George; one of his first letters to his fiancée from Coole, where he had fled for Lady Gregory's support of their marriage, concludes, 'Am I not Sinbad thrown upon the rocks & weary of the seas? I will live for my work & your happiness & when we are dead our names shall be remembered—perhaps we shall become a part of the strange legendary life of this country.'¹⁶ It was later emphasized in the poetry he wrote to and of his very own Sibyl/Scheherezade, and that other resourceful lady, Sheba. 'Solomon to Sheba', written in 1918 for and about George and their joint project, has all the gaiety and frankness of marital affection. The dialogue between two people equally matched in both wit and passion concludes

Said Solomon to Sheba,
And kissed her Arab eyes,
'There's not a man or woman
Born under the skies
Dare match in learning with us two,
And all day long we have found
There's not a thing but love can make
The world a narrow pound. (*VP* 333)

The dialogue continues in 'Solomon and the Witch', written the same year.

On their first visit to the Dulacs after their marriage, the Yeatses also commissioned a ring, probably George's wedding gift to her husband. The symbolism of the finished project was dictated by the automatic script, and was remarkably perceptive concerning their relationship and personalities. The passage reads:

Yeats: 'Why were we two chosen for each other'
Instructor: 'one needs material protection the other emotional protection—
The Eagle & the Butterfly' (*YVP* 1 109-10; *YVP* 3 400, S44).

¹⁵ An early letter from Housman thanks Georgie for praising his fairy stories (*BG* 20).

¹⁶ *CL InteLex* 3337, 7 October [1917].

Inside the ring were incised their signs, Venus and Saturn, again explained by the Instructors: ‘her [Venus] parallel [Sun]—your [Saturn] on her [Sun]’; love lightening wisdom’s seriousness, wisdom in turn steadyng beauty (*YVP* 2 451; *BG* 122 & 698 n. 107). Yeats informed Dulac, ‘I shall have an explanation for the ring ready always, for I have written a poem to explain it.’¹⁷ Within months of the portrait, he had written the lines sung by the beggar in ‘Tom O’Roughley’ which he would favour when inscribing his books: ‘And wisdom is a butterfly | And not a gloomy bird of prey’ (*VP* 338). The emblem remained significant, as did George’s role. He wore the ring for the rest of his life, removed only during some of their trance sessions and finally by George on his deathbed.

Edmund Dulac remained a friend and sometimes co-conspirator for the rest of Yeats’s life, and valued by George for the care he took of the poet. During his later years when making his escapes from Ireland, Yeats dined regularly with Dulac and Helen Beauclerk, who in turn supported his amorous exploits. The friendship was not always harmonious, and they argued violently over the speaking of poetry and choice of musicians; Dulac refused to compose the music for *A Full Moon in March*, considering it ‘too realistic and bloody’, as Yeats told George (*CL InteLex* 6149, 16 December, 1934). Once during one of these quarrels over music Yeats quoted a letter from George, adding with rueful knowledge of his wife’s independent and courageously critical spirit, ‘You can be certain she means what she says’ (*Ibid.*, 7004, [?8 July, 1937]). Indeed a later episode over Yeats’s reinterment caused considerable difficulty for George, when without permission Dulac interfered with her plans, designing and erecting a tombstone in Roquebrune without her permission. But it too survives, one more monument to a generous friendship.

Perhaps we should not be too surprised that ‘A Prayer on going into my House’ refers to a dream that ‘Sinbad the sailor’s brought a painted chest, | Or image, from beyond the Loadstone Mountain’ (*VP* 371); or even that Dulac’s portrait of George should be stored for close to 70 years in an elaborately decorated chest.²⁰

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3411, 27 February, 1918.

¹⁸ To be distinguished from the ‘gilded Moorish wedding-chest’ of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (*Myth* 366).

The Tower: Yeats's Anti-Modernist Monument

Ronald Schuchard

WHEN THE YEAR of the Big Wind of Modernism brought the publication of Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922, Yeats had only begun to lay the foundation of his own poetic monument, *The Tower* (1928), quietly and modestly publishing in that year a small Cuala Press volume entitled *Seven Poems and a Fragment* and a privately printed edition of *The Trembling of the Veil*, a chapter of his autobiography. It had been five years since he purchased Thoor Ballylee, married Georgie Hyde-Lees, and began the automatic writing with her. Out of the public eye at the tower, working on a vision of historical cycles, disturbed by the Irish civil war, the father of two small children, he was nonetheless strongly aware of what these two authors had achieved. 'I am reading the new Joyce', he wrote to Olivia Shakespear—'I hate it when I dip here & there but when I read it in the right order I am much impressed . . . It has our Irish cruelty & also our kind of strength & the Martello Tower pages are full of beauty' (*CL InteLex* 4085, 8 March [?1922]; *L* 679). Yeats had actually started reading *Ulysses* two years earlier when it was serialized in the *Little Review*, writing to John Quinn both about Joyce and the restoration of Thoor Ballylee, which he described as 'a setting for my old age, a place to influence lawless youth . . . If I had this tower when Joyce began I might have been of use, have got him to meet those who might have helped him'. If Yeats had not made an occultist out of Joyce, he was nonetheless intrigued by the new novel—'an entirely new thing', he wrote, 'neither what the eye sees nor the ear hears, but what the rambling mind thinks and imagines from moment to moment. He has certainly surpassed in intensity any

novelist of our time' (*CL InteLex* 3465, 23 July [1918]; *L* 651).

During the year Yeats moved from Oxford to Dublin, alternating residence between Merrion Square and Thoor Ballylee, his windows shot out in the one, the bridge blown up at the other. In December he had lunch for the first time with another relatively youthful modernist, the author of *The Waste Land*, and went away promising him some unlikely prose of dreams and visions—a new section of *The Trembling of the Veil*—for the *Criterion*.¹ Eliot, who had deemed Yeats 'a foreign mind' the previous year,² was greatly impressed by the discussion, telling Ottoline Morrell that he found Yeats 'really one of a very small number of people with whom one can talk profitably about poetry, and I found him altogether stimulating'.³ The senior poet had just been elected a Senator of the Irish Free State, and his new role in public life made the tower an even more necessary refuge, his ascent and descent of its winding stair a more conscious symbol of poetic and political antinomies, his pursuit of intellectual beauty in the midst of national violence a more pressing concern.

I begin with this portrait of Yeats in 1922, because it is in *Seven Poems and a Fragment* that we see the first architectural stage of *The Tower*, a volume that reaches back to retrieve a suppressed poem of 1912 but that is primarily the poetic record of the decade 1917–1927, from the acquisition of Thoor Ballylee and the first poem of his marriage to the final poem of the volume and his subsequent departure. Yeats had characteristically allowed his sisters to print limited Cuala Press editions of his poems and plays a year or two before the trade editions, as with *Responsibilities* (1914, 1916) and *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917, 1919), but *The Tower* was to be preceded by no fewer than three Cuala editions: there might have been

¹ Yeats published 'A Biographical Fragment', an excerpt from *The Trembling of the Veil*, in the *Criterion* of July 1923, the first of six contributions of prose and poetry through July 1935. Through the *Criterion*, Eliot would play a minor role in the construction of *The Tower* over the next five years.

² See 'A Foreign Mind', *Athenaeum*, 4653 (4 July 1919), 552–23. In reading Yeats's *The Cutting of an Agate*, Eliot declared, 'we are confirmed in the conviction—confirmed in a baffling and disturbing conviction—that its author, as much in his prose as in his verse, is not "of this world"—this world, of course, being our visible planet with whatever our theology or myth may conceive as below or above it' (552).

³ *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, vol. I, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), 611.

four, but he chose to include the Cuala edition of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921) in the new Macmillan edition of his collected works. He did, however, include all the poems from *Seven Poems and a Fragment* (1922), *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems* (1924), and *October Blast* (1927), so that when the trade volume of *The Tower* was published early in 1928 there was only one previously unpublished poem, 'Colonus' Praise', a choral lyric from his new play, *Oedipus at Colonus*. Yeats deliberately changed the titles of some poems and scrambled the chronology and order of the Cuala volumes to diminish the autobiographical element, as he had done in *The Wild Swans at Coole*, thereby making the relation and context of many poems difficult to discern.⁴ Moreover, it would prove to be the most unstable of his major volumes; if you do not have a copy of the first edition, you have not read the volume as it was published in 1928. In gathering and revising his separate volumes for his *Collected Poems* in 1933, he altered the makeup and character of no volume more dramatically than *The Tower*—most notably the removal of 'The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid' to a section of 'Narrative and Dramatic Poems', where, separated from its original home and context, it languished for fifty-six years. When the temporary expiration of copyright outside the US occurred in 1989, however, A. Norman Jeffares and Daniel Albright restored it to the *The Tower* volume in their new editions of the poems, but Richard Finneran kept it separated in his US editions. Such removals, alterations, additions, and conflicting orders have of course had consequences in reading and interpreting the volume.⁵ In 1999 Penguin published an

⁴ See my 'Hawk and Butterfly: The Double Vision of the Wild Swans at Coole (1917, 1919)', *YA* 10, 111-34.

⁵ Yeats had kept the poem in its original order for Macmillan's Edition De Luxe. Initiated in 1930 and abandoned in 1939, its order became the basis for the limited and signed edition of the two-volume *The Poems of W. B. Yeats*, which was published posthumously in 1949, and for the *Variorum Edition of the Poems* (1957; revised 1966). The Jeffares and Albright editions drew on the order of these volumes, but the Finneran editions drew on the order of *Collected Poems*. See Jeffares's *Yeats's Poems* (1989, revised 1991; YP 335-41), Albright's *W. B. Yeats: The Poems* (1990), and Finneran's *The Poems: A New Edition* (1983) revised as *The Poems* (1989) and as *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, second edition revised (1996). To date there is no standard critical edition of *The Tower*: see Warwick Gould, 'The Definitive Edition: A History of the Final Arrangements of Yeats's Work' (YP 706-49), and 'W. B. Yeats and the Resurrection of the Author', *The Library*, June 1994, 101-34.

edition of *The Tower* in its Poetry First Editions series, and in 2004 Scribner published a so-called facsimile edition, but there has been no sustained discussion of the volume (or many of the poems) in that state, as if critics had not found a way of treating it as a modernist text.⁶ Thus, in asserting that it is an anti-modernist text, I return to the sequence of Cuala editions that underpin the first unveiling of that unsettled poetic edifice, which was, it will be seen, consciously constructed as a counter-monument to *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*.

Students of Yeats understand that the poems in his separate volumes do not necessarily represent recent work or coincide with specific periods of his life as a poet, making it dangerous to talk about his development from volume to volume. He frequently held back individual poems and groups of poems for years, reaching into his hoard unexpectedly to bring one or more forward, leaving us to speculate on the grounds of suppression, publication, and arrangement. We thus want to find justification for the presence of the oldest poem in *The Tower*, 'The New Faces', written in early December 1912, on the eve of Lady Gregory's departure for America with the touring Abbey players. Yeats did not want her to make the trip: 'I have a sense of ill luck about it', he wrote in his journal. 'I wish I had her stars' (*Mem* 267-68). Unable to cast her horoscope, and in a melancholic, introspective mood, he wrote the poem instead, imagining that should she precede him in death it would be impossible for him to return to Coole and walk the gravel paths where they had

⁶ In his editorial introduction to *The Tower (1928): Manuscript Materials* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2007), Finneran observes the interpretive problem created in the *Collected Poems*: 'It could be argued that transferring "The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid" to the Narrative and Dramatic section makes Yeats's final version of *The Tower* a far less esoteric volume. In the earlier versions of the collection, the concluding sequence of "The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid" and "All Soul's Night" gave the impression of a poet quite dedicated to "meditations upon unknown thought" . . . But in the *Collected Poems* we understand this side of Yeats as but one among many; indeed, . . . perhaps not even an essential side, perhaps something now firmly in the past' (xxxvi). George Bornstein has traced the changing bibliographical, contextual, and linguistic codes and their effect on the interpretation of the poems from *Seven Poems and a Fragment* through *The Tower* to *Collected Poems* in his *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 65-81. Bornstein argues that these changing codes and meanings themselves 'are part of the modernist project' (79) and make *The Tower* a 'paradigmatic modernist text' (81).

wrought works ‘that shall break the teeth of Time’ (*VP* 435). The unbearable thought of new faces inhabiting Coole leads him to affirm that his and her ghostly shadows will always inhabit the garden and be more real there than the living, whose presence would seem ‘more shadowy than they’. It is evident that Lady Gregory’s earlier nervous collapse following the struggle for ownership of Coole with her son Robert and his wife Margaret, and the presence there now of the children, playing ‘what tricks they will | In the old rooms’, come into Yeats’s personal image of those undefined new faces (*VP* 435).

But a more immediate context has recently come to light: Robert had actually set in motion the sale of the Coole estate with the Congested Districts Board (a formal offer was received on 17 December), and the ‘new faces’ allude more directly to the new occupants that would have followed a sale that must have seemed a sure and dispiriting thing to both Lady Gregory and Yeats.⁷ Some readers have deemed Yeats, who addresses Lady Gregory in the first line as ‘you, that have grown old’, supremely tactless in so describing her sixty years—and even in sending the poem to her—but she did not see it that way.⁸ ‘The lines are very touching’, she replied on receiving it. ‘I have often thought our ghosts will haunt that path and our talk hang in the air—It is good to have a meeting place anyhow, in this place where so many children of our minds were born’.⁹ What she resisted was not an insensitive image of her age, or even his premature intimation of their mortality, but an indiscreet allusion to a highly sensitive and unresolved domestic situation at Coole. ‘You won’t publish it just now will you?’ she asked, before answering for him imperiously, ‘I think not’. Somewhat abashed, Yeats assured her in response, ‘You need not fear that I shall publish this poem at present—’, but in certainty of the poem’s permanence he informed her

⁷ See James Pethica, “Upon a House Shaken”: The Struggle for Coole Park 1907-1912’, *YA* 16, 3-51, especially 43-47.

⁸ This persistent view has come forward from Jeffares’s first essay on the poem, ‘The New Faces: A New Explanation’, where he reports that ‘Mrs. W. B. Yeats suggests that Yeats kept the poem back for reasons of tact’, and where he adds that Yeats ‘might even seem to be commenting on her age’. *Review of English Studies*, 23 (October 1947), 351-53.

⁹ Letter of 9 December 1912 (Berg).

that he had ‘written [it] on a blank page of my Collected edition for safety’.¹⁰ Ten years later, at a respectable distance, and having toyed with incorporating its images into ‘A Prayer for My Daughter’,¹¹ he rescued it from further tampering and preserved it inconspicuously in *Seven Poems and a Fragment*. By the time he brought it down into *The Tower* six years later, far removed from its earlier context and associations, ‘The New Faces’ had finally reached its timely moment, its old intimation reverberating anew in the volume as an integral part of Yeats’s deep preoccupation with age, transience, and ‘approaching night’ (*VP* 431).

The second oldest poem in *The Tower*, ‘Owen Ahern and His Dancers’, was personally so sensitive that it was held back seven years, and yet we can now see it as the poem that marks the true beginning of the tower period. On Robert Gregory’s urging, Yeats had purchased the tower for £35 in March 1917 from the Congested Districts Board, which had itself acquired the property from the Gregory estates for redistribution among the people who were small-holders in the neighbourhood. He was at this time writing his treatise on *Anima Mundi* and the Antithetical Self, a further development of the theory of the mask, *Per Amica Silentiae Lunae*, which he dedicated to Maud Gonne’s twenty-one-year-old daughter Iseult Gonne (“Maurice”) in May 1917. That summer he took possession of the tower, secured an architect and builder for renovation, and set out for Maud Gonne’s home in Normandy, where with a sense of great urgency he would propose to Iseult in hopes that she would become the lady of Ballylee Castle. The story is well known: Iseult refused him and his ill-advised ultimatum, and in September he

¹⁰ *CL InteLex* 2035 [12 December 1912]; the letter was published but misdated [c. 15 December 1912] by Donald T. Torchiana and Glenn O’Malley in ‘Some New Letters from W. B. Yeats to Lady Gregory’, *A Review of English Literature*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares, 4 (July 1963), 11–12. Yeats inscribed a revised draft of ‘The New Faces’, dated December 1912, in vol. I of his copy of *CW*, ix; see *YL* 321, item 2325.

¹¹ For ‘The New Faces’ and the composition of ‘A Prayer for My Daughter,’ see Jon Stallworthy, *Between the Lines: Yeats’s Poetry in the Making* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 29–45, and Wayne K. Chapman, ‘The Annotated Responsibilities: Errors in the *Variorum Edition* and a New Reading of the Genesis of Two Poems, “On Those that Hated ‘The Playboy of the Western World’, 1907” and “The New Faces”, *Y&P* 6 (1988), 108–33.

returned to England, proposed to Miss Georgie Hyde-Lees, and married her on 20 October. In the first few days of their honeymoon Yeats fell into deep remorse of conscience (Joyce's *agenbite of inwit*) over what he had done, suffering great regret for having fled from Iseult in Normandy. On 24 October, amidst despairing feelings that he had betrayed Iseult, Maud, George (as Yeats called her), and himself, he wrote a self-castigating lyric entitled 'The Lover Speaks' (now part I of 'Owen Ahern and his Dancers'), bemoaning the fact that his 'Heart' had gone mad with the burden of unrequited love, a love for Iseult that had, he writes, 'come unsought | Upon the Norman upland' (*VP* 449). 'But O!', the poet cries of his disappointment and hasty departure, 'my Heart could bear no more when the upland caught the wind; | I ran, I ran, from my love's side because my Heart went mad'. Later that afternoon, George, in an attempt to bring him out of his emotional darkness, surprised Yeats 'by attempting automatic writing', and he immediately cast a horoscope in awe of the event (*YVP1* 512). Three days later, still in emotional confusion but in growing astonishment over the phenomenon that George had initially 'faked' but irresistibly continued, he wrote a second lyric, 'The Heart Replies' (now part II), in which the Heart defends its action of having made a 'wildly bred' man of fifty years run from 'a cage bird' of a child: "Let the cage bird and the cage bird mate and the wild bird mate in the wild". In reply, the poet admits, alluding to George, "I did not find in any cage the woman at my side", and painfully laments, "O but her heart would break to learn my thoughts are far away". But the reproving Heart remains indifferent to his self-pitying cries and admonishes him to desist: "O let her choose a young man now and all for his wild sake".

On 29 October (two days later), Yeats wrote to inform Lady Gregory of the 'miraculous intervention' that had occurred, describing first the 'great gloom' that had possessed him— '(of which I hope, and believe, George knew nothing)', he added naively—and then of George's automatic writing and the emotional transformation that it had brought about in him. 'From being more miserable than I ever remember being since Maud Gonne's marriage I became extremely happy. . . . The misery produced two poems which I will send you presently to hide away for me, adding 'they are among the best I have

done'.¹² The next week he wrote to her again about the poems, saying uneasily that 'they can hardly be published for years, if ever. I got some peace of mind by writing them & they are quite sincere'.¹³ They were indeed hidden away, kept out of *Seven Poems and a Fragment* but eventually included in *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems*, brought to light there and in *The Tower*, latterly under a single distancing but hardly disguising title, 'Owen Ahern and his Dancers'. It is, however, a pivotal poem in the volume, marking as it does the complex of days and the emotional / intellectual liberation from which the succeeding poems of the volume spring.

The period of intense misery and unhappiness that began with the marriage of Maud Gonne in February 1903 and ended on the advent of George's automatic writing in October 1917, as described in his letter to Lady Gregory, coincides exactly with Yeats's fall from and return to the visionary plane—he had written no visionary poems during those fourteen years, with the possible exception of 'The Cold Heaven', though it seems a poem of remembered vision. When the annunciation arrived—when the spirit masters informed him that they had come to bring him new metaphors for poetry—the exhilaration that followed gave rise to a flood of new poems that celebrate his return to magical and visionary life and that see his union with George as a spiritual marriage of the highest order. She becomes the young bride who is Harun Al-Rashid's gift to his ageing poet-friend, an extraordinary young woman who shares his thirst for 'those old crabbed mysteries' and who can give him 'the best that life can give, | Companionship in those mysterious things | That make a man's soul or a woman's soul | Itself and not some other soul' (*VP* 465). In the poem Yeats has his persona describe that miraculous moment when his bride began to speak, 'sitting upright on the bed':

Or was it she that spoke or some great Djinn?
I say that a Djinn spoke. A livelong hour
She seemed the learned man and I the child;
Truths without father came, truths that no book
Of all the uncounted books that I have read,

¹² CL InteLex 3350, 29 October [1917]; L 633-34.

¹³ CL InteLex 3354, 3 November [1917].

Nor thought out of her mind or mine begot,
Self-born, high-born, and solitary truths . . . (*VP* 467)

In ‘childish ignorance’, her nightly voice becomes a source of great wisdom for the poet, but in time he begins to worry that she might lose her ignorance ‘and so | Dream that I love her only for the voice’. He shivers at the thought that she might lose her love for him ‘because she had lost | Her confidence in mine’. More than the metaphorical recreation of their marriage and visionary partnership, the poem is a sincere love poem to a woman who came to him as a gift, unknown and unloved, but who has since become a woman who ‘now | Can shake more blossom from autumnal chill | Than all my bursting springtime knew’ (*VP* 466). If we read *The Tower* without ‘The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid’, if it remains isolated among ‘Narrative and Dramatic Poems’, we miss the onset of what becomes one of the most transcendent themes of the volume, the discovery of the power and necessity of human love and affection in the arduous pursuit of a vision of reality, of what Yeats calls in the poem ‘the stark mystery that has dazed my sight’.¹⁴ And so, in the midst of writing *A Vision*, when he came to write poems as prayers on the births of their children, as in ‘A Prayer for My Son’, the poet, invoking the image of the Christ child hunted by the henchmen of Herod, prays that he and George, too, may be worthy of another man and woman who ‘Hurried through the smooth and rough | And through the fertile and waste, | Protecting, till the danger past, | With human love’ (*VP* 436).

No sooner did he reclaim his visionary life than he recalled the fictional personae created in his stories of the 1890s, Michael Robartes and Owen Aherne, characters, Yeats explained, ‘who have once again become a part of the phantasmagoria through which I can alone express my convictions about the world’ (*VP* 852). As he placed them in poems and dialogues with their visions and dancers, he also summoned his heroic persona Cuchulain to take part in a poetic dialogue with a Girl and a Fool about the antithetical self (“The Hero, the Girl, and the Fool”), a crucial dialogue reduced to

¹⁴ Under the title ‘Desert Geometry or the Gift of Harun Al-Rashid’, Yeats included the poem at the beginning of the second part of *A Vision* (*CVA* 121-27).

the final two stanzas ('The Fool by the Roadside') in *A Vision* (CVA 219) and later in the *Collected Poems* (restored in the Jeffares and Albright editions). 'I rage at my own image in the glass', says the Girl who longs for Cuchulain's love, 'That's so unlike myself that when you praise it | It is as though you praised another, or even | Mocked me with praise of my mere opposite'. Cuchulain, too, rages at his own strength 'because you have loved it', having heard that 'men have reverence for their holiness | And not themselves'. But it is only the Fool listening by the roadside who knows that the failure of lovers to discover and love each other's opposites, to know the self and the mask, is what brings love's conflicts, and that only when time has run its course does the Fool think 'I may find | A faithful love, a faithful love' (VP 447-9).

It was necessary for Yeats to summon others from his phantasmagoria as well, especially the creatures of its lunar bestiary, creatures whose presence was essential to his imaginative life and that he thought had abandoned him—the dark leopards, the wild witches, the holy centaurs. A year before the miraculous intervention, in the midst of creative despair, he had written 'Lines Written in Dejection' about their absence. 'When have I last looked on | The round green eyes and the long wavering bodies | Of the dark leopards of the moon?' he asks. 'All the wild witches, those most noble ladies . . . are gone. | The holy centaurs of the hills are vanished; | I have nothing but the embittered sun' (VP 343-34). So when in his recovered lunar excitement he saw his friend Edmund Dulac's startling illustration of a black centaur teaching a poet the lyre, the image suggested the symbolic return of his own centaur, whom he addresses in that elusive poem, 'On a Picture of a Black Centaur by Edmund Dulac' (Plate 16).¹⁵ The centaur appears on the edge of a wood, under a tree

¹⁵ Dulac's painting, 'The Good Chiron Taught His Pupils How to Play upon the Harp', had appeared as an illustration to Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918). 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). The poem first appeared in *Seven Poems and a Fragment* as 'Suggested by a Picture of a Black Centaur', the titular attribution to Dulac delayed until *The Tower*. The Irish artist Cecil ffrench Salkeld later claimed that the inspiration for the poem was a water-colour by him; his account of the composition in September 1920 is reproduced in Joseph Hone, *W. B. Yeats 1865-1939* (London: Macmillan, 1942), 326-28.

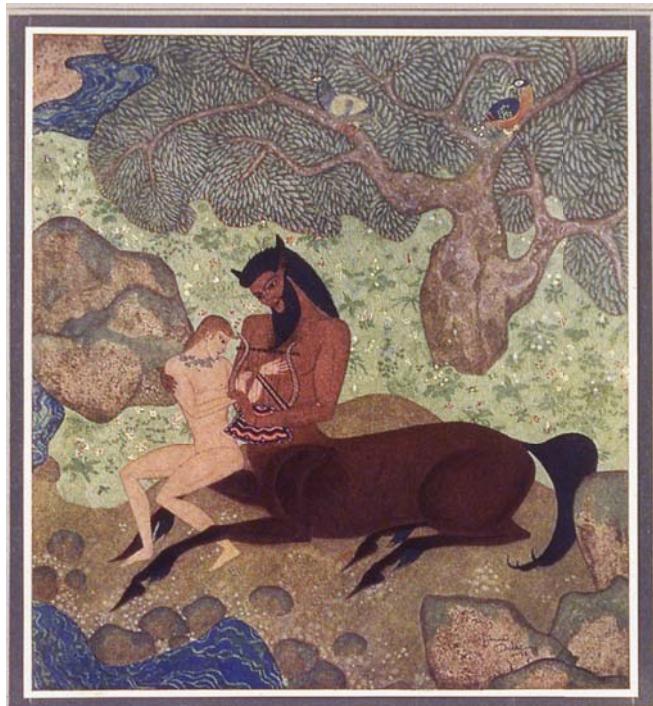


Plate 16. Edmund Dulac's 'The Good Chiron Taught His Pupils How to Play upon the Harp' in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918). Private Collection.

on whose branches perch two parrots, which Yeats associates with the hawks and ravens of unresting thought and abstraction that thwart the creative mind, with what he calls elsewhere ('Meditations in Time of Civil War') 'The innumerable clang ing wings that have put out the moon' (*VP* 427). 'Your hooves have stamped at the black margin of the wood', the poet begins, 'Even where horrible green parrots call and swing. | My works are all stamped down into the sultry mud' (*VP* 442). In welcoming the centaur, he describes how in his absence he had been lost in the 'mad abstract dark' and been driven 'half insane' by a parrot's green wing, but that now he sips 'full-flavoured wine' found in an ancient dream world. 'Stretch out your limbs and sleep a long Saturnian sleep', he urges the centaur after its long return journey, regretful that he had lost faith in him: 'I have loved you better than my soul for all my words'. And the grateful poet is comforted to know that 'there is none so fit to keep a watch and keep | Unwearied eyes upon those horrible green birds', birds that have ceaselessly mimicked and mocked an image-barren imagination and left its visionless works to be trampled in the mud.

In his new heightened consciousness, Yeats is also moved to conjure the ghostly images and indelible memories of old friends, recently dead, in 'All Soul's Night', written at Oxford while the tower was being refurbished and printed as the opening poem of *Seven Poems and a Fragment*. He would later append it to the end of *A Vision* (1925), informing his readers in the introduction that 'I have moments of exaltation like that in which I wrote "All Soul's Night", but I have other moments when remembering my ignorance of philosophy I doubt if I can make another share my excitement' (*CVA* xii). Yeats's exaltation in this poem comes out of his renewed magical life, his re-mastery of the Cabalistic meditation techniques that he had learned from MacGregor Mathers and practiced with William Horton and Florence Farr Emery as adepts and magicians of the Golden Dawn. His excitement derives from his ability to evoke images from the Great Memory and follow the wandering mind into visionary states, for in their aftermath he has 'a marvellous thing to say, | A certain marvellous thing | None but the living mock' (*VP* 471). But this poem is less about his friends and more about his call upon them as spirits to help him keep his mind fixed and undistract-

ed in the meditation process. The opening of the poem is strikingly similar to that of a later visionary poem, 'Byzantium'. Here, 'Midnight has come, and the great Christ Church Bell' summons a ghost that can 'drink from the wine-breath'. 'Byzantium' also begins at midnight, when the 'great cathedral gong' (*VP* 497) of Santa Sophia summons an image, an image of a supernatural, breathless spirit that has the power to lead him to a virtual sea of visionary images. In both poems the movement of the meditating mind on the winding path of vision is likened to mummies wound in mummy-cloth. But whereas in 'Byzantium' the confident poet follows the winding mind through trance into a glorious vision of self-begetting images, in the earlier 'All Soul's Night' he as yet calls upon familiar spirits to help him fully develop and discipline a mind that can not be diverted from vision. After the great Christ Church Bell sounds the moment for evocation to begin, the poet, alluding to the intensified guerilla warfare in Ireland, declares, 'I need some mind that, if the cannon sound | From every quarter of the world, can stay | Wound in mind's pondering | As mummies in the mummy-cloth are wound' (*VP* 471). After calling up the images of his esoteric friends, he knows that 'No living man can drink from the whole wine' of the supernatural world, but he declares again, 'I have mummy truths to tell | Whereat the living mock'. 'Such thought', he says—the thought of perceiving and telling those visionary truths, even if less than whole truths, whole wine—such thought he will hold tight 'Till meditation master all its parts', and when that mastery is achieved, he is certain,

Nothing can stay my glance
Until that glance run in the world's despite
To where the damned have howled away their hearts,
And where the blessed dance; (*VP* 474)

In calling for this mastery of meditation, the poet further declares that he is prepared to follow the winding, wandering mind wherever it leads, to all visions born of contraries—paradise and hell, the blessed and the damned, good and evil—visions which only the living mock, visions which civil war would surely bring. 'Such thought', he says again in closing his invocation, 'that in it bound | I

need no other thing, | Wound in mind's wandering | As mummies in the mummy-cloth are wound'. The poet is finally exalted in the thought that vision can be achieved and sustained 'in the world's despite', excited in his belief that the self can be suspended in a timeless moment even as the cannons roar and mankind mocks, that imagination is superior to the mundanity of violence and mockery. That belief is all he requires as a poet. The poem is, in effect, a new manifesto, a reaffirmation of his belief in the magical, visionary mind in times of political turbulence and destruction. It was thus quite fitting that three years later he retrieved it for the end of *A Vision*, and that ultimately he chose to make it the concluding poem or epilogue of *The Tower*.

We see that as Yeats gradually rebuilt Thoor Ballylee, he gradually built *The Tower* volume, making of his new emotional and visionary life the poems that make up its preliminary volumes. In the summer of 1918 he wrote some cornerstone verse, 'To Be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee', originally in eight lines (*CL InteLex* 3465, 23 July [1918]; *L* 651). He had experimented with the eight-line stanza in 'September 1913', but suddenly in the summer of 1918 he also carved the major building block of the great poems to come—the octave, and especially Tasso's ancient Italian form, *ottava rima*. That June, Yeats and George were living in a nearby house lent by Lady Gregory while alterations to Thoor Ballylee ensued. There he wrote 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory' in octaves. When they moved into the tower, he returned to the stanza for 'A Prayer for My Daughter'. As he employed it, he began to depart from and return to the stanza as needed, finding in it a kind of architectural support for certain poems. He wrote five stanzas of *ottava rima* for the first section of 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', before moving on to a variety of stanza lengths in the remaining sections, writing to Lady Gregory during composition: 'The first poem is rather in the mood of the Anne poem but the rest are wilder' (*CL InteLex* 3900, 10 April [1921]; *L* 669). Thus, we see him moving freely in and out of eight-line forms, using an octave for section II of 'The Tower', *ottava rima* for sections I and IV (with separate octaves in VII) of 'Meditations in Time of Civil War', and *ottava rima* for the whole of 'Among School Children' and 'Sailing to

Byzantium'. In the course of writing *The Tower* he recharged the form in English; where Byron had made *ottava rima* his vehicle for satire and comedy, and Shelley for philosophical musing, Yeats made it serve a greater range of occasion and emotion—elegy, valediction, prayer, meditation, reverie, remorse, bitterness, rage, ecstasy. It was the mastery of the eight-line stanza, as well as the mastery of meditation, that brought Yeats to the 'self possession and power' (*AVB* 8) that he felt he had achieved in *The Tower*.¹⁶

Inevitably, the growing violence in Ireland intruded more and more immediately upon Yeats's visionary resurgence, marring his 'ghostly solitude' (*VP* 429), and in February 1921 he was moved to publicly denounce British policy in Ireland at the Oxford Union. One particular atrocity that had been gnawing upon his conscience was the senseless shooting of a young mother, sitting on her porch with a child in arms, by drunken Black-and-Tan soldiers passing in a lorry near Gort in September 1919. When in April 1921 he came to write 'Thoughts upon the Present State of the World', the original title of 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', he described its first two sections to Olivia Shakespear: 'They are not philosophical but simple & passionate, a lamentation over lost peace & lost hope. My own philosophy does not much brighten the prospect, so far as any future we shall live to see is concerned' (*CL InteLex* 3899, 9 April [1921]; *L* 668). 'Now days are dragon-ridden', he writes passionately in section I, bitterly recounting the Gort murder, 'the nightmare | Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery | Can leave the mother, murdered at her door, | To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free' (*VP* 429). In the middle of section III, where he compares the solitary soul to a swan, he wrote to Lady Gregory, expressing his uncertainty about the poem's merit 'or whether I have now enough emotion for personal poetry' (*CL InteLex* 3900, 10 April [1921]; *L* 668). In this poem and its sequel, 'Meditations in Time of Civil War', Yeats summons, as we know, tremendous personal emotion to address the claims of violence on his art.

¹⁶ See ch. 10 of Helen Vendler's *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007) for a comprehensive study of Yeats's use of *ottava rima* in *The Tower* and later volumes.

'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' does begin simply with a subdued meditation in *ottava rima* on the impermanence of great works of art: 'Many ingenious lovely things are gone | That seemed sheer miracle to the multitude', he begins, thereby striking one of the most recurring themes in the volume and of his later work (*VP* 428). Here he points to 'An ancient image made of olive-wood' (that of Athene in the Acropolis), to 'Phidias' famous ivories | And all the golden grasshoppers and bees', just as in 'Lapis Lazuli', where in recounting the cycles of passing civilizations he reminds us that 'No handiwork of Callimachus | Who handled marble as if it were bronze, | Made draperies that seemed to rise | When sea-wind swept the corner, stands' (*VP* 566). The beautiful opening stanza could be a free-standing lyric, but it suddenly shifts from the plight of art in time to the plight of the 'pretty toys' of the Irish cultural revival in the present—how its 'fine thought' and philosophy were eroded by bitterness and swept away by the coarse broom of political violence. The visionary philosophy of the automatic writing was certainly shaping the poem, for as he wrote it he informed Olivia Shakespear that he was 'searching out signs of the whirling gyres of the historical cone as we see it & hoping that by their study I may see deeper into what is to come' (*CL InteLex* 3899, 9 April [1921]; *L* 668). His prophetic poem 'The Second Coming' had already been published, and in a continuing prophetic mode Yeats sees the turbulence and darkening thought in Ireland as a national manifestation of a larger historical cycle. Yeats thus wrote the poem in 'deep gloom' over the political violence that had come to reign and that had sundered a cultural vision, but he also wrote with an equal concern for the effect of violence on his personal vision; indeed, the primary focus of the poem is on the poet's relation to his imagination, his soul, and his monuments in the midst of historical violence. 'He who can read the signs' of historical cycles, he writes in the fifth stanza (and Yeats himself could read them well),

knows no work can stand,
Whether health, wealth or peace of mind were spent
On master-work of intellect or hand,
No honour leave its mighty monument (*VP* 429)

Were it otherwise, were he able to still the ravages of time on art, it would take its toll on the creation of art in a tragic world, would ‘break upon his ghostly solitude’, would interfere with the highest aim of the poet—to transmute his soul into art, his only victory over time and ‘approaching night’, the developed theme of ‘Sailing to Byzantium’. The artists and the men of culture who can read the signs of history dare to admit that at any time in history ‘Incendiary or bigot could be found | To burn that stump on the Acropolis, | Or break in bits the famous ivories | Or traffic in the grasshoppers or bees’ (*VP* 430), but in their creative enterprise and tragic awareness those artists are not diverted by violence from the pursuit of beauty. ‘Come’, cries Yeats, putting imperious words in the mouths of bigots, ‘let us mock at the great’, at those artists ‘That had such burdens on the mind | And toiled so hard and late | To leave some monument behind, | Nor thought of the levelling wind’ (*VP* 432). ‘I wonder’, Yeats wrote to Olivia after finishing the poem and while working on ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’, ‘will literature be much changed by that most momentous of events, the return of evil’ (*CL Intelex* 4117, [23 April, 1922]; *L* 680). The reality of that cyclical return is manifest in the final stanza, ‘Violence upon the roads: violence of horses; | . . . evil gathers head: | Herodias’ daughters have returned again’, and out of fourteenth-century historical memory appears ‘Under the shadow of stupid straw-pale locks, | That insolent fiend Robert Artisson’ (*VP* 433). But even as an evil figure rides upon the dark turning of the Great Wheel, we know that the poet is in the tower, locked in ghostly solitude: ‘Man is in love and loves what vanishes , | What more is there to say?’ (*VP* 429-30)

Yeats was of course continuing to write plays as well as poems related to *A Vision*, and he excerpted separate lines of verse from his new play *The Cat and the Moon* and gave them to T. S. Eliot as a counterpoise for the *Criterion*, published there in July 1924 as ‘The Cat and the Moon’, just before the Cuala edition of *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems*. Yeats’s preface to the volume was written in the form of a letter to Lady Gregory, in which he writes that ‘the other day when I read that strange “Waste Land” by Mr. T. C. Eliot I thought of your work and of Synge’s; and he . . . writes but of his own mind. That is the kind of insoluble problem that makes the

best conversation, and if you will come and visit me, I will call the Dublin poets together, and we will discuss it until midnight' (*VP* 854). Musing on Eliot's monumental poem, and on the nature of art, Yeats had come to the conclusion, borne of *Per Amica* and *A Vision*, that Eliot had sought his self rather than his opposite, and ironically had failed to achieve, in Eliot's word, impersonality (in Yeats's, the mask). He had also thought more about Joyce. It was the beginning of a criticism in progress to be developed in *A Vision*, where he would relate Joyce's *Ulysses* and Eliot's *The Waste Land* to seemingly dissimilar writings of Pound and Pirandello as exhibiting the fragmentation of a unified consciousness, of unity of being:

I find at this 23rd Phase which is it is said the first where there is hatred of the abstract, where the intellect turns upon itself, Mr Ezra Pound, Mr Eliot, Mr Joyce, Signor Pirandello, who either eliminate from metaphor the poet's phantasy and substitute a strangeness discovered by historical or contemporary research or who break up the logical processes of thought by flooding them with associated ideas or words that seem to drift into the mind by chance; or who set side by side as in 'Henry IV', 'The Waste Land', 'Ulysses', the *physical primary* — a lunatic among his keepers, a man fishing behind a gas works, the vulgarity of a single Dublin day prolonged through 700 pages — and the *spiritual primary* delirium, the Fisher King, Ulysses' wandering. (*CVA* 211-12)

'It is as though myth and fact', Yeats observes, 'united until the exhaustion of the Renaissance, have now fallen so far apart that man understands for the first time the rigidity of fact, and calls up, by that very recognition, myth — the *Mask* — which now but gropes its way out of the mind's dark but will shortly pursue and terrify' (*CVA* 212). As Richard Ellmann comments, 'Yeats implies that in these writers myth, instead of merging with fact in a symbolic whole, has collided with it to produce a frenzied miscellany. This is a prelude to the manifestation of myth in some fearful, dehumanized form'.¹⁷ As Yeats had written of French poets in the 1890s in *The Trembling of the Veil*, he might also say again of Joyce and Eliot, 'after all our subtle colour and nervous rhythm . . . what more is possible? After us the Savage God' (*Au* 349).

¹⁷ Richard Ellmann, *Eminent Domain* (Oxford: OUP, 1970), 51.

'Meditations in Time of Civil War', begun almost immediately after 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' as the war and the Irregulars encroached upon the tower, was temporarily separated from its companion poem in *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems*. As he read proofs for *The Trembling of the Veil*, he wrote to Sturge Moore that when he was not reading proofs he was working on 'a series of poems about this Tower and on the civil war at which I look . . . as if it were some phenomenon of nature' (*LTSW* 46). Indeed, that natural phenomenon was the tumultuous historical cycle in which he placed the previous poem, but in the midst of violence he is also attracted by processes in the natural world around him, of birds and bees, and of supernatural images—some monstrous, some magical—as he meditates again upon art and upon the alternating fullness and emptiness of the human heart.

This poem, too, begins simply in *ottava rima*: 'Surely among a rich man's flowering lawns . . . Life overflows without ambitious pains', choosing what shape it will (*VP* 417). 'Mere dreams', he contradicts himself as he sees the image of the fountain of life and the 'abounding glittering jet' of the imagination displaced by an empty sea-shell, yet hoping in these violent times that ancestral spirits might still 'take our greatness with our violence'. As he considers his predecessors in the tower, men of active life now forgotten, he wishes to take his place in their ancestral procession as a poet, 'that after me | My bodily heirs may find, | To exalt a lonely mind, | Befitting emblems of adversity' (*VP* 420). What constitutes the nature and making of such a poetic emblem occupies much of the poem, but in considering his heirs and descendants, in affirming that in life 'love and friendship are enough', he declares that 'whatever flourish and decline' in the cycles of their lives, 'These stones'—the stones of the tower and of his poems, 'remain their monument and mine' (*VP* 423).

He has before him as he writes, the magnanimous gift of Junzo Sato, a five-hundred-year old ancestral sword, 'a changeless sword', that leads him to declare in awe of its beauty and artistry that 'only an aching heart | Conceives a changeless work of art' (*VP* 421). And he is sure that centuries of artists—who know that it is the 'Soul's beauty' that is most adored in art, and who know that 'none could pass Heaven's door | That loved inferior art'—all of them, he is cer-

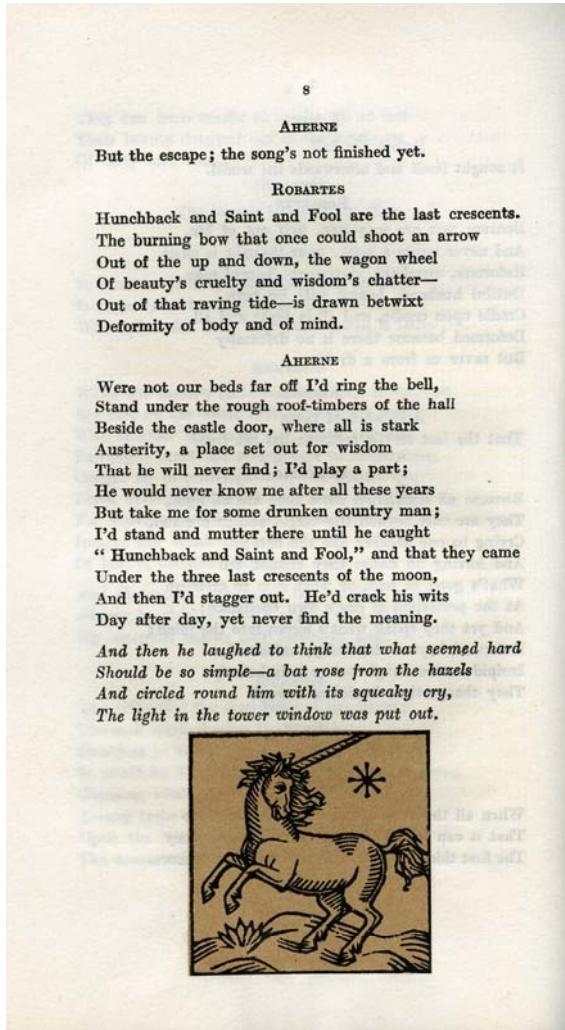


Plate 17. Edmund Dulac's woodcut of a unicorn in *A Vision* (1925).
Private Collection, London. It also appeared on the title-page of
Stories of Michael Robartes and his Friends (1932), and in *Last
Poems and Two Plays* (1939). Copies in Private Collection.

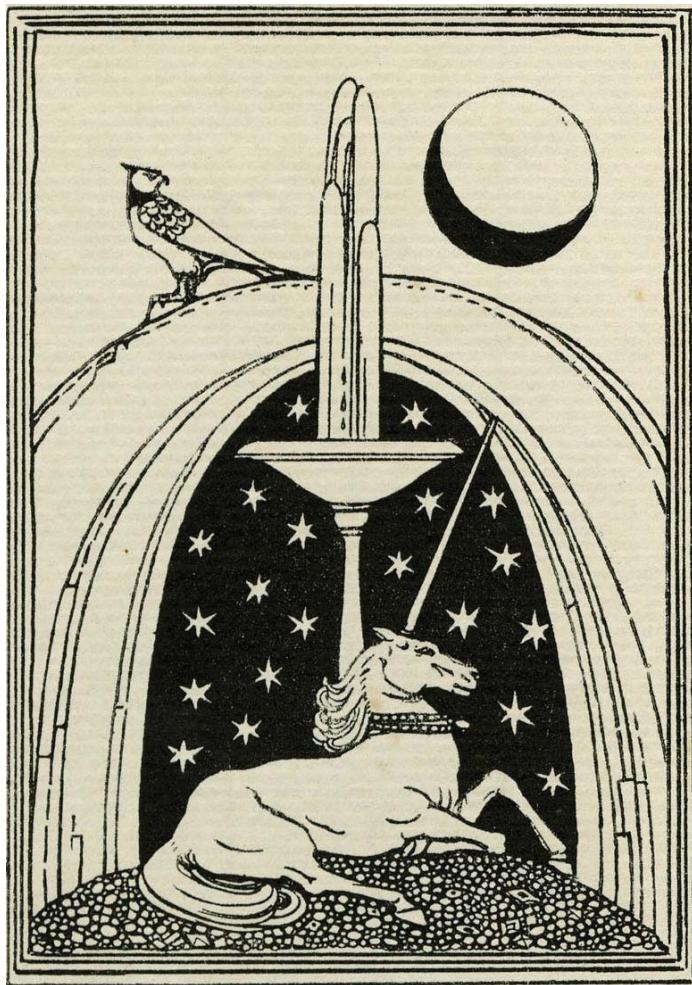


Plate 18. Charles Ricketts's endpapers for the 1920s Macmillan *Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*. Private Collection.

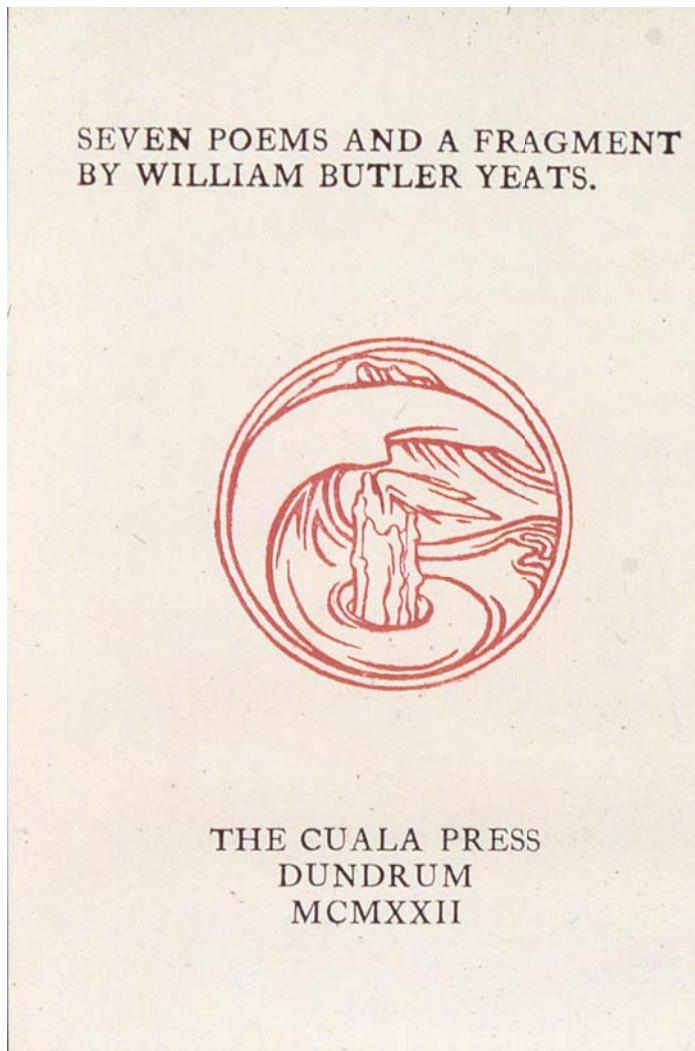


Plate 19. Thomas Sturge Moore's 'Candle in Waves' sigil on the title-page of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1920). This emblem of 'the soul in the midst of the waters of the flesh or of time' also appeared in *Seven Poems and a Fragment* (1922) and *October Blast* (1927). Private Collection.



Plate 20. Yeats's bookplate, by Thomas Sturge Moore, showing the candle in waves motif above Sturge Moore's gates, his visual pun on the origins of Yeats's name in the Middle English and northern and north-midland dialectal word 'yeat' or 'yate' meaning 'gate',
Senate House Library, University of London.

tain, had ‘such an aching heart’. As in Dante’s great love for Beatrice, if the poet’s soul cannot be united with the beloved object, then it must be sublimated in art. And we sense that he brings back into consciousness here the unremitting ache of his heart, Maud Gonne, whose presence intensifies in the later poems of the volume.

Images of art and violence continuously displace each other in the poet’s consciousness, and he knows in his meditations that as a poet he must turn from the violence. ‘I must nourish dreams’, he says, even as conscience pulls him toward being a man of action. When an affable Irregular and his men come to the door cracking jokes of civil war and talking of the weather, he has to distract himself with the motion of a moor-hen to silence his envy of them, wishing he was one among them. But finally the poet returns to his chamber, as he must, ‘caught | In the cold snows of a dream’ (*VP* 424). It reminds us of an earlier poem, ‘The Cold Heaven’, a visionary paradise which the poet had been shut out of for years, but it also illuminates what he was writing in a draft of *A Vision*: ‘The [poet’s] soul . . . is afflicted because it cannot find in life . . . some charm or virtue, and therefore, finds it in a dream and makes of that dream its art’ (*YVP4*, 14).

Yeats writes out of his determination not to let the civil war and ‘the world’s despite’ remove him from his dream or sense of beauty. In his Nobel address on ‘The Irish Dramatic Movement’ the following year, he tried to convey in prose something of the emotional situation of the poem:

In the country you are alone with your own violence, your own ignorance and heaviness, and with the common tragedy of life, and if you have any artistic capacity you desire beautiful emotion; and, certain that the seasons will be the same always, care not how fantastic its expression. (*Au* 562)

In explaining this sentence, he writes that he was in the tower during the first months of the civil war: ‘the railway bridges blown up and the roads blocked with stones and trees. . . . One felt an overwhelming desire not to grow unhappy or embittered, not to lose all sense of the beauty of nature’. He goes on to describe how he had discovered an old stare’s nest in a hole outside his window, and how he was suddenly moved to write a poem about it, a fair copy of which he wrote in Lady Gregory’s copy of *Seven Poems and a Fragment* in

July 1922, two years before *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems* appeared (the former lacking the final five-line stanza). In the midst of men being killed and houses burned, he makes an invocation to the honey-bees, like an invocation to a muse, ‘Come build in the empty house of the stare’ (*VP* 424). ‘Presently a strange thing happened’, Yeats continued in his Nobel address. ‘I began to smell honey in places where honey could not be, at the end of a stone passage or at some windy turn of the road, and it came always with certain thoughts’ (*Au* 579–80). This mental phenomenon, that out of the intensity of creative thought would come the palpable smell of honey whenever that thought was recalled, was the ultimate physical sign of the answering call of beauty and the muse in violent times. It was this poem, and this affirmation, that had such a moving and lasting effect on Eavan Boland, Seamus Heaney, Michael Longley, Derek Mahon, and other Irish poets who came into their poetic maturity with the rise of the Troubles in the late 1960s; they have written of it and lived by it as they have themselves struggled with the conflicting claims of art and history on the poetic conscience.¹⁸ Yeats showed them, as he had been shown in ‘The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid’, ‘how violent great hearts can lose | Their bitterness and find the honeycomb’ (*VP* 463).

The images of the stare’s nest and the honey-bees give way to ‘phantoms of hatred’, and ‘Monstrous familiar images swim to the mind’s eye’. In the street-mob’s cries for vengeance, and in the ‘senseless tumult’, the poet’s wits all but go astray as he too almost cries for vengeance on the murderers of Jacques Molay. But suddenly among the violent cries appear the magical unicorns, ‘Their legs long, delicate and slender, aquamarine their eyes’. As students of Yeats, we might observe that the Cuala edition of *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems* appeared with Robert Gregory’s design of the “Charging Unicorn”, pulled forward seventeen years from its original appearance on the title-page of *Discoveries* (1907), and that he also commissioned Sturge Moore’s plunging unicorn, *Monoceros de Astris* (Pls. 8 & 10, between pp. 108–09) for the title-page of *Reveries Over Childhood and Youth* (1915).¹⁹ Moreover, Dulac had

¹⁸ See my ‘The Legacy of Yeats in Contemporary Irish Poetry’, *Irish University Review*, 34 (Autumn / Winter 2004), 291–314.

¹⁹ Sturge Moore’s woodcut of the plunging unicorn would be used in subse-

made a woodcut of a unicorn for *A Vision* (CVA 8), a woodcut that would be used again for later Cuala editions (Plate 17).²⁰ Two years earlier he had commissioned Charles Ricketts to draw an emblem of a unicorn by a fountain, resting under a brazen hawk that looks back upon a waning moon, for the Macmillan edition of his work (Plate 18). When he received the design from Ricketts, he described the complex image as 'a masterpiece', 'a decoration of which one will never tire' (CL InteLex 4200, 5 Nov. [1922]; L 691). 'My own memory proves to me', he continued, 'that at 17 there is an identity between an author's imagination and paper and book-cover one does not find in later life', but Yeats maintained that identity all his life, as his book-covers and emblematic designs show. When his sister asked him about the unicorn's meaning, Yeats replied, 'The truth is that it is a private symbol . . . It is the soul'.²¹ And so for an image of the soul he summoned his memory of Gustave Moreau's 'Les Licornes' (Plate 10, between pp. 108-09), which he had seen in Paris in 1908. It is the purest image in the poem; all is perfectly still, timeless, free from historical cycles and prophecies. The ladies close their musing eyes, and the stillness of the scene, the sweetness of their full hearts, and the loveliness of their beautiful bodies are sealed off in the imagination from the external world. But such a perfect, singular image of self-delighting reverie cannot hold; it is swiftly displaced

quent Cuala editions of *Two Plays for Dancers* (1919), *The Words upon the Window Pane* (1934), and *New Poems* (1938). In 1918 Yeats had Sturge Moore design for George a bookplate with a unicorn plunging out of a lightning-split tower, later describing it as 'a masterpiece' (LTS M 54, Plate 11). In 1908 he had co-authored with Lady Gregory *The Unicorn from the Stars*.

²⁰ After Dulac completed his woodcut of The Great Wheel for *A Vision*, he remembered that Yeats had wanted a unicorn in the centre of the wheel. On 30 April 1925 he sent this separate design for the unicorn, saying that he would incorporate it if absolutely necessary (LTWBY2 462). Yeats did not press for the correction, and the separate image (Plate 17) appeared not only in *A Vision* but on the title-page of the Cuala edition of *Stories of Michael Robartes and his Friends* (1932), and posthumously in the Cuala edition of *Last Poems and Two Plays* (1939).

²¹ CL InteLex 3787 [September 1920]; L 662. Another image of the soul that Yeats used for selected Cuala editions was that of 'candle among waves', a woodcut taken from the top circular area of the bookplate designed for him by Sturge Moore in 1915 (Plates 19 and 20). Yeats described it to Lily Yeats on 18 February 1915 as 'an emblem of my own the soul in the midst of the waters of the flesh or of time' (CL InteLex 2609). It appeared on the title-pages of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1920), *Seven Poems and a Fragment* (1922), and *October Blast* (1927).

by ‘an indifferent multitude’ of images, of brazen hawks and perhaps horrible green parrots, those ‘innumerable clang ing wings that have put out the moon’. The stanza sharply dramatizes the conflict of Yeats’s visionary life: without antitheses, as Blake had written and as Yeats reiterated in the drafts of *A Vision*, is no progression, no art.

In the final octave that ends this moving meditative poem, Yeats turns away from the tumult and the men of action and shuts the door of the tower, still conscience-struck and wondering ‘how many times I could have proved my worth | In something that others understand or share’ (*VP* 427). ‘But O! ambitious heart’, says his Antithetical Self, ‘had such a proof drawn forth | A company of friends, a conscience set at ease, | It had but made us pine the more’. And so the poet in his mask ascends the winding stair once again, his embattled soul intact, self-assured that in his magical pursuit of soul’s beauty ‘The abstract joy, | The half-read wisdom of daemonic images, | Suffice the ageing man as once the growing boy’. But of course it could not fully suffice, nor could conscience or envy ease: a month after completing the poem, the subjective poet became a Senator, assumed his objective mask, and descended the winding stair into the world.

Set like a gemstone among the octaves and *ottava rima* of the longer poems is the great sonnet in the volume, ‘Leda and the Swan’, which he wrote as an annunciation poem. In fact, its first title was ‘Annunciation’ (*Mem* 272–75), though when he wrote about it to an editor he described it, with his inimitable spelling problem, as ‘a classic enunciation’ (*CL InteLex* 4744, 25 June, 1925; *L* 709). When he included the poem in *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems*, the opening lines were still unstable, but when it appeared in *A Vision* as an epigraph for Book III, ‘Dove or Swan’, it was in final form, though the title there was simply ‘Leda’ (*CVA* 179).²² In the poem, he informed his readers, ‘I imagine the annunciation that founded Greece as made to Leda . . . But all things are from antithesis, and when in my ignorance I try to imagine what older civilisation she

²² A rush, a sudden wheel and hovering still
The bird descends, and her frail thighs are pressed
By the webbed toes, and that all powerful bill
Has laid her helpless face upon his breast (*VP* 441 v.).

refuted I can but see bird and woman blotting out some corner of the Babylonian mathematical starlight' (*CVA* 181). In the revision he had intensified the violent visitation—no longer 'A rush, a sudden wheel', but 'A sudden blow', and thus he imagines the historical moment of an archetypal event—the incursion of a supernatural being into the world and his impregnation of a mortal woman—an event that signals the beginning of a new Magnus Annus, a two-thousand-year cycle of civilization, a cycle symbolized by a Great Wheel, tragic in its relentless turning downward into darkness after rising to the moment of a civilization's greatest cultural light, its Unity of Culture. Yes, Leda puts on his power to give rise to the new Graeco-Roman civilization, but she is denied the knowledge to stop the burning of Troy and the murder of Agamemnon, all set in action at the moment of conception. As Yeats indicates in 'Two Songs from a Play', she is powerless to keep the achievement of 'Platonic tolerance' and 'Doric discipline' in place (*VP* 438), powerless to keep the Great Wheel from turning downward toward intellectual darkness and violence. Out of that darkness a Holy Ghost as Dove will make a new Annunciation, and a human Virgin impregnated by a supernatural being will give rise to the Judaeo-Christian civilization, reaching its Unity of Culture in Byzantium before the Wheel turns downward toward yet another second coming. 'Leda and the Swan', 'Two Songs from a Play', 'Sailing to Byzantium', and 'The Second Coming' are among the great poetic metaphors of Yeats's vision of historical cycles, the fulfilled promise of his spirit masters in October 1917.

Yeats brought two poems each from *Seven Poems and a Fragment* and *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems* into *A Vision* when it was published in 1925, but in his 'Dedication' to the work he confessed that 'I am longing to put it out of reach that I may write the poetry it seems to have made possible' (*CVA* xii). He had been recovering from a serious illness, and now it was no longer violence but a sense of old age that threatened his imagination, which became more excited and fantastical than ever after the completion of *A Vision*. Out of his mounting rage came three great poems in steady succession—'The Tower', 'Among School Children', and 'Sailing to Byzantium'. Out of that rage comes his identification with

Sophocles' blind Oedipus—he wrote two versions of Sophocles' Oedipus plays and placed two of the choral lyrics with his poems to ensure that identification, which he extended to Homer and Raftery, all blind seers raging in the dark in their search for truth. But his illness had also generated poems filled with personal images and memories, as in those that comprise 'A Man Young and Old', an old man's wild regrets for youth and love. He sent a letter to Olivia that he was in the tower writing poetry, 'as I always do here, and as always happens, no matter how I begin, it becomes love poetry before I am finished with it' (*CL InteLex* 4871, 25 May [1926]; *L* 714-15). And so in June 1927 he gathered his few new poems and personae together in the third Cuala edition, *October Blast*, his autumn-of-life rage at the limits of time and the body's betrayal of intellect and imagination. His fear is that his muse, his wandering mind, his cold dream will be replaced by abstraction and argument, a life-long fear now redoubled. His desire is to make his soul, to arrest it from its journey in a work of art, in such a form as Sato's ancestral sword, or Phidias' famous ivories, or Callimachus' bronze-like marbles, or a smithy's golden tree and bird.

The reader will not be surprised to know that the poem 'The Tower' had its first public appearance in Eliot's *Criterion* in June 1927. Surely it is one of the poems (and volumes) that led Eliot to praise Yeats's development as a poet and to appraise him as the greatest poet of the century, that led Joyce to puzzle his Paris friends with his passion for Yeats, reciting the poems from memory and saying, 'No surrealist poet can equal that for imagination'.²³ There, in defiance of age, Yeats sends imagination forth into both personal memory and the Great Memory, summoning all images to ask two questions of them all: 'Did all old men and women . . . Whether in public or in secret rage | As I do now against old age?' And then, 'Does

²³ In a seventieth-birthday tribute to Yeats in 1935, Eliot stated that 'it should be apparent at least that Mr. Yeats has been and is the greatest poet of his time. . . . At no time was he less out-of-date than today, among men twenty and forty years his juniors. Development to this extent is not merely genius, it is character; and it sets a standard which his juniors should seek to emulate, without hoping to equal'. *Criterion*, 14 (July 1935), 612-13. Joyce's recitation of Yeats's poems in Paris is recounted in Eugene Jolas, 'My Friend James Joyce', in *James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism*, ed. Seon Givens (New York: Vanguard Press, 1963), 14.

the imagination dwell most | Upon a woman won or woman lost?'' (*VP* 413). These unanswered questions are preliminary to his moving declaration of faith in the limitations and disappointments of human life over abstract thought and philosophical argument: 'I mock Plotinus' thought | And cry in Plato's teeth, | Death and life were not | Till man made up the whole, | Made lock, stock and barrel | Out of his bitter soul'. Man's bitterness and his 'memories of love, | Memories of the words of women'—these, he declares, are among 'those things whereof | Man makes a superhuman | Mirror-resembling dream'. And so in this faith he determines to make his soul in his cold dream until the body fail, 'Or what worse evil come —| The death of friends, or death | Of every brilliant eye | That made a catch in the breath | Seem'—and here he summons natural images of declining day to characterize the mind's fading memories and light—'Seem but the clouds of the sky | When the horizon fades | Or a bird's sleepy cry | Among the deepening shades' (*VP* 416).

In 'Among School Children', in answer to his own question, the imagination dwells most upon a woman lost, a woman of Ledaean kind, until his thoughts of Maud Gonne as a schoolchild drive his evoking heart wild; there in the schoolroom, 'She stands before me as a living child' (*VP* 444). And this image triggers a succession of images before his scarecrow body, leading to thoughts of Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras and their similar attempts to construct a philosophy of reality: 'Old clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird', the concluding line of a stanza which he described as 'a fragment of my last curse upon old age. It means that even the greatest men are only scarecrows, by the time their fame has come' (*CL InteLex* 427, 24 Sept., [1926]; *L* 719). Yes, but it also means that for all their greatness they, like him, knew not reality either. When he sent Maud Gonne a copy of *The Tower*, he wrote with some apprehension, 'You will find a reference to your self in "Among School Children" . . . I do not think it will offend you' (*G-YL* 445). 'Why should I be offended at the references to me in Among school children?' she replied.

It is very kind. Oh how you hate old age—well so do I, I see no redeeming features in it, but I, who am more a rebel against man than you, rebel less against nature, & accept the inevitable & go with it gently into the

unknown—only against the sordidness & cruelty of small ambitions I fight until the long rest comes (*G-YL* 445).

For all his rage, there is a greater acceptance of his dilemma than Maud Gonne recognizes. In addressing the collective ‘Presences’ held in the imaginations of longing human minds, the self-born mockers of man’s enterprise to know reality in a lifetime, he recognizes that in *their* supernatural world ‘Labour is blossoming or dancing’; *there* ‘The Body is not bruised to pleasure soul, | Nor beauty born out of its own despair, | Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil’. But Yeats accepts the bruising, the midnight oil, the despair of seeking beauty, as human privilege and tragic emotion denied the mocking Presences, so that in his closing apostrophe to and questioning of objects in the natural world—the multiform reality of the chestnut tree and the expressions of the dancing body—he looks for no answer; he delights in posing again, after Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras, an unknowable human question, ‘O body swayed to music, O brightening glance, | How can we know the dancer from the dance?’ There is enough to be known of the dance from the dancer’s eye, which brightens as she feels and expresses in mind and body that portion of the dance that suffuses her being in an exalted moment.

Yeats informed his listeners on BBC radio that he wrote “Sailing to Byzantium” when he ‘first felt the infirmity of old age’ (*CW10* 286), and he informed Olivia Shakespear that he wrote it ‘to recover my spirits’ (*CL InteLex* 4920, 5 Sept. [1926]; *L* 718). He further explained to his listeners that the bird alluded to in the final stanza was ‘a symbol of the intellectual joy of eternity, as contrasted with the instinctive joy of human life’.²⁴ Thus, his sudden sense of infirmity was overcome by a spirit-lifting belief that he was moving away from one kind of natural, sensual joy toward a supernatural, intellectual joy, from a procreative world to a spiritual world, toward the embod-

²⁴ *CW10* 286. Yeats cancelled the following statement in his BBC script: ‘Now I am trying to write about the state of my soul, for it is right for an old man to make his soul, and some of my thoughts upon that subject I have put into a poem called “Sailing to Byzantium”. When Irishmen were illuminating the Book of Kells . . . Byzantium was the centre of European civilisation and the source of its spiritual philosophy, so I symbolise the search for the spiritual life by a journey to that city (*Ibid.*, 392).

iment of his soul in a lasting lyric work. Yeats knew that 'Sailing to Byzantium' was the capstone of his tower poems, and he gave it pride of place in *October Blast* as he planned *The Tower*. Once again he called on his friend Sturge Moore to design the cover. Concerned that it look like *his* tower and not like that of anyone else, he sent him a photograph of Thoor Ballylee as it appeared in the summer of 1927. On the back of this photograph Yeats penned a descriptive note: 'The cottage at back is my kitchen. In front you will see our parapet of the old bridge, the other was blown up during our Civil War'.²⁵ Sturge Moore, who knew Yeats's poems and symbols well, transformed Yeats's black and white photograph into a magnificent cover of olive-green cloth and gold-stamped handiwork, portraying the tower and its reflection in the river, one of the most strikingly beautiful books of modern literature (see cover design). When the volume appeared, Yeats was in Rapallo, seriously ill with congestion of the lungs and physical exhaustion, but he was ecstatic about the cover. 'Your cover for *The Tower* is a most rich, grave and beautiful design', he wrote to Moore, 'admirably like the place, and I am all the more grateful because I may see little of that place henceforth' (*LTSMS* 123). Soon after leaving the tower, he resigned from the Senate.

Yeats knew that the tower period was over when that shining edifice was unveiled. When he read it straight through, he was, he wrote to Olivia, 'astonished at its bitterness' (*CL InteLex* 5104, 25 April, 1928; *L* 472), and came to believe that the bitterness had given the book its power. But when we ask *ourselves* wherein lies its power and greatness, the bitterness does not prevail. As Yeats ascends and descends the stone steps of the tower over a decade, as he moves among the natural, the preternatural, and the supernatural worlds, and among personal relations and national violence, we see that the poems are deeply rooted in the human heart, of which bitterness is but one in the wide range of emotions that we have witnessed

²⁵ Thomas Sturge Moore Collection, Senate House Library, University of London. The photograph has been printed in *YA* 17, facing 255, and the note in *T. Sturge Moore (1870-1944): Contributions to the Art of the Book & Collaboration with W. B. Yeats*, comp. & ed. Malcolm Easton (Hull: The University of Hull, 1970), facing 40. See also Warwick Gould's 'Designs by Thomas Sturge Moore for Books by W. B. Yeats' in Christopher Pressler and Karen Attar, eds., *Senate House Library, University of London* (London: Scala, 2012), 54.

between despairing self-doubt and ecstatic self-transcendence. That transcendence is where the building of the tower ends, and where the gilded volume begins. When we open it, we encounter ‘Sailing to Byzantium’, a masterpiece in *ottava rima*, a Renaissance form that invites the reader not into a modernist poetic world but into a metaphorical culture of the creative mind where a unified consciousness is achieved through a mastery of meditation, the evocation of images, and an exaltation of mind in magical visions of ‘where the blessed dance’ (*VP* 474). In building *The Tower*, Yeats was never envious of the minds that created *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*; his volume resurrects another world where myth, history, and fact are united, where wholeness and Unity of Being are sought not in the fragmented consciousness of the ‘naked mind’, as Yeats would call it, but in the mask of the Antithetical Self, and where, with an aching heart and a lonely mind, he could pursue in the midst of civil strife the supreme artistic aim of arresting the journeying soul in works of art that embody and reflect the soul’s magnificence.²⁶ In building his tower, he remained true to his vision twenty years earlier of an aged Ariosto standing in the door of his tower in completion of his art:

He was the poet who had at last, because he had done so much for the word’s sake, come to share in the dignity of the saint. He had hidden nothing of himself, but he had taken care of ‘that dignity . . . the perfection of form . . . this lofty and severe quality . . . this virtue.’ And though he had but sought it for the word’s sake, or for a woman’s praise, it had come at last into his body and his mind. Certainly as he stood there he knew how from behind that laborious mood, that pose, that genius, no flower of himself but all himself, looked out as from behind a mask that other Who . . . He has in his ears well-instructed voices, and seeming-solid sights are before his eyes, and not, as we say of many a one, speaking in metaphor, but as this were Delphi or Eleusis, and the substance and the voice come to him among his memories which are of women’s faces . . . (*E&I* 291).

²⁶ In criticizing English poets of the 1930s in his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936), Yeats wrote that ‘I too have tried to be modern’, but that they, like Eliot, ‘have pulled off the mask, the manner writers hitherto assumed, Shelley in relation to his dream, Byron, Henley, to their adventure, their action. Here stands not this or that man but man’s naked mind’ (*OBMV* xxxvi).

For all the praise and admiration expressed by Eliot and Joyce for Yeats's later work, they knew, as Yeats knew, that he was not a modernist writer in spirit, that he was out of his time, and not of theirs.²⁷ Yeats had earlier dramatized that reality in 'Ego Dominus Tuus' and 'The Phases of the Moon', where critics (*Hic* and *Robartes*), who pursue the 'modern hope' of finding the self, mock his personae (*Ille* and *he*) as a deluded poet who futilely pursues 'Magical shapes' and 'Mere images' in search of his anti-self (VP 367-69, 373). In *A Vision* and in *The Tower*, Yeats attempted to build monuments to an ancient esoteric mind and its way of wisdom and seeing. If the two intertwined volumes constitute a prophecy—as yet unfulfilled—of its resurrection and continuance, they stand nonetheless as Ozymandian stones in the vast sands of modernism.

²⁷ Eliot, who respected Yeats's craftsmanship and development but not the esoteric underpinnings of his work, had continued to develop his view of Yeats's 'foreign mind' in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933): 'No one can read Mr. Yeats's *Autobiographies* and his earlier poetry without feeling that the author was trying to get as a poet something like the exaltation to be obtained . . . from hashisch or nitrous oxide. He was very much fascinated by self-induced trance states, calculated symbolism, mediums, theosophy, crystal-gazing, folklore and hobgoblins . . . but you cannot take heaven by magic, especially if you are, like Mr. Yeats, a very sane person' (140). And in *After Strange Gods* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), he extended I. A. Richards's criticism of Yeats's esotericism by stating that 'Mr. Yeats's "supernatural world" was the wrong supernatural world, not a world of real Good and Evil, of holiness or sin, but a highly sophisticated lower mythology summoned, like a physician, to supply the fading pulse of poetry with some transient stimulant so that the dying patient may utter his last words' (46).

Vacillation: Between What and What?

Helen Vendler

THIS ESSAY IS in memory of Derry Jeffares and his writings on Yeats, especially his *Commentary* on the poems, with its helpful notes and its quotations of applicable remarks by Yeats. When ‘Vacillation’ was first published (in the 1932 Cuala Press volume *Words for Music Perhaps*), Yeats tried to stabilize the content of the parts by affixing a title to each, each thereby becoming a stage of a vacillating journey toward wisdom and joy. His subtitles (some of them revised) were, in order:

- I: ‘What Is Joy’:
- II and III: ‘The Burning Tree’ (originally ‘Tree’):
- IV: ‘Happiness’ (originally ‘Aimless Joy’):
- V: ‘Conscience’ (originally ‘Remorse’):
- VI: ‘Conquerors’ (originally ‘The Meaning of All Song’):
- VII: ‘A Dialogue’ (originally ‘Dialogue of soul & heart’):
- VIII: ‘Von Hügel’ (originally ‘The Choice’). (*NC* 299–302)

In the 1933 printing of ‘Vacillation’ in *The Winding Stair*, Yeats dropped all his subtitles, and left the parts of his sequence to speak for themselves.

Yeats perhaps decided to delete the early subtitles because he had not reached a consistency of naming. Some subtitles name an abstraction: ‘Joy,’ ‘Happiness,’ ‘Remorse.’ Part II, ‘The Burning Tree’ (the first part to be composed), takes its title from a mythological image (found in the *Mabinogion*). Part VI focuses on a recurrent historical phenomenon—‘Conquerors.’ Part VII bears the name of its rhetorical genre (‘A Dialogue’); and the concluding poem is headed by the surname of a contemporary (‘Von Hügel’). In the end, Yeats rejected his original sequence-title—‘Wisdom’—and let all the

poems, untitled, fall under the single provocative title ‘Vacillation.’ ‘Vacillation between what and what?’ the reader is forced to ask—and then must enter the sequence to find out the commanding poles between which the poet vacillates.

Rejecting subtitles, Yeats finally distinguished the members of the sequence by the forms into which he cast them. I’ll come to the forms as I look at individual poems, but let me begin by confessing that I did not treat ‘Vacillation’ in my book on Yeats and lyric form because its problems of both sentiment and form seemed to me at the time too difficult.¹ I have already mentioned the first question a reader might pose: Vacillation between what and what? Subsequent questions arise: Is there a resolution to this serious vacillation? If so, why is the last poem so jaunty? Why should a free-thinking poet close with an address to a Catholic writer on mysticism? Why the complete absence of things Irish from this sequence? Why fold the Greek myth of Attis into a Welsh myth of a divided and burning tree? (Although Yeats’s source for the tree is the *Mabinogion*, a Celtic poem, he does not mention its name, thereby depriving the legend of national specificity.) Why does the poem originally called ‘Conquerors’ depart in its closing stanza from its historical focus? Why is a landscape viewed under summer sun and wintry moon presented as the obverse of conscience? Why, in the crucial but equivocal central moment of happiness in a café, is the poet’s body said to ‘blaze’? And what provokes that ‘blaze’ into being? Why did Yeats delete Shakespeare from the poem after having originally coupled him with Homer, saying ‘Shakespeare and Homer sang original sin’?² To me, the poems of ‘Vacillation’ were baffling both in themselves and in their order in the sequence as a whole. And although its opening question—‘What is joy?’—is never directly answered, one must ask whether there is an implicit rebuttal to death and remorse that deserves the name of joy. What follows are some speculations, helped very much by seeing the sequence evolve through its many drafts.

¹ *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

² W. B. Yeats, *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems*, ed. David R. Clark (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), henceforth *WPM*. All references to the drafts of “Vacillation” are drawn from this volume (36-89). The subtitles are found (7-81).

What Blake named ‘contraries’ (without which there is no progression)³ Yeats renames as ‘extremities’ (a spatial metaphor) and ‘antinomies’ (two things that cannot coexist at the same time). Both concepts—spatial extension and temporal succession—are eternally present in the human universe, and each requires the other to produce the tormenting friction—and therefore the energy—of life. Yeats’s mind tirelessly produced images of antithesis, and as soon as we let his poems pass randomly before our mind, his contraries arise: the sun and the moon, antithetical and primary civilizations, expanding and contracting gyres, the noble and the beggar-man, the full of the moon and the dark of the moon, will and fate, self and mask. The myth of ‘Plato’s parable’—that each of us is half of an original sphere—is being enacted in every pair of Yeatsian antitheses. In the persona of Michael Robartes, in 1919, Yeats sketched one extreme version of vacillation: Robartes undergoes the irreconcilable ‘double vision’ of free will and determinism, representing himself as brought to a ‘pitch of folly’ by vacillation, by being ‘caught between the pull | Of the dark moon and the full.’

In his sixties, however, writing ‘Vacillation’ in 1931–32, Yeats casts a cold eye of estimation on his own system of contraries, asking himself whether his sense of life as a constant vacillation from one pole to another is an accurate one. Is it the only possible model of life? Is it an active model in which the soul willingly hurtles from antithesis to antithesis or is it a static model in which the soul is ‘caught,’ like Michael Robartes, between two contesting forces? And if this model of ever-antithetical vacillation is true, as he has asserted over and over, does this model allow for a moment in which one might feel joy rather than imprisonment in an antithetical agon, condemned to an eternal strife? And has he, he wonders, ever felt joy? And if so, what is the relation of joy to those antithetical poles which force a choice on man’s intellect? His one-stanza earlier poem, ‘The Choice,’ intimately related to the later ‘Vacillation,’ begins,

The intellect of man is forced to choose
Perfection of the life or of the work,

³ *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 33.

But by the end of that poem, the very idea of choice has become ‘an empty purse,’ and the perfection of the work, although it feeds the vanity of the poet by day, by night generates only remorse:

That old perplexity an empty purse,
And the day’s vanity, the night’s remorse. (*VP* 495)

Such a bitter poem implicitly asks whether life, in its forced choices and their tragic results, has any space in its system for joy.

It is a cruelly disturbing thought—that one has allowed so little room in one’s own life for joy that one scarcely can remember experiencing it. Yeats’s prelude to the sequence, part I, evokes man’s desperate and incessant course between antinomies, soon to be ended by the burning sword of death and the incinerating brand of the last day, which man is helpless to resist. Yeats’s obstinate final question in his prelude—‘What is joy?’—does not even know whence it arises: confronting death, the body says one thing (‘death’), the heart another (‘remorse’), but no-one speaks up for joy. Part I is an unsettling little ten-line lyric, with no predictable scheme of rhyme. At first, it seems equally unpredictable in its rhythm: is it dimeter? is it trimeter? For its first eight lines, it is pure declaration, admitting no dissent from its pronouncements on the shape of life and the ending of life:

Between extremities
Man runs his course;
A brand, or flaming breath,
Comes to destroy
All those antinomies
Of day and night;
The body calls it death,
The heart remorse.

Thus ends the eight-line opening sentence of Yeats’s prelude. Something in the poet revolts against this bleak geometrizing of life in terms of antinomies, and he bursts out, against his own preceding assertions,

But if these be right
What is joy? (*VP* 499-500)

Yeats’s stunning resilience in old age, bringing him to quarrel with

the very system of antitheses that he drew out of his marrow, motivates 'Vacillation.' He will stand up for joy, even though he cannot as yet characterize it. All he knows—as his part I rhyme tells us—is that 'joy' is the opposite of 'destroy.' The opposite of destruction is creation: what is creation? Does creation bring joy? How is creation related to wisdom, and to death, and to remorse?

The original *ottava rima* lines of 'Vacillation' Yeats ultimately separated into Parts II and III. From the *Mabinogion* Yeats borrows the image of a tree that is half flame, half foliage, introducing it by the age-old formula for the mythical, 'There is a tree...' Within the mythical tree he encloses the mythical figure of Attis (who was castrated by Cybele and transformed into a pine tree). It is clear from the drafts that Yeats means to assert that it is the poet himself who hangs, as the image of Attis, between flame and foliage. (He did not mean that the poet hangs up an image of Attis; no, he is himself Attis, a sacrifice, as Attis was.) In this crucified self-image, the poet, although struck by wonder on beholding the mythical tree, expresses resentment against each of its halves—the 'glittering flame' of intellect and the 'moistened' foliage of body—which are engaged in constant mutual destruction and renewal. The resentment flares up in Yeats's final characterization of each half of the tree. The first half, the flame, is the 'staring fury' of intellectual passion; it resembles on the one hand pure intellect (like the 'staring Virgin' Athena of 'Two Songs from a Play') and on the other it contains the 'fury' of ravaging thought. As Yeats says in 'Meru,' in spite of our human reluctance to disturb the cultural status quo, thought surges up irrepressibly to destroy what we have loved:

man's life is thought,
And he, despite his terror, cannot cease
Ravening through century after century,
Ravening, raging, and uprooting that he may come
Into the desolation of reality (*VP* 563).

The staring fury of mind leads only to a desolate knowledge. And the other half of the tree, the sensual body, is blind: if one chooses the 'blind lush leaf' alone, one can never coldly contemplate exis-

tence. But if, on the other hand, one voluntarily ‘hangs between’ both halves of the mythical tree, one can experience both intellectual passion and sensual feeling without the one cancelling out the other. To be passionately alive in both mind and sense is to know—what? What knowledge has one gained in that tormenting suspension between the awakened spirit and the ignorant flesh? Yeats leaves the answer in a frustrating and frustrated negative; the poet may not know what he knows when he has come into the fullness of his contesting powers, but he does know that whatever he knows, it is not grief. This negative definition of joy—the absence of grief—following the protesting question that ended part I, precludes for the moment any positive description of what joy might be. Yet Yeats has concluded that it is a kind of knowledge, not merely an emotion. And it must be a magnificent kind of knowledge, because Yeats has cast parts II and III into his most elaborate stanza, one that always summons up splendour, the *ottava rima* of ‘Sailing to Byzantium’ and ‘Among School Children.’

Leaving his burning tree behind, Yeats looks, in part III, at the deluded human search for joy through wealth and ambition, and at what would counter it. The language turns coarse as competitive greed comes into view, followed by the destruction of family love that it brings about. Business energy is contrasted with conscious ‘idleness’: is, then, the best way to achieve joy to remain idle and scorn financial competition, thereby winning the love of women and children? As he considers wealth and domesticity, Yeats realizes that neither can figure, for him, as the ultimate location of joy, and so, abandoning both worldly and familial hopes, he turns to the work he must do in old age, now that he has, he believes, freed himself from the ‘Lethean foliage’ of blind bodily desire. The Christian idea of a ‘happy death’ animates, in newly secularized form, his closing injunctions to himself. Keep death in view, he says to himself, and against that image test ‘every work of intellect or faith | And everything that your own hands have wrought.’ Works of intellect are the visible products of philosophy and learning; works of faith are those peculiar achievements grounded in nothing visible or tangible, but nonetheless strong enough to move mountains. Yeats had wrought his own works of intellect and faith—his writings and his nationalist

endeavours—and these must be tested against earlier human masterpieces brought into being by others through those same powerful faculties of mind and soul. All that is done should be worthy of one's moment of death, so that one may come 'Proud, open-eyed, and laughing to the tomb.'

These personal adjectives are strange bed-fellows. Through them, we come to understand that Yeats no longer resents the knowledge brought by the intellect. What was once called 'staring' is now called 'open-eyed'; what was once the matter of tragedy—the castration of Attis—is seen, now that bodily foliage and its blindness are gone, as the poet's proud sacrifice of eros to his art. And 'laughing?' In the end, Yeats wishes to confront the approach of death with the joy of aesthetic self-assertion rather than with tragic anguish. The *ottava rima* connecting the burning tree of part II and the moral injunctions of part III casts our eyes back to that Renaissance Italian quality *sprezzatura*, so prized by Yeats. Aristocratic *sprezzatura* dominates the end of part III, as the poet grandly adjures himself to call 'extravagance of breath' any works not able to stand up to the test of death.

As we eventually notice, Parts IV, V, and VI have in common the fact that they are written in four-beat lines. This siblinghood marks them off as the central moments of the sequence, differing in metre from the puzzling apparently indeterminate beats of part I and the stately pentameters of the *ottava rima* of parts II and III. Yet IV, V, and VI, although siblings in metre, are entirely different in rhyme scheme, as we shall see. They also differ in structure: IV and V have two stanzas each, but VI departs from that binary pattern by choosing to have three stanzas, the third nakedly dissimilar to the first two. I will attempt some explanation of these formal differences as we come to each of these three tetrameter poems.

'Vacillation' has been engaged, from the last line of its opening segment, in the search for the origin, meaning, and function of joy. At last, in part IV, we arrive not at 'joy'—the prompting word of part I—but at the more equivocal word 'happiness.' In one version of the subtitle, Yeats had called this part 'Aimless Happiness,' a phrase borrowed from the earlier poem 'Demon and Beast.' In that poem he recalls a brief space of time in which he found himself freed from the

antinomies of hatred and desire, fiercely named as ‘that crafty demon and that loud beast.’ With the disappearance of hatred and desire, the poet says, ‘I saw my freedom won | And all laugh in the sun.’ The moment of freedom occurs when, after a visit to the National Portrait Gallery, Yeats passes outside and watches birds beside a little lake:

But soon a tear-drop started up,
For aimless joy had made me stop
Beside the little lake
To watch a white gull take
A bit of bread thrown up into the air; (*VP* 400)

Yet he is worried by this ‘aimless joy,’ because he suspects than the enfeeblement of age lies behind it: ‘mere growing old, that brings | Chilled blood, this sweetness brought.’ Liberated for a moment from passionate emotion, allowing himself merely to repose and to gaze amused at an ‘absurd | Portly green-pated bird,’ the poet knows a peculiar new inner state: ‘Being no more demoniac | A stupid happy creature | Could rouse my whole nature.’ He too is for a moment stupid and happy, pure body, pure animal.

This sort of geriatric amnesia, aimlessly letting go both mind and body, demon and beast, hatred and desire, cannot permanently satisfy Yeats in his search for joy. His restless creative drive so exhausts him, however, that he longs for such mindlessness, and he finds it in part V as he had in ‘Demon and Beast.’ Part V is a mysterious poem. The fifty year-old poet is seen sitting in solitude in a crowded London teashop, doing nothing; finished with his tea and no longer reading his book, he allows himself a vacant gaze outside at the street. That gaze is entirely undirected by hatred or desire, uninspired even by the intellectual act of reading a book, or the sense-pleasure of taking tea. While the empty gaze lasts, he is pure body, restricted to one sense alone, that of sight:

My fiftieth year had come and gone,
I sat, a solitary man,
In a crowded London shop,

An open book and empty cup
On the marble table-top (*VP* 501).

The odd form of the stanza—a couplet followed by a tercet—gives the impression of spill-over. We expect the first couplet to generate a second one—but to our surprise the second couplet extends itself by a full line, grows an extra tendril, so to speak. We do not at first know what Yeats intends by this rhyme scheme. From the unremarkable first scene in the unremarkable shop, there grows a remarkable second scene which describes a moment out of time:

While on the shop and street I gazed
My body of a sudden blazed;
And twenty minutes more or less
It seemed, so great my happiness,
That I was blessed and could bless (*VP* 501).

This is a religious exaltation: the poet, having been blessed, can bless others. In its inexplicability, it is reminiscent of the conversion of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner as he watched the water-snakes, those 'happy living things' 'whose every track | Was a flash of golden fire':

A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware,

Yeats's flash of golden fire comes when he rhymes the sedentary 'gazed' with the Blakean 'blazed.' This psychologically ungrounded couplet-statement of bodily ignition is followed by the three-line stair-step amassing of 'happiness,' the three end-rhymes in '-ess' supplemented by an internal rhyme at the close, when the poet 'was blessed and could bless.'

The drafts reveal Yeats's difficulty with this crucial stanza. Here is a slightly regularized earlier version of stanza 2:

For twenty minutes more or less
I sat in utter happiness
Unearned it came, undreamed, unsought,

Happiness empty of all thought
 The happiness the sages taught.⁵

The word and concept ‘happiness,’ introduced in line two of this stanza, is twice repeated in the tercet, in a rather feeble insistence on its utterness. To earn, to dream, to seek: those were the ways through which Yeats had, until this moment, conducted his determined quest for happiness. But this new happiness arrives flaunting its indifference to all these efforts of dreaming passion, earnest work, tenacious search, and persistent thought. It seems that the poet has attained a state of what we can only call nirvana. Nothing has been revealed, no revelation is at hand; the emptying of the mind, taught by Eastern sages (in contrast to the Western sages from Socrates forward) is the source of this happiness.

For a moment Yeats’s claim to a vacant but blessed and blessing happiness makes a felt effect. If this blessedness were a permanent or voluntary state (instead of a twenty-minute unexpected one), the poem could end here. But a twenty-minute total suspension of mind does not create wisdom in the face of death—and that is what Yeats is after in ‘Vacillation’ (which, we recall, took ‘Wisdom’ as its original title).

Mind and conscience must, since the poet is human, re-enter the poem: and they do, producing the ‘remorse’ of part V. In the confession of part V, in which the poet, although he would love to rest, during every season, in pure aesthetic appreciation—of a Shakespearean summer sun gilding the clouds, or a wintry moon dominating with its ‘storm-scattered intricacy’ a sunken field—cannot give in to that temptation: ‘Responsibility,’ he says, ‘so weighs me down.’ In a triumph of arid speech, repudiating his earlier magnificent *ottava rima*, Yeats repeats the Pauline confession of moral insufficiency and active evil: ‘For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do’ (Romans 7: 16, 19). It is not surprising that to the Pauline ‘do’ a poet should add the verb ‘say’:

⁵ WMP, 49. In the transcription of the draft, the words ‘Unearned’, ‘undreamed’ and the final ‘happiness’ are bracketed and prefaced with an editorial question mark. Nonetheless, since they represent the editor’s best guess at the autograph, I feel able to quote them here.

Things said or done long years ago,
 Or things I did not do or say
 But thought that I might say or do,
 Weigh me down, and not a day
 But something is recalled,
 My conscience or my vanity appalled (*VP* 501).

It took Yeats some time to arrive at the solidity of this stanza: it is more reworked than any other of the sequence. He first tried out parallel constructions of the verbs ‘say’ and ‘do’ (italics and slight normalization mine):

Things *said or done* long years ago
 Or *said or done* by yesterday
 Or things I sought to *say or do* (*WMP* 45)

In the next full draft of the poem, he lights upon the idea of a more ‘knotty’ syntax: in lieu of the parallel construction above, he creates a chiasmus using *do* and *say*, but in the process weakens the first *said* or *done* to *done* alone, while borrowing a conspicuous *would* from Saint Paul. (The italics below, illustrating the chiasmus, are mine.)

A thousand things upon me weigh
 Things *done* some thirty years ago
 Or things I did not *do or say*
 But thought that I would *say or do* (*WMP* 45)

Finally, Yeats realizes that to illustrate his Pauline Gordian knot of conscience and remorse, he needs a stronger intertwining, a quasi-double chiasmus: *said/done; do/say; say/do* (italics mine). He also inscribes the vacillating *might* in place of the Pauline determined *would*. The final typescript reads:

Things *said or done* long years ago
 Or things I did not *do or say*
 But thought that I might *say or do*
 Weigh me down, and not a day (*WMP* 77)

But something is recalled;
My conscience or my vanity appalled (*WMP* 85).

And in lieu of the vague and hyperbolical assertion ‘A thousand things upon me weigh’ he invents the solid and believable and specific ‘Things,’ narrowing it down in the penultimate line to the single daily torment of ‘not a day | But *something* is recalled’ (italics mine).

Both happiness (part IV) and conscience (part V), exhibit a single binary shape—two six-line stanzas. But unlike the ‘mounting’ two-rhyme stanza of happiness—a rhymed couplet followed by an escalating rhymed tercet—in IV, the ‘contrastive’ three-rhyme stanza of stinging remorse in V is one in which a prefatory aesthetic or intellectual *abab* quatrain is forcibly countered or enlarged by *cc*, a fierce closing couplet of self-laceration. Exaltation versus self-blame, vacant ‘happiness’ versus remorse. And reading here the word ‘remorse,’ we recall the sequence’s prelude: ‘The body calls it death, | The heart remorse. | But if these be right | What is joy?’

A brief mindless ‘blaze’ will be, and is, undone by conscience; but what can be said about supreme worldly fame? Does it yield joy? In part VI, ‘Conquerors,’ Yeats displays the terminal world-weariness of those who have overcome whole kingdoms: no matter how beautiful the occupied land, or how valiant the battle, or how powerful the conquered civilization, the conquerors, one and all, cry their acquiescence in the extinction not only of themselves but of their gains: ‘Let all things pass away.’ In this third member of Yeats’s central tetrameter group, there are not, as in its two predecessors, introductory couplets with mounting tercets, or fierce quatrains with conclusive couplets: we see merely three wayward tetrameter stanzas, *abaab*, the stanza’s only distinction is its arc of suspense, as one waits to see what line, rhyming with the opening *b*, will end the stanza with a concluding *b*. But no matter what the subject of the different stanzas is, the arc of suspense will yield only one repeated ending: ‘Let all things pass away.’ All suspense in life ends in death.

The problem of part VI is not its long historical view of ancient conquerors, but the conclusion Yeats draws from it in closing the poem. At the end of stanza two the conquerors vanish, and the poet

turns inward, to consider his own worldly gains in the immaterial conquests of his art. Is he like the weary conquerors, acquiescing to obsolescence, or will he hope that his art will last forever? And if a poet should come to agree with the famous conquerors' resignation to transience, why will he do so?

In the closing stanza of part VI, Yeats returns from the historical vision of the conquerors to the tree of part II, but now the tree is the trunk of passion, whose root is man's 'blood-sodden heart.' The antinomies of day and night return from the part I prelude, no longer geometrical 'extremities,' but rather organic 'branches.' And the Attis of part II, hanging between antinomies, returns as the 'gaudy moon' of art hanging in the branches of the mortal tree of passion (there is a side-glance at the root of 'gaudy' in *gaudium*, joy). The full moon of aesthetic perfection, the poet realizes, can sing no song but 'Let all things pass away,' since it knows itself borne up by mortal branches sprung from a mortal heart. Although Yeats flinches at the memory of the losses, personal and national, that have turned the heart into a 'blood-sodden' root resembling the 'blood-saturated ground' of 'Blood and the Moon,' he realizes that he would choose mortality, and its inevitable fated transience, over any proposed immortality.

Yeats acts out this acquiescence to mortality in the forked two-part closing of 'Vacillation.' The moral close is dramatized in the intransigent dialogue-in-couplets between Soul and Heart in part VII, but a different, if parallel, close is acted out in the address to Friedrich von Hügel in part VIII. In part VII, as Soul debates Heart, Yeats resorts to the Greek dramatic mode of stichomythia—in which opponents cast one-sentence speeches at each other. In the slightly earlier 'Dialogue of Self and Soul,' he had already elaborated such an opposition; here (as he replaces 'Self' with 'Heart' as the antagonist of Soul) he can enact the distinct antithesis of Passion and Salvation, in which, as Soul didactically urges spirituality, Heart responds with emotional exclamations and questions. In the first draft, Passion almost got the better of Yeats's art: after Soul says, 'Find Heavenly reality not things that seem,' Heart calls out childishly, 'I am a singer and I need a theme!' When Soul wants him to submit, like Isaiah, to

heavenly inspiration, Heart asserts baldly, ‘No imagery can live in heaven’s blue.’ When Soul counsels salvation, Heart says ‘Shakespeare & Homer sang original sin’ (*WMP* 63).

These mistaken or misguided answers are corrected in the final version. Heart’s complaining ‘I need a theme!’ turns to wiry ironic expostulation: ‘What, be a singer born and lack a theme?’ Instead of the uninspired remark on imagery’s being extinguished in Heaven, Heart utters a repudiation of ‘simplicity’ (in the Aristotelian sense of an indivisible substance): the poet’s heart is unwilling to be ‘Struck dumb in the simplicity of fire!’ Refusing to trace his poetic lineage to a modern Christian author, Shakespeare, Yeats lengthens the lineage of poetry as far back as possible, to the first poet, the unChristian Homer. If ‘original sin’ was Homer’s reiterated theme, we did not need Genesis to reveal it to us. Soul’s last command summons up the very figure of Jesus, beheld in eternity: ‘Look on that fire, salvation walks within.’ (The original draft says, ‘Knock on that door,’ and the animated verb ‘walks’ was originally the static ‘waits.’)¹⁰ Flinging answers back to Soul, the poet, as Heart, proclaims his own allegiance to complexity, mortality, Homer, and the moral imperfection of humanity. He has scorned gold-getting and idle domesticity; he has recovered from his initial resentment of both the Lethean flesh and his Attis-like obligation to full awareness; he has rejected the vacant happiness of the Eastern sages; he is convinced that lunar *gaudium* springs only from ‘blood-sodden’ suffering; and he has willingly joined in the immemorial chorus of the conquerors, ‘Let all things pass away.’ That refrain is a negative ‘*fiat*’—a necessitarian ‘Let there be nothing permanent’ countering God’s ordaining *fiat*—‘Let there be light.’

Why did Yeats frame his dialogue of Soul and Heart in pentameter couplets? Why must what Heart says rhyme directly with what Soul says? Soul, always speaking first, sets the condition of reply: ‘Find something that rhymes with ‘seem.’’ Heart casts about and finds ‘theme.’ To Soul’s ‘desire,’ Heart answers with scorn of heavenly ‘fire.’ As Soul points to the heavenly ‘within’ in which Jesus walks, Heart replies triumphantly with ‘sin.’ The back-and-forth exchange demands persistently that Heart rise to diction contesting the end-rhyme of Soul; and, with the last word, Heart

wins. The pentameters of this dialogue link it with the earlier pentameters of parts II and III, just as the tetrameters of IV, V, and VI had linked those parts together. We seem to be seeing a sequence varying between lighter ‘lyric’ tetrameters and graver ‘meditative’ pentameters. This perception casts us back to our puzzle with part I and its uneven rhythms. Prompted by the many pentameters we have encountered, we hear that part I, too, can be read as perfectly regular pentameters, rhyming *abcab*:

Between extremities man runs his course;
A brand, or flaming breath, comes to destroy
All those antinomies of day and night;
The body calls it death, the heart remorse.
But if these be right, what is joy? (cf. *VP* 499–500)

As soon as we have perceived this rhythmic possibility, we realize that there *is* a regular rhythm to part I: 3 beats, 2 beats, repeated five times. (This realization makes evident the correct scansion of the last sentence: ‘But if these be right, | What is joy?’) And reading our ‘pentameter’ version of part I we realize why there is no second ‘c’ rhyme: after all, the ‘antinomies of day and night’ have been destroyed as time is abolished at death, so their line-rhyme, ‘night,’ can have no double.

Of course, recasting part I into regular tetrameters with a satisfyingly regular rhyme scheme obliterates the very effect the slightly unscannable short lines of the prelude are intended to create—that of an aged poet uttering, in uneven lyric rhythms and irregular rhymes, the most basic question of his life, the question that brings under critical examination the system of antinomies so neatly ordering life in his former invented scheme of contraries. However, this second, pentametric, perception of part I—that under its formal waywardness and baffled energy there lies an unsuspected order and gravity that link it to the later pentameters of the sequence—gives us confidence that Yeats’s question (“What is joy?”) may ultimately yield an answer.

But is part VIII that answer? It would hardly seem so. Part VIII is the most peculiar part of ‘Vacillation,’ consisting, as it does, of a

tolerant examination of Von Hügel's attraction to the supernatural, an attraction Yeats shares but cannot endorse. Geometrical antinomies, the divided mythical tree, the castrated Attis, human responsibility, blood-sodden mortality, and Soul's didactic certainties have demanded severities of tone. But to a fellow human seeker, Yeats thinks, one speaks in the companionable colloquial tones of friend to friend, parting with him only reluctantly. Never was there a more benign anathema ('Must we part? . . . So get you gone') than this address to Friedrich von Hügel , who, in his writings on mysticism, asserted that the body of Saint Teresa of Ávila remained undecayed in its tomb, using fourteeners and hexameters. Its refusal to be consistent is I suppose appropriate for its conversational jog. The familiar tone that Yeats here adopts, the assumption of colleagueship in a willing credulity, is actually shocking when we encounter it fresh from the implacable Soul and the obstinate Heart. There is a free-floating intellectual irresponsibility in the far-flung speculation that the 'self-same hands' of some unspecifiable supernatural demiurge in one mood eviscerated the Pharoahs for Egyptian mummification, and in another mood decided to 'mummify' Saint Teresa by supernatural unction. Yeats's own tolerant irresponsibility makes his point; that speculation about the invisible is simply one more act of the imagining mind, and that, as Blake said in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 'every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth.' The preservation of the Pharoahs is an image of the truth of their secular power; the preservation of the body of Saint Teresa is an image of the truth of her spiritual power, and the presence of the miraculous oil is an image of the healing power of the saint's words.

It is not entirely clear how the apposite closing allusion to the lion and the honeycomb came into Yeats's mind; in the drafting of the poem, it is present from the beginning. Like Yeats's tone, it reinforces the colleagueship that Yeats establishes with Baron Von Hügel; no need to quote the book of Judges, because Von Hügel knows the Bible as well as Yeats, and can catch the swift reference to Samson finding a honeycomb in the lion he had slain. From that fact, Samson invents a riddle (Judges xiv, 5-18): 'Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.' The

riddle suggests the scripturally ‘revealed’ answer to Yeats’s opening question, ‘What is joy?’ ‘Devouring time’ (the eater) produces sweet nourishment; the sweetness of joy emerges from the strength of experience (Samson’s slaying of the strong lion). The rhythm of this coda fits the mood of jaunty conversation between friends; the jogging heptameter suggests a lightheartedness absent from the rest of the poem.

Having decided that every poet’s theme is original sin, the poet can regain gaiety, and drop the austerity of severe implacable choice and the self-laceration of remorse. But part VIII is best characterized as a coda because the drama is already over at the close of part VII, with Heart’s defiant choice of original sin over Soul’s simplicity of fire. Just as Mozart has an equable closing chorus after the disappearance into hell of Don Giovanni, so Yeats writes an exit speech for himself to let the passions settle. And once that is done, he can at last sit down to compose his prelude: ‘Between extremities! Man runs his course.’ Where we might have expected a gradual and inviting prelude, we find a terse summary; and where we might have found a tragic tension at the end, we find a jovial and sociable farewell. The interest of ‘Vacillation’ lies as much in its oscillation between opening oracular wisdom and closing informality as in the philosophical undoings of the poem’s successive positions, beginning with the crucifixion of Attis on the antinomies.

Yet those undoings—of worldly ambition, of conventional domesticity, of aimless ‘happiness,’ of a tragic sense of remorse, of the desire for conquering fame, even of salvation—point Yeats toward the joy that ratifies necessity, in which all vacillation ceases. ‘The meaning of all song’ is ‘Let all things pass away.’ ‘Vacillation’ is a very specialized poem of successive ordeals in the search for the wisdom that brings joy, and does not appeal to those who want to hear in Yeats’s voice an identifiable Irishness or a polemical politics or at least the melancholy of personal love. No Ireland, no politics, no beloved: Yeats strips himself of these overt identity-markers to be a poet not of his own time but of the company of poets, not of a specific life but (as we realize from all the mentions of his increasing age) of the attainment of that ‘old experience’ that Milton prophesied of his Pensero. ‘What’s the meaning of all song?’ Yeats asks in one of his two unlimited questions (of which the other is ‘What

is Joy?'); and he ranges from Egypt and Homer and early modern Spain and England to contemporary Germany to show himself a citizen of *all* song—old or new, local or foreign. It is the naked self, without its embroidered coat of particularity of national or political allegiance, that speaks 'Vacillation'—and this universal Yeats, suspended between the staring fury and the blind lush leaf, should be allowed to play a role in the biography of this poet as important as the personal and nationalist Yeats embodied in 'The Wanderings of Oisin' or 'Parnell's Funeral' or 'Easter 1916.'

W. B. Yeats and the Creative Process: The Example of 'Her Triumph'

Phillip L. Marcus

'HER TRIUMPH' is surely one of the loveliest of W. B. Yeats's poems, and one of the great love poems in the language. It may seem surprising, therefore, that it cannot confidently be related to any actual woman or specific romantic experience in his life.¹ On the other hand, 1926, the year of its composition 'had been a poetic annus mirabilis for WBY. . . . The harvest of that frantic year's writing would stand very near the summit of his artistic achievement' (*Life* 2 338–39). In fact, although the poem literally celebrates the transforming power of love, its covert subject is the creative process itself—and possibly a transforming moment in the evolution of Yeats's own work. Maud Gonne, herself the personal inspiration of so much of his work, had once written to him perceptively that '[w]hat makes the extraordinary charm of your poetry is the terrible though unseen effort of its creation. This somehow makes the atmosphere of a precious jewel about it. Like a gem it is the outcome of a terrible and hidden effort' (*G-YL* 283). In 1916, H. W. Nevinson recorded a conversation in which Yeats 'talked of Freud & Jung and the subconscious self, applying them to art; said the great thing is to reduce the conscious self to humility, as by imitation of some ancient master, leaving the unconscious free to work'.² Similarly, Yeats himself was to tell an interviewer in 1931 that '[t]he thing that gets you over the horrible business of beginning is the

¹ Professor Roy Foster, personal communication, 13 February, 2004.

² Ronald Schuchard, "An Attendant Lord": H. W. Nevinson's Friendship with W. B. Yeats', *Yeats Annual No.* 7 (1990), 283.

momentum of the subconscious. The subconscious is always there, lying behind the mind, ready to leap out. The weight of its momentum grows with experience. The whole aim of consciousness is to make the subconscious its obedient servant. That is why as one grows older one gets happier' (*Life* 2 419). The light tone of most of his statement is belied by the word 'horrible', which chimes with Maud's 'terrible and hidden effort'. His language also shows him drawing upon the concepts of depth psychology to explain his experience, and in fact it is such an approach that offers the most fruitful perspective for interpreting the hidden effort beneath the surface of 'Her Triumph'.

Some of the manuscript record for the composition of 'Her Triumph' seems to have disappeared, but the early stages of what remains might actually refer to a real person or persons, whether someone he knew is imagined to be the speaker or the poet himself is speaking by way of a female mask:

I am not evil now; until you came
 I had thought the shamefulest things imaginabel
 And they but seemed the sweeter for the shame:
 Thought love the better were it casual;
 I had an opium eating friend, a friend
 Who had drunk to drown a melancholy fit
 The coils of the great dragon had no end.³

But the specific detail involving the speaker's 'evil' life was obscured in revision, much of it subsumed into the generalized 'I did the dragon's will'; and 'I had fancied love a casual | Improvisation or a settled game' metamorphoses what nowadays would be called casual sex into something apparently more benign.⁴ Even what are apparently the earliest extant drafts incorporate the protective distancing and generalizing effect provided by the legendary stories of Saint George and Perseus. Some lines at this stage go better with the Christian saint than with the pagan hero: 'In your companionship I turn to

³ W. B. Yeats, *The Winding Stair: Manuscript Materials*, ed. David R. Clark (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 122-23; hereafter abbreviated *WS* and cited parenthetically in the text.

⁴ This change is noted by Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* (1993; rpt. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 213.

God', 'lost in dragon without an end'. In the latter instance, 'lost' seems to have the Dantean sense of 'damned'. In another early draft, the word 'evil' appears repeatedly. But according to the Classical legend, Andromeda is a guiltless victim, a scapegoat, and as the drafts progress the text moves away from whatever the dark 'private' aspects of the poem's donnee might have been towards the paradigm of hero, menacing dragon, and rescued maiden.

As Adrienne A. Munich has shown, the Perseus and Andromeda story was the subject of nearly innumerable Victorian poems and paintings, many of which Yeats certainly knew. His main visual source was Edward Burne-Jones's painting 'The Doom Fulfilled'; his primary literary source may have been William Morris's verse tale 'The Doom of King Acrisius' from *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70). Yeats had read 'as a boy . . . the third volume of *The Earthly Paradise*' (*Au* 141, *CW3* 131), and Morris was to become one of his favourite authors as well as his 'chief of men'). He may have seen the painting when it was first exhibited at the New Gallery in May 1888. He was living in London then and taking French classes at Morris's. In 1902 'The Doom of King Acrisius' was published as a separate volume with photographic reproductions by Frederick Hollyer of 'The Doom Fulfilled' and the other paintings in the Perseus series: a partial realization of the early plan to have Burne-Jones produce illustrations for the entire *Earthly Paradise*, and the first time the poem and the relevant painting were united.⁵ In this volume the freed Andromeda is described on the page following the reproduction of the painting in terms that 'Her Triumph' seems to echo:

For her alone the sea-breeze seemed to blow,
For her in music did the white surf fall,
For her alone the wheeling birds did call

⁵ Adrienne Auslander Munich, *Andromeda's Chains: Gender and Interpretation in Victorian Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Christopher Wood, *Burne-Jones* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1998), 105-06; William Morris, *The Doom of King Acrisius* (New York: R. H. Russell, 1902); Joseph R. Dunlap, *The Book That Never Was* (New York: Oriole Editions, 1971). Of special importance on Yeats's visual sources for the poem is the study by David R. Clark in *Yeats at Songs and Choruses* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), 90-136. Although my own approach and interpretation are very different, I am indebted to Professor Clark's work throughout my own study.

Over the shallows, and the sky for her
 Was set with white clouds, far away and clear:
 E'en as her love, this strong and lovely one
 Who held her hand, was but for her alone (55).

In Yeats's poem, the speaker in her transformed state similarly feels a new relationship to the natural world, staring 'astonished' at the sea; and that world perceives her and her rescuer differently, as evidenced by the miraculous strange bird shrieking at them. Morris's 'wheeling' birds would have carried implications for Yeats of a cyclical dimension to the experience, inaugurating not only a personal transformation but a new historical era as well; and in fact this perspective was to emerge in his own poem. Two cancelled references in the manuscripts—'I thought the poets dreamed' and 'I laughed at poets talk'—had made artistic renderings of the story part of the story (*WS* 126-27). Munich's study convincingly demonstrates that the majority of Victorian poets and painters who dealt with Perseus and Andromeda used their encounter as a vehicle for the expression of fears about women and their increasing demands for political rights and greater personal freedom.⁶ Yeats, however, was attracted to the myth for different reasons, reasons specifically connected with the creative process and the sources of his own creative power.

Yeats's work on the materials that became *A Vision* (dated 1925 but actually published in 1926) immersed him in speculations that bore upon the creative process, and elements of those speculations emerged in *The Trembling of the Veil*, written 1920-22 and published in 1922 and then again in 1926 in *Autobiographies*. One passage in particular might be considered the earliest version of 'Her Triumph', a virtual scenario for the poem he was to write a few years later:

When a man writes any work of genius, or invents some creative action, is it not because some knowledge or power has come into his mind from beyond his mind? It is called up by an image, as I think...but our images must be given to us, we cannot choose them deliberately (*Au* 272, *CW3* 216).

⁶ Two other relevant studies are Joseph A. Kestner, *Mythology and Misogyny: The Social Discourse of Nineteenth-Century British Classical-Subject Painting* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989) and Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siecle Culture* (1986; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

As the passage continues it becomes clear that 'mind' is used here in the sense of 'consciousness': 'I know now that revelation is from the self, but from that age-long memoried self, that shapes the elaborate shell of the mollus and the child in the womb, that teaches the birds to make their nest; and that genius is a crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind'. Yeats sometimes used the term 'Self' to refer to Unity of Being, what Jung termed individuation; but as he uses the term here, it corresponds to the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious. So creation of a 'work of genius' involves the joining of consciousness with the realm of the archetypes (a term used by both Yeats and Jung to refer to the paradigmatic forms found in the collective unconscious).⁷ Perhaps the 'Gates' and 'Gate-keepers' to which Yeats goes on to refer correspond to the archetypes themselves, which often assume in human experience a personified form: shadow, animus, anima, and so forth. Jung argued that the conscious mind must *confront* them as part of the process of achieving wholeness, and Yeats describes something similar in this passage: 'through their dramatic power they bring our souls to crisis'.... The 'chosen man' is brought 'to the greatest obstacle he may confront without despair'. Yeats had already explored this aspect of the process in 'Ego Dominus Tuus'. In *The Trembling of the Veil* Dante and Villon serve as his examples of the greatest artists, those who have successfully undergone such a trial. In *A Vision* he would place Dante at Phase 17, the phase at which Unity of Being is most possible (*CVA* 75). In that volume he also speculated that either he identified strongly with Villon, 'in whom the human soul for the first time stands alone before a death ever present to the imagination, without help from a Church that is fading away'; or alternatively that he 'read into Villon's suffering our modern conscience which gathers intensity as we approach the end of an era'. In the latter case, what seemed to Yeats 'pitiless self-judgment may have been but heroic gaiety' (*CVA* 200-01). These men achieved what few other writers have: 'The two halves of their nature are so completely joined that they seem to labour for their objects, and yet to desire whatever happens, being at the same instant predestinate and free, creation's very self. We gaze at such men in awe, because we gaze not at a work of art, but at the re-creation of the man through that art, the birth of a new species of man'. In contemplation of them 'the

⁷ See Phillip L. Marcus, *Yeats and Artistic Power*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), xviii-xix and xxvii, n. 9.

hairs of our heads stand up, because that birth, that re-creation, is from terror', from what Maud Gonne had called 'the terrible though unseen effort' of poetic creation.

In contrast to Dante and Villon Yeats places 'great lesser writers like Landor and like Keats', in whose work 'we are shown that Image and that Mask as something set apart; Andromeda and her Perseus—though not the sea-dragon'. . . . The distinction between the two pairs of writers, Yeats goes on to make clear, is that unlike Dante and Villon, Landor and Keats 'lacked their Vision of Evil'. Had the latter possessed that vision, it would have been represented by the 'sea-dragon'. The focus upon the creative process as involving the joining of consciousness with archetypal unconscious contents, producing 'a new species of man' at whom we 'gaze . . . in awe', the necessity of the Vision of Evil, and the specific reference to the story of Perseus and Andromeda all anticipate 'Her Triumph' and suggest that the poem might be read as a sort of allegory of Yeats's prose speculations (*Au* 273; *CW3* 217).

The early draft of the poem in which the word 'evil' resounds has a new meaning in this light. In it the speaker was made to say 'O I am evil'; but also 'I was most evil' and finally 'I am not evil now'. Whatever associations the word might have had with a private biographical event and/or the Christian values of Saint George (and Dante, perhaps), in terms of the Perseus and Andromeda story, the draft seems to show Yeats working towards the realization that the proper vehicle for 'evil' would be not Andromeda but the dragon. The necessity of this identification from a Jungian point of view, and the psychological implications of prose passage and poem alike, are illuminated by Erich Neumann's *On the Origins and History of Consciousness*, a study that takes its starting point from and develops fully the perspective of Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious*, a translation published in 1916 of his *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* (1912). Jung's study, written at a point when he was beginning to find Freud's 'conceptual framework . . . unendurably narrow',⁸ was a transitional work, survivals of that Freudian conceptual framework mixed with elements of what would become Jung's own distinctive position, a 'mythopsychology' showing how 'the fantasy life of the individual is connected with mythological material' and enabling

⁸ C. G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, 2nd ed., trans. R. F. C. Hull (1967; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), xxiii; hereafter abbreviated as *ST* and cited parenthetically in the text.

him ‘to get closer to the archetypal structural elements of the psyche’.⁹ What might seem individual memories might really be “phylogenetic” reminiscences’, a major step from Freud’s largely personal unconscious towards the concept of the collective unconscious.¹⁰ Jung was later to write that one of his main purposes in writing the book ‘was to free medical psychology from the subjective and personalistic bias that characterized its outlook at that time, and to make it possible to understand the unconscious as an objective and collective psyche’.¹¹ There is reason to think that at some point Yeats actually read at least part of this book, for in the Introduction (first published in 1932) to *Fighting the Waves* he says ‘a German psychoanalyst has traced the ‘mother complex’ back to our mother the sea’ (*VP* 571), which seems to refer to the following passage from *Psychology of the Unconscious*:

The sound resemblance of *mar*, *mere* with *meer*=sea and Latin *mare*=sea is remarkable, although etymologically accidental. Might it refer back to “the great primitive idea of the mother” who, in the first place, meant to us our individual world and afterwards became the symbol of all worlds? Goethe said of the mothers, “They are encircled by images of all creatures.” The Christians, too, could not refrain from reuniting their mother of God with water. “Ave Maris stella” is the beginning of a hymn to Mary. Then again it is the horses of Neptune which symbolize the waves of the sea....¹²

⁹ Gerhard Wehr, *Jung: A Biography*, trans. David M. Weeks (German edition 1985; New York: Shambala Publications, 1987), 127–28.

¹⁰ See also *The Freud-Jung Letters*, ed. William McGuire, trans. Ralph Manheim and R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 450: ‘The so-called “early memories of childhood” are not individual memories at all but phylogenetic ones’; and Wehr, 144: ‘From here it was no longer a great step from Freud’s personal unconscious to the “collective unconscious”’.

¹¹ *ST* xxiv. The conflict between Freud and Jung involved many other issues, of course; see C. G. Jung, ‘Freud and Jung: Contrasts’ in *Freud and Psychoanalysis*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (1961; rpt. with corrections 1970), 333–40; C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffe, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, revised ed. (New York: Putnam Books, 1973), 146–69; George B. Hogenson, *Jung’s Struggle with Freud*, revised ed. (Wilmette, Illinois: Chiron Publications, 1994), 36–42 *et passim*; Phyllis Grosskurth, *The Secret Ring* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1991), 36–52; Paul Roazen, *Freud and His Followers* (1975; rpt. New York: Da Capo Press, 1992), 224–96; Deirdre Bair, *Jung* (Boston: Little Brown, 2003), especially 201–40; and Wehr, 127–60.

¹² C. G. Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious*, trans. Beatrice M. Hinkle (1916; rpt. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1949), 283.

If Yeats did see this passage at the time of writing the Introduction, if not before, he might have been attracted by the resonance of the final sentence quoted above with the title of his own rewritten play; in any case, he seems to have recognized the essential procedure adopted by Jung in the book, the movement from the personal to the archetypal.¹³ For the purposes of understanding 'Her Triumph', however, establishing that Yeats had any direct knowledge of Jung's work at the time he wrote his poem is unnecessary: either Jung's own theory of the collective unconscious or the two men's equally great indebtedness to the tradition of 'the perennial philosophy' would be sufficient to explain the similarities.

Because *The Psychology of the Unconscious* was written during the period when Jung's perspective was undergoing a major redefinition, he came to feel that it was 'in urgent need of revision' (*ST* xxiii), and late in his life published a revised version as *Symbols of Transformation* (1952), but even then he felt too limited by the original study to bring it totally into line with his mature thought. Thus he welcomed *The Origins and History of Consciousness* (1954) as the realization with 'outstanding success' of what he himself had attempted to do, and as a further advance: 'he has succeeded in constructing a unique history of the evolution of consciousness and at the same time in representing the body of myths as the phenomenology of this same evolution'.¹⁴ Neumann, in turn, saw his own study as 'an application of the analytical psychology of C. G. Jung, even where we endeavor to amplify this psychology, and even though we may speculatively overstep its boundaries' (xv). Jung had in fact anticipated Neumann's core idea as early as 1909, when he had written to Freud 'I feel more and more that a thorough understanding of the psyche (if possible at all) will only come through history or its help. Just as an understanding of anatomy and ontogenesis is possible only on the basis of phylogenesis and comparative anatomy. For

¹³ See James M. Olney, *The Rhizome and the Flower: The Perennial Philosophy—Yeats and Jung* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 6; Olney is certain that Yeats was referring to Jung but also that 'he only half understood what he was talking about and that [his] information came from what someone told him rather than from a reading of Jung'. My own view is that Yeats's comments in the passage in question do show a clear understanding of Jung's approach.

¹⁴ Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, with a Foreword by C. G. Jung, trans. R. F. C. Hull (originally published in German in 1949; English edition 1954; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), xiv; hereafter abbreviated as *OHC* and cited parenthetically in the text.

this reason antiquity now appears to me in a new and significant light. What we now find in the individual psyche—in compressed, stunted, or one-sidedly differentiated form—may be seen spread out in all its fullness in times past. Happy the man who can read these signs!¹⁵ There is no question, of course, of Yeats having been familiar with Neumann's book, but it is useful for understanding the psychological dimension of 'Her Triumph' precisely because it draws the crucial aspects of Jung's emerging thought into a 'unified whole' (*OHC* xiii), and because one of its 'amplifications' involves an interpretation of the Perseus and Andromeda story, which Jung had not discussed.

The core of Neumann's argument is that 'in the course of its development, the individual ego consciousness has to pass through the same archetypal stages which determined the evolution of consciousness in the life of humanity. The individual has in his own life to follow the road that humanity has trod before him, leaving traces of its journey in the archetypal sequence of the mythological images' examined in his study (*OHC* xvi). Mythology, in other words, is composed of *projections* of the unconscious, so that by interpreting the one we can come to understand the other (*OHC* 262-63 *et passim*). More specifically, Neumann claims, '[t]he evolution of consciousness as a form of creative evolution is the peculiar achievement of Western man. Creative evolution of ego consciousness means that, through a continuous process stretching over thousands of years, the conscious system has absorbed more and more unconscious contents and progressively extended its frontiers' (*OHC* xviii). He discerns three 'mythological stages in the evolution of consciousness': 'the Creation Myth', the Hero Myth', and 'the Transformation Myth' (*OHC* 5), and all of these, but especially the second and third, are important for understanding Yeats's poem. The emergence of consciousness from the primal unconscious appears in mythology as the hero's fight with the symbols of that archetypal androgynous primal state, the slaying of the transpersonal (this in contradistinction to Freud) Father and the Terrible Mother (again, not Woody Allen's 'castrating Zionist' but the negative transpersonal archetype—"the obsolete psychic stage which threatens to swallow us up again' (*OHC* 182). Projected into mythological images, '[t]he three basic elements of the hero myth were the hero, the dragon, and the treasure' (*OHC*

¹⁵ *The Freud-Jung Letters*, 269.

191); the last frequently takes the form of a captive female, corresponding in Jungian terms to the anima or unconscious female side of the male psyche. Through the hero's slaying of the dragon, this 'feminine image extricates itself from the grip of the Terrible Mother, a process known in analytical psychology as the crystallization of the anima from the mother archetype'.¹⁶ The 'task of the hero is to free, through her, the living relation to the 'you', to the world at large' (*OHC* 202). Contact with the anima figure 'is the source of all fruitfulness', the 'world of art, of epic deeds, poesy, and song . . . revolves round the liberated captive' (*OHC* 203). In other words, the myth presents allegorically not only the essential Jungian process of individuation, of full self-realization and wholeness, but also the creative process lying behind a work of art. As a specific illustration of this argument, Neumann chooses the story of Perseus 'as a paradigm of the hero myth' (*OHC* 213): 'the sequence so typical of the hero myth is recapitulated in the story of Perseus. The killing of the transpersonal mother and father (the Medusa and the sea monster) precedes the rescue of the captive, Andromeda' (*OHC* 216).

By the backward light of Neumann's argument we can see that in 'Her Triumph' Yeats was embodying the story of his own self-realization and of the process whereby the poem itself was created. 'I did the dragon's will until you came', for example, personifies the anima recalling 'her' captive state before her rescue by the hero and her 'crystallization' from the mother archetype. The next several lines elaborate 'doing the dragon's will' at a superficial level, but much of the language used has a deeper significance as well. '[W]ill' and 'fancied' are terms from a faculty psychology outmoded by the work of Freud and Jung. The manuscript versions had featured in this context the word 'thought': 'I was all evil thought until you came', 'My thoughts were full of evil', 'I thought the evil things unspeak in MS NLI 13589 (29), 1v; and 'I thought the shamefulst things imagin-

¹⁶ Jung offered an early version of this paradigm in a lecture given in 1916 and available in English translation in 1917: 'It is precisely the strongest and best among men, the heroes, who give way to their regressive longing and purposely expose themselves to the danger of being devoured by the monster of the maternal abyss. But if a man is a hero, he is a hero because, in the final reckoning, he did not let the monster devour him, but subdued it, not once but many times. Victory over the collective psyche alone yields the true value—the capture of the hoard, the invincible weapon, the magic talisman, or whatever it be that the myth deems most desirable'. See *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, 2nd ed., trans. R. F. C. Hull (1966; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 287.

abel' and 'Thought love the better were it casual' (MS NLI 13,592 (5), 2v (*WS* 122-23, 120-21). The word 'thought' resonates with many other Yeats poems, including 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', in which it appears repeatedly and ironically; and, later, 'Meru' (But man's life is thought . . .) and 'The Gyres' ('Things thought too long can be no longer thought'). In all these instances it is associated with the end of an historical cycle. Even more relevant is 'Michael Robartes and the Dancer', which opens with a description of a painting of Saint George and the Dragon and includes the punning line 'The half-dead dragon was her thought'. This poem also anticipates 'Her Triumph' more generally in its consideration of male / female issues and in the use of a female speaker (there balanced by a male one). None of the 'thought' references survived into the final text, but the underlying concept remains in the historical dimension of the finished poem.

Other words in lines 2-6 that have a deeper significance include 'heavenly' and 'fall' (linked with 'temptation' in the earliest draft), which have traditional religious associations but also correspond to the psychological concept of primal unity, 'the perfect beginning because the opposites have not yet flown apart' (*OHC* 8), represented in Neumann's schema by 'the circular snake, the primal dragon of the beginning that bites its own tail, the self-begetting *Uroboros*' ('The coils of the great dragon had no end' in Yeats's drafts [*WS* 122-23]) and the 'fall into division' at which point 'the ego begins to emerge from its identity with the uroboros, . . . being born and descending into the lower world of reality, full of dangers and discomforts (*OHC* 39) and the archetypal Feminine and Masculine have been differentiated.¹⁷ Finally, 'deeds' and 'gave the moment wings' anticipate Perseus with the winged shoes of Hermes: 'wing heeled Persius' [sic] in NLI 13,592 (5), 2v (*WS* 122-23).

The turning point of the poem at all levels comes in line seven, 'And then you stood among the dragon-rings', which in terms of depth psychology would correspond to the moment when the conscious element of the psyche confronts and overcomes the threat of powerful unconscious forces. The involvement of Perseus in the dragon's coils is unusual in iconographic versions of the story (found among Yeats's possible visual sources only in Burne-Jones's 'The Doom Fulfilled') and suggests the close bond and also the tension

¹⁷ Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother*, 2nd ed., trans. Ralph Manheim (1963; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 21. See also 12.

between conscious and unconscious dimensions. In terms of the creative process, this is the moment of the ‘crisis that joins the buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind’, as Yeats had put it in *The Trembling of the Veil*. It includes the sea-dragon and therefore the ‘Vision of Evil’ that he felt distinguished the greatest artists. ‘[M]astered’ in line eight is also significant in psychological terms, for as Neumann makes clear the hero figure’s triumph has a ‘patriarchal’ dimension in that the *dominance* of the *matriarchal* has been ended. But the new state is not a substitution of one dominance for another; it corresponds historically to a period *before* ‘the female is subjugated’ (*OHC* 199), and the goal is a *balance* of male and female elements.¹⁸

The final two lines of ‘Her Triumph’, ‘And now we stare astonished at the sea, | And a miraculous strange bird shrieks at us’, apparently came comparatively easily to Yeats, for along with ‘And broke the chain and set my ankles free’ they were the first lines of the poem to reach final form (*WS* 122-23). Unquestionably they correspond to the final stage in Neumann’s schema, the Transformation. Neumann relates this moment to the anthropological researches of Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*:

Every culture hero has achieved a synthesis between consciousness and the creative unconscious. He has found within himself the fruitful center, the point of renewal and rebirth which, in the New Year fertility festival, is identified with the creative divinity, and upon which the continued existence of the world depends (*OHC* 212).

The stress here on imaginative fertility and creativity continues throughout Neumann’s analysis of the Perseus and Andromeda story: ‘[i]t is, however, impossible to find the treasure unless the hero has first found and redeemed his own soul’. This statement corresponds precisely to the manuscript line ‘You have redeemed my soul’ (*NLI* 13,592 (5), 2v *WS* 122-23]). ‘The inner receptive side is, on the subjective level, the rescued captive, . . . who is at once man’s inspi-

¹⁸ The goal, as Neumann makes clear in his companion study *The Great Mother*, is a *balance* of male and female elements: ‘the peril of present-day mankind springs in large part from the one-sidedly patriarchal development of the male intellectual consciousness, which is no longer held in balance by the matriarchal world of the psyche. In this sense the exposition of the archetypal-psychical world of the Feminine that we have attempted in our work is also a contribution to a future therapy of culture’ (xlii-xliii).

ration, his beloved and mother, the enchantress and prophetess. . . . [T]he fruitfulness of the hero who gains the captive is a human and cultural fruitfulness. From the union of the hero's ego with the creative side of the soul, when he "knows" and realizes both the world and the anima, there is begotten the true birth, the synthesis of both' (*OHC* 213-14).

The subjective 'we' and objective 'us' of Yeats's final lines are crucial, as they point to the union and balanced relationship of the male and female elements of the psyche, the 'hierosgamos' or sacred marriage of occult tradition. As Neumann puts it, '[t]he symbolic marriage of ego-hero and anima, as well as being the precondition of fertility, offers a firm foundation on which the personality can stand and fight the dragon, whether this be the dragon of the world or of the unconscious.' Remarkably, Yeats's drafts contain the same phrase: 'The dragon of the world' (NLI 13,592 (5), 2v [WS 122-23]). Neumann continues, '[h]ero and princess, ego and anima, man and woman pair off and form the personal center which, modeled on the First Parents and yet opposed to them, constitutes the proper sphere of action. In this marriage, which in the oldest mythologies was consummated at the New Year festival immediately after the defeat of the dragon, the hero is the embodiment of the "heaven" and father archetype, just as the fruitful side of the mother archetype is embodied in the figure of the rescued virgin' (*OHC* 213). In *To the Lighthouse*, written largely in the same year as 'Her Triumph',¹⁹ Virginia Woolf was to depict this process symbolically in the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe (the artist in whose psyche the male and female elements must fuse); and in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) she would assert directly that 'the androgynous mind' (figured as a married couple) was essential to the creative process.

The lovers in Yeats's poem 'stare astonished at the sea' not because they have never seen it but because their new way of seeing transforms it, they inhabit 'a new heaven and a new earth'. And because they, too, have been transformed, they represent 'a new species of man'. As Yeats had put it in *The Trembling of the Veil*, 'we gaze at such men in awe;... and it may even seem that the hairs of our heads stand up, because that birth, that recreation, is from terror' Thus the 'miraculous strange bird' (which David Clark has suggested

¹⁹ Julia Briggs, *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2005), 166.

might derive in part from a Blakean passage identifying it as an ‘illustration of the Moment of Inspiration, as seen by the Poet’) ‘shrieks’ at them.²⁰ And as ‘creation’s very self’, they constitute both the triumphant conclusion of ‘Her Triumph’ and the symbols of its genesis as well as a celebration of the creative highpoint that 1926 represented for its author.

The romantic aspect of this moment in the poem naturally leads to speculations about some contemporary romantic involvement in Yeats’s own life, speculations that up to now at least have proven fruitless. Perhaps, however, in the final analysis the autobiographical core of ‘Her Triumph’ was the ‘sacred marriage’ of the poet and his wife. After nine years of marriage and two children, the superficial romance of their relationship had no doubt faded; but at a deeper level those same years had only intensified the bond. George Yeats, after all, had been since their marriage Yeats’s own direct link to the unconscious, via the automatic script and other methods, had served as the conduit through which that ‘knowledge or power ha[d] come into his mind from beyond his mind’. The most extended fruit of their collaboration, the first version of *A Vision*, had been published shortly before ‘Her Triumph’. In that volume itself Yeats had celebrated their collaboration and acknowledged Mrs. Yeats’s crucial role elliptically by including the poem ‘The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid’. The spirits themselves had said ‘we have come to give you metaphors for poetry’ (*AVB* 8), and, as Helen Vendler long ago demonstrated, *A Vision* itself can be read as an account of the creative process.²¹ In this context, ‘Her Triumph’ highlights both the success of the Instructors’ mission as manifested in Yeats’s creative abundance in 1926 (something despaired of not long before in ‘The Tower’) and the union of husband and wife, male and female, subjective and objective, conscious and unconscious, ‘the hero’s ego and the creative side of the soul’ through which it came about.

In Jungian theory it is only when a man has accomplished the freeing of his anima that he can ‘achieve his first true capacity for relatedness to women’.²² What impact if any the process had upon Yeats’s own relationships can never certainly be known. It may be

²⁰ Clark, *Yeats at Songs and Choruses*, 98.

²¹ Helen Hennessy Vendler, *Yeats’s ‘Vision’ and the Later Plays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

²² Joseph Henderson, ‘Ancient Myths and Modern Man’, in *Man and His Symbols*, ed. Carl G. Jung (1964; rpt. New York: Dell, 1968), 117.

said with greater confidence that his poem celebrating that act extends the treatment of the Perseus and Andromeda story in a way more positive than was typical among Yeats's Victorian predecessors. The contemporary scholar Elizabeth Cullingford, imagining "alternatives beyond appropriation"—instances, however rare, when [the male writer] has let femaleness transform, redefine, his textual erotics, allowed himself *to be read through* femininity and femaleness', has speculated that Yeats in 'Her Triumph' has provided such an alternative, though she is still disturbed that he 'strips his modern woman of her clothing and her power in the love game and restores her, naked and grateful, to her rock by the sea'.²³ Perhaps, as Cullingford suggests, 'the nature of the myth' itself makes such reservations inevitable. A comparison of Yeats's poem with a contemporary painting by a female artist, the 'Andromeda' (1927–28) of Tamara de Lempicka, supports such a supposition.²⁴ In this modernist work there is *no* ocean; and the rock to which traditionally the heroine has been bound has been metamorphosed into an urban space with Cubist skyscrapers. Moreover, there is no Perseus. Andromeda herself, placed to the very front of the picture plane and nearly filling the large canvas, is an imposing figure. In Jungian terms she would make a formidable personification of the anima. But the painting remains ambiguous: does Andromeda's enigmatic expression suggest a search for the absent rescuer? Or is his absence the point? She looks powerful enough to break the binding chains herself—no rescuer needed. Was the artist exploiting the erotic dimension of Andromeda's plight, exposing her to 'the male gaze', or celebrating post-War female power and independence?

Neumann's paradigm also has an historical dimension, and this, too, is relevant to the interpretation of Yeats's poem. '[T]hese things are true also of nations', Yeats had suggested at the end of the passage in *The Trembling of the Veil* (CW 218). At this level, 'the hostile dragon is the old order' (OHC 182), and the hero is the avatar of a new era and is 'destined to bring that new order into being and destroy the old' (OHC 175). His task is to 'awaken the sleeping images of the

²³ *Gender and History*, 214. Elsewhere in her discussion of the poem Cullingford notes that '[p]sychoanalytic critics... celebrate literary cross-dressing... and Jung exhorts men to discover and liberate the *anima*' (203), but she does not apply that approach herself.

²⁴ The painting is reproduced in Gilles Néret, *Tamara de Lempicka 1898–1980* (Köln: Benedikt Taschen, 1993), 27.

future which can and must come forth from the night, in order to give the world a new and better face' (*OHC* 174). Of course Yeats's fascination with historical cycles and points of apocalyptic historical transformation goes back to the very early years of his career, to such seminal texts as *The Wanderings of Oisin* and 'The Secret Rose'. But the researches that he and Mrs. Yeats had been conducting since 1917 had culminated in the new synthesis of the 'Dove or Swan' section of *A Vision* (1925/1926). Both international events since the beginning of World War I and the Russian Revolution and Yeats's experiences as a Senator in post-Revolutionary Ireland offered him abundant new evidence that the end of an historical cycle was approaching, and he expected that times were destined to grow still darker before the dawn of any new era. His visions of the future were often bleak, 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' being a case in point. 'Her Triumph', however, symbolically anticipates the moment of the new era's arrival in more positive terms. Morris's poem had connected the story of Perseus and Andromeda with 'wheeling birds' and in Yeats's drafts the word 'thought' hinted at the moment of cycle end. In the final version, the dragon's 'rings' (not typically stressed in the iconographic tradition before Yeats) identify it with the cyclical process as well as the old order, and the transformed lovers' vision in the final lines does 'give the world a new and better face'.

Only implied in this poem but clearly discernible in other Yeatsian contexts is the artist's role in the process of historical transformation. In another episode of the Perseus legend, the winged horse Pegasus springs from the decapitated trunk of the Medusa. In Neumann's view, 'the winged horse strikes the fountain of poesy from the earth . . . [T]his aspect of the Pegasus myth lies at the root of all creativity' (*OHC* 217-19). His statement that the hero's task is to 'awaken the sleeping images of the future which can and must come forth from the night' identifies the hero with the individuated artist, in touch with his unconscious, with his anima—one of whose roles is 'prophetess' (*OHC* 214). More than merely celebrating the advent of a new era, the visionary artist may also be responsible, at least in part, for bringing it about or determining its essential nature.

Neumann does not elaborate on the subject, but his position can be understood more fully by reference to Jung, whose views about literature were generally congruent with Yeats's own as well. One of Jung's essays on Eastern religion, for example, contains passages very similar to the crucial section of *The Trembling of the Veil*, with the

substitution of Goethe and Nietzsche for Dante and Villon: '[i]t is only the tragedies of Goethe's *Faust* and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* which mark the first glimmering of a break-through of total experience in our Western hemisphere'—they understood that the process of 'daemonic rebirth' is beset with 'unknown terrors'. *Zarathustra*, Jung claimed, 'is no longer philosophy at all: it is a dramatic process of transformation which has completely swallowed up the intellect. It is no longer concerned with thought'—that word so pregnant with implications for Yeats in the manuscripts of 'Her Triumph' and elsewhere—but, in the highest sense, with the thinker of the thought.... A new man, a completely transformed man, is to appear on the scene, one who has broken the shell of the old and who not only looks upon a new heaven and a new earth, but has created them'.²⁵ Particularly relevant are Jung's two essays about the creative process, 'On the Relationship of Analytical Psychology to Poetry' (1922) and 'Psychology and Literature' (1930), essays from the same decade as the composition of 'Her Triumph'. In them Jung suggests that the creative process begins with 'the unconscious activation of an archetypal image', one of those images that 'give form to countless typical experiences of our ancestors, . . . the psychic residua of innumerable experiences of the same type'.²⁶ These are Neumann's 'sleeping images of the future which can and must come forth from the night'. At the moment when the archetype has been activated, 'we suddenly feel an extraordinary sense of release, as though transported, or caught up by an overwhelming power' (the moment, as Yeats put it in *The Trembling of the Veil*, when 'some knowledge or power has come into his mind from beyond his mind'); and the impact of the archetype 'stirs us because it summons up a voice that is stronger than our own'. This power is in turn transmitted by the artist, who 'enthralled and overpowers' his audience (*SMAL* 82).

At such moments, the artist undergoes a transformation. 'On the one side he is a human being with a personal life, while on the other he is an impersonal creative process. . . . As a human being he may have moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is "man"

²⁵ *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, 2nd ed., trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 547-55.

²⁶ *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 81-82; hereafter abbreviated *SMAL* and cited parenthetically in the text. I have discussed this material in a different context in *Yeats and Artistic Power*, xvi-xxiii.

in a higher sense—he is “collective man”, a vehicle and moulder of the unconscious psychic life of mankind’ (*SMAL* 101). (Again, the parallel with Yeats’s ‘new species of man’ is a close one). In order to ‘give suitable expression’ to primordial experience, such a writer will naturally ‘turn to mythological figures’ (*SMAL* 96). Among the examples Jung offers, several are suggestive of Yeats: ‘Wagner needs the whole corpus of Nordic myth . . . ; Nietzsche resorts to the hieratic style of the bard and legendary seer; Blake presses into his service the phantasmagoric world of India, the Old Testament, and the Apocalypse’ . . . (*SMAL* 97). The potent unconscious material with the visionary artist works has a tendency to overpower his conscious artistic intentions, but still such an artist does elaborate and shape the archetypal image into the finished work (*SMAL* 82). By giving the archetype shape, the artist ‘translates it into the language of the present, and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life. Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking’ (*SMAL* 82). This claim reflects Jung’s central tenet of the *compensatory* relationship of the unconscious to the conscious mind: ‘the one-sidedness of the individual’s conscious attitude is corrected by reactions from the unconscious’; and similarly, ‘art represents a process of self-regulation in the life of nations and epochs’ (*SMAL* 83). The artist ‘reaches back to the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequacy and one-sidedness of the present, . . . seizes on this image, and in raising it from deepest unconsciousness he brings it into relation with conscious values, thereby transforming it until it can be accepted by the minds of his contemporaries according to their powers’ (*SMAL* 83).

For Yeats, the turn of the century had provided a vivid illustration of the compensatory process: ‘[t]he close of the last century was full of a strange desire to get out of form to get to some kind of disembodied beauty and now it seems to me the contrary impulse has come. I feel about me and in me an impulse to create form, to carry the realization of beauty as far as possible’ (*CL3* 369). The phrase ‘about me and in me’ acknowledges the historical and cultural as well as the personal reversal. Perhaps the most famous of his poetic embodiments of the concept of compensation would be ‘The Second Coming’, in which the operative word is ‘surely’—that is, the almost total one-sidedness of the present moment made it certain that a

compensatory counter-dispensation was about to begin; the desert birds that 'reel' about the rough beast recall the 'wheeling birds' of Morris's poem. Even the poem's grimness has its parallel in Jung, who saw the process as occurring 'whether this blind collective need results in good or evil, in the salvation of an epoch or its destruction' (*SMAL* 98). More germane to 'Her Triumph' is the little lyric 'The Realists', published in 1912:

Hope that you may understand!
What can books of men that wive
In a dragon-guarded land,
Paintings of the dolphin-drawn
Sea-nymphs in their pearly wagons
Do, but awake a hope to live
That had gone
With the dragons? (*VP* 309)

Yeats's brilliant use of syntax and word placement, enjambment and caesura points up the most important word in the poem, 'Do'. To a realist, art devoted to heroic and romantic visions of experience seems remote from contemporary life, irrelevant. From Yeats's very different perspective, however, books (such as Morris's) of men that wive in a dragon-guarded land were important precisely because they *were* at odds with contemporary artistic and social values; and the artists who produced them would thereby be providing those sleeping images of the future that would dominate in the era to come. In 'Her Triumph' Yeats was to attempt precisely that.

An index of the importance of 'Her Triumph' in Yeats's career, and of its relation to the compensatory process and Yeats's own aesthetic of artistic power, emerges when it is compared with a poem he wrote decades before, 'The Song of Wandering Aengus' (1897). In many ways that lyric offers a remarkable anticipation of the later poem. It had a personal level involving Yeats's renewed romantic commitment to Maud Gonne following his affair with Olivia Shakespear;²⁷ and a political level involving his ongoing commitment to the national idea as embodied in a female figure, the *speir-bean* of the *aisling* tradition, his own future Cathleen ni Houlihan;

²⁷ This transition is reflected in 'Aedh Laments the Loss of Love', which Allen R. Grossman relates to another of Burne-Jones's paintings in the Perseus Series, 'The Baleful Head'; see his *Poetic Knowledge in the Early Yeats: A Study of 'The Wind among the Reeds'* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1969), 157.

but the poem also had a psychological dimension closely congruent with the theories Jung would formulate after his break with Freud.

The use of the Irish myth in the poem as vehicle for personal concerns reflects Yeats's assertion that 'emotions which seem vague or extravagant when expressed under the influence of modern literature, cease to be vague and extravagant when associated with ancient legend and mythology' (*UP1* 423). Jung would later posit that 'myths are first and foremost psychic phenomena that reveal the nature of the soul', projections into the conscious realm of unconscious psychological processes, so the narrative and imagery of Yeats's poem could also serve as vehicles for embodying an experience involving individuation.²⁸ In a note, Yeats identified Aengus as the 'god of youth, beauty, and poetry', highlighting also the aesthetic dimension of the poem (*VP* 794). If for Freud, dreams were generally symbolic expressions of repressed contents, Jung came to believe that 'big dreams' constitute coded messages from the unconscious designed to give direction to the dreamer's future development. The poem has a dreamlike atmosphere and its action takes place at night, ending, like a dream, with the 'brightening air' of dawn. The 'fire' in Aengus's head represents an impulse from the unconscious that precipitates his encounter with the buried parts of his psyche and thus propels him towards self-realization. ('The subconscious is always there', Yeats would later say, 'ready to leap out.') His mage's wand becomes a fishing rod because as Jung was later to argue '[f]ishing is an intuitive attempt to catch unconscious contents'. Blowing his fire aflame, Aengus is like the alchemists in whose materials and processes Jung would detect an allegory of the individuation process.²⁹ The 'glimmering girl' corresponds to the anima. She calls Aengus by his name because she holds the key to his true identity. The imagery of the poem is organized around a pattern of red and white, gold and silver images because, as Jung would write in an analysis of a young woman's dream, '[s]ilver and gold, in alchemical language, signify feminine and masculine, the hermaphrodite aspect of the fish, indicating that it is a *complexio oppositorum*.³⁰ Sun and moon would have the same symbolic meaning. The path to individuation would not be a straight one, but rather would go 'in spi-

²⁸ *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 2nd ed., trans. R. F. C. Hull (1968; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 6.

²⁹ *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 133; see also *VSR* 128-29.

³⁰ *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, 2nd ed., trans. R. F. C. Hull (1968; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 151-53.

rals', and even the most determined and courageous of questers might never reach the goal. Significantly, Jung would represent the sought-after state as 'the union of opposites in the archetypal form of the *hierosgamos* or "chymical wedding". . . [in which] the supreme opposites, male and female . . . are melted into a unity purified of all opposition and therefore incorruptable'.³¹ (Neumann's use of this 'sacred marriage' image no doubt derived from Jung.) Thus the pattern of opposed images has both aesthetic and psychological aspects, which merge in the creative process behind the poem itself.

In both 'The Song of Wandering Aengus' and 'Her Triumph' Yeats used mythic stories as vehicles for, because projections of, psychological processes involving the encounter with the *anima*, individuation and the creative process. But the difference between the future prospect of 'I will find out where she has gone' and the present reality of 'And now we stare astonished at the sea' points to significant contrasts. In the earlier poem 'T' and 'she' remain separate, their union yet to come: in 'Her Triumph' that union has been achieved. The later poem both offers an heroic figure as one of the images that might inspire and shape a future cycle and reflects the author's confidence in the power of his art. Of course the coming years, with their losses, disappointments, and prospects of renewed world cataclysm, would frequently shake that faith; but it persisted to the end of his life, embodied even in the noble and defiant final works, 'The Black Tower' and *The Death of Cuchulain*: 'Who thought Cuchulain till it seemed | He stood where they had stood'?³²

³¹ *Psychology and Alchemy*, 2nd ed., trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 28, 37.

³² In 1931, Yeats referred to *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, an occult Chinese philosophical treatise, published that year in English with a commentary by Jung (L 788). He called the book 'invaluable'. If he read Jung's commentary he would have much material relevant to 'Her Triumph', including a discussion of the visionary moment that 'brings about a solution of psychic complications and frees the inner personality from emotional and intellectual entanglements, thus creating a unity of being which is universally felt as "liberation". Such a symbolic unity cannot be obtained by the conscious will because consciousness is always partisan. Its opponent is the collective unconscious, which does not understand the language of the conscious mind. Therefore it is necessary to have the magic of the symbol which contains those primitive analogies that speak to the unconscious. The unconscious can be reached and expressed only by symbols, and for this reason the process of individuation can never do without the symbol. The symbol is the primitive exponent of the unconscious, but at the same time an idea that corresponds to the highest intuitions of the conscious mind'; and 'As we know, the poets have often sung the *anima's* praises'; *Alchemical Studies*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (1967; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 28, 40.

The Cold Heaven

Deirdre Toomey

Suddenly I saw the cold and rook-delighting heaven
That seemed as though ice burned and was but the more ice,
And thereupon imagination and heart were driven
So wild that every casual thought of that and this
Vanished, and left but memories, that should be out of season
With the hot blood of youth, of love crossed long ago;
And I took all the blame out of all sense and reason,
Until I cried and trembled and rocked to and fro,
Riddled with light. Ah! when the ghost begins to quicken,
Confusion of the death-bed over, is it sent
Out naked on the roads, as the books say, and striken
By the injustice of the skies for punishment? (*VP* 316)

THIS POEM'S POWERFUL sense of place has led many readers (including myself) to assume that it is set in a bleak West of Ireland landscape of the type depicted by Jack B. Yeats. However, to my knowledge, the only reader to have half-guessed its gestation in Yeats's own experience is W. J. McCormack, who, when asked where he thought it was set, replied grimly 'In Enniscorthy station waiting for a train'.

Maud Gonne was sufficiently moved by the poem to ask Yeats what it was about, an unusual reaction for her. Yeats told her that 'it was an attempt to describe the feelings aroused in him by the cold detached sky in winter. He felt he was alone responsible in his loneliness for all the past mistakes that were torturing his peace of mind.' The comment reflects very closely a line of the first draft—'My soul turned upon itself in torment'. The late Derry Jeffares managed to extract this astonishing memory from the old Maud Gonne when interviewing her in the mid 1940s, having whetted her interest by

telling her he thought that ‘The Cold Heaven’ related to Yeats’s belief that ‘men live their lives backwards after death’. Her response was to come out with her memory of Yeats’s own explanation. Derry usually tried to head her off well-rehearsed political rants (which he described as being as ‘if she were switched to automatic pilot’) and to get her talking about a poem by mentioning sources he had discovered, as well as analogues in diaries, letters and books in Yeats’s library. It certainly worked in this case (YA9 266–67).

The setting of ‘The Cold Heaven’ is not, however, an Irish landscape at all. Yeats was travelling by train from Manchester (where he had been on tour with the Abbey Players) to Norwich on 21 February 1911 when he drafted the poem. His first draft is diary-like and consists of lines describing the tedium of the long cold journey. ‘I lay on the cushions half asleep’ counting the stations ‘Gazing through the window of the rail way carriage. . . [Thinking] of nothing but the journey end . . . half asleep in the darkening railway carriage’ and so on. After half a page of such ramblings and jottings Yeats burst straight into a draft of the first lines,

‘Over a darkling water gleam county
As though ice burned and was yet the more ice’.¹

Yeats was travelling from Manchester to Norwich via London to see an amateur production of *The Countess Cathleen* staged and directed by Nugent Monck, a follower and colleague of the historicist Shakespearean producer and director William Poel. Monck was heroically engaged in the development of a literary theatre in Norwich, and was later to become an assistant manager of the Abbey Theatre. Yeats had earlier written to Monck to advise him that he did not have a specific historical period in mind for *The Countess Cathleen* but had set it in what he termed ‘the vague period of the folktales’. He told Monck, who was worried about costumes, that in 1899, for the first performance of *The Countess Cathleen*, he had hired costumes from Nathan’s and that the assistant there had told him that nothing was known about the costume of the mediaeval

¹ In the Seven Woods and The Green Helmet and Other Poems *Manuscript Materials by W. B. Yeats*, ed. David Holdeman (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), 231–235.

Irish except that ‘the people had no clothes and they wore their hair long to hide stolen articles in it’ (9 February 1911, *CL InteLex* 1539).

Yeats was very moved by Monck’s production, telling Edith Lister that it was ‘like a page from a missal’ (23 February 1911, *CL InteLex* 1551). The play was performed, not in the large drawing-room of Monck’s Elizabethan house, The Crypt, where he had staged *tableaux* with his all male acting troupe, but in Norwich’s magnificent Georgian Assembly rooms with a cast drawn from pupils of Norwich Girls’ School. The first performance was reviewed favourably by the *Eastern Daily Press*, which described the play as ‘An Irish Folk Play’, with special praise for Miss Irene Varley, who played the Countess. (Yeats had thought of a child actress, Dorothy Paget, for the Countess in 1899, but had been argued out of this idea.) He was moved enough by the production to respond to cries of ‘Author! Author!’ by standing up on his seat and saying that he had undertaken a ‘six hours journey to be present’ and that he was ‘highly delighted’ by the performance adding that to ‘Mr. Monck and all who had taken part’ he paid a tribute of ‘unqualified praise’.²

It could be that the prospect of seeing the play performed for the first time in nearly 20 years had mobilised thoughts of Maud Gonne, for whom Yeats had written *The Countess Cathleen*, and that this poem was, as the manuscript evidence might suggest, drafted on his journey from London to Norwich. The line in an early prose draft which indicates that he was approaching his journey’s end at evening (‘impassioned evening blazed’), might indicate that the poem was drafted as he approached Norwich, as does the rook-infested landscape of frozen wetlands.

Although the play was dedicated to Maud Gonne, ‘[a]t whose suggestion it was planned out and begun’ Yeats had already, in a letter of late 1888, told Katharine Tynan that he hoped to do something with the legend of Countess Kathleen O’Shea which he had anthologised in his *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*. It was evidently at his first meeting with Gonne on 30 January 1889 that, as he recalls, he became anxious to dramatise this legend in order to please her, saying, wildly, that he wished to follow in the footsteps of Victor Hugo’s *Les légendes des siècles* (*Mem* 41); His attempted pro-

² *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 February 1911, 6.

nunciation of this title must have dismayed the francophone Gonне. In his letter to John O'Leary describing this first meetings, he moved swiftly from her radical political position ('she herself will make many converts') to a discussion of the play, which he says that he has 'long been intending to write' (CL1 137-38). Gonне had some experience of acting and urged Yeats to write a play for her. As Yeats recalled this in *Memoirs*, 'She spoke to me of her wish for a play that she could act in Dublin . . . I told her of a story I had found when compiling my *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, and offered to write for her the play I have called *The Countess Cathleen*' (Mem 41). Despite desperate pleading by Yeats, Gonне refused to play the title role. In her chronologically vague account of this episode, probably of 1892, she recalls that Yeats had read the play to a Dublin group. 'He said that he had written the part of the Countess Kathleen for me and that I *must* play it'. The version which he read out is presumably close to the 1892 proofs, which include a manuscript cast list—although Florence Farr is down to play the Countess. Maud Gonне refused the role, saying that it would distract her from her political work, although she admitted to being 'severely tempted'. Yeats then said that if she refused he would have to bring over an English actress to play the part; Maud adds tartly 'which eventually he did with no great success' (SQ 175-77).

Yeats's identification of Maud Gonне with the self-sacrificing Countess Cathleen was very powerful indeed. He saw Gonне as a woman compelled to behave self-destructively; in early 1899, writing from Paris, he told Lady Gregory that 'Hers has been in part the war of phantasy & of a blinded idealism against eternal law' (CL2 357). *The Countess Cathleen* also defies 'eternal law' by selling her soul to devils disguised as merchants, but is finally redeemed by her idealism and altruism. In 1889, Gonне had walked into a pre-created role, in that her work in the West of Ireland among the evicted tenants, as well as her wealth and her great beauty, made her an ideal modern analogue for the Countess.

In 1889 Yeats undoubtedly was given a vivid account of her recent work among the evicted tenants in the west of Ireland, the consequence of the failure of the 'Plan of Campaign', of women with new born babies being evicted, of old couples married for 50 years

being evicted from the house which they had built and of her own successful interventions, placing evicted people in local hotels at her own expense. This early engagement with Maud Gonne as heroic saviour of the desperate certainly fits

memories which should be out of season
With the hot blood of youth, of love crossed long ago

which, by the time of composition of this poem, were of events nearly twenty years before.

Yeats projected a moment of crisis from his railway carriage onto the winter landscape of South Norfolk, celebrated for its vast rookeries, icy marshes and wetlands; there had been heavy snow and frost in Norfolk in mid-February 1911, weather so severe that parts of the Broads were frozen.³ As for ‘rook-delighting heaven’, Norfolk, particularly the Yare valley, has the largest rook colonies in Western Europe. A photograph (Plate 21) shows the rookery at Buckenham Carr Woods, west of Norwich, where up to 80,000 rooks nest nightly. A description of the rooks descending on the trees by an ornithologist of our day certainly fits ‘suddenly’; Mark Cocker describes the rooks at Buckenham Carr Woods as coming into view ‘as if breaking suddenly through a membrane’.⁴ The striking compound epithet ‘rook-delighting’ is present in the first draft version of the poem.

The experience recorded in the manuscript draft of the poem came as Yeats had been in Manchester with the Abbey company who had just offered a triumphant performance of his *Deirdre*: he told Mabel Dickinson that there were ‘people standing up everywhere’ for Synge’s *Playboy* (*CL InteLex*, 1554). He was moving from a successful present to memories of May 1899 and of a less successful past. In travelling to Norwich for a performance of *The Countess Cathleen* he was travelling ‘ceaselessly back into the past’. His ‘boyish plan’ of an Irish National Theatre had now been fully realised, with a success in

³ Jim Vincent (1884–1944), an estate worker and amateur ornithologist, noted in his journal that on 13 February 1911 ‘Sharp frost’ and ‘Greater part of Broad frozen’ See *A Season of Birds*, ed. Edwin Vincent (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), 13.

⁴ In his *Crow Country* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007), 2.



Plate 21. The biggest rookery in Europe at Buckenham Carr Woods, near Norwich, courtesy Jane Rusbridge, © Natalie Miller.
All rights reserved.

a major English city. From Manchester he was now to revisit, as it were, the modest beginnings of the project, *The Countess Cathleen*, his first play performed in Dublin, in May 1899 with the nascent Irish Literary Theatre, as it then was. The prospect of seeing a new production of this play, originally written for Maud Gonne, must have mobilised very powerful emotions of 'love crossed long ago', as well as a painful examination of conscience. Yet, Yeats in this moment of crisis blamed himself for her rejection of his love, and 'took all the blame out of all sense and reason'. This represents a strange reaction from Yeats's indictment of Gonne in 'Friends', written shortly before, in January 1911, as one

'...that took
All till my youth was gone
With scarce a pitying look' (*VP* 315)

'The Cold Heaven' follows 'Friends' in the Cuala setting so the reader is presented (on one page) with this bitter reproach and an acceptance of responsibility and of blame; 'I took all the blame'. In 'Friends', thoughts of Maud Gonne make Yeats 'shake from head to foot', while and in 'The Cold Heaven' he cries and trembles 'and rocks to and fro'. The link between the two poems is thus enhanced by the powerful physical response to memories and thoughts of Gonne. As the Old Man says in Yeats's penultimate play *Purgatory* souls are forced to return and

'Re-live
Their transgressions, and that not once
But many times' (*VP* 1042)

The irrational belief that he was in fact to blame for the misery of his youth and his frustrated love for Maud Gonne might well draw upon a book which had influenced Yeats greatly as young man, Ráma Prasád's *Nature's Finer Forces*, a study of the Hindu *Tattwas*, but also a meditation upon Karma.⁵ Yeats's friend Dorothea Hunter stressed its importance to the young Yeats in a letter to Richard Ellmann, and Yeats's own lightly annotated copy is in the Lilly Library, Indiana. Prasád argues that a crime or wrong will lead to the

⁵ (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1890), hereafter *NFF*.

repetition of the offence in another incarnation; so the murderer

still yearns to murder and destroy... but the picture of the ebbing life of his victim is now part and parcel of his constitution; the pain, the terror, and the feeling of despair and helplessness are there in all their strength... He is subject to unaccountable fits of terror, despair and helplessness (*NFF* 134-35).

Yeats returned to this conception in January 1918, asking George Yeats's spirit controls 'Does the murderer believe that he is committing the murder again?' (*YVP1* 316). No reply survives. Prasad applies the same argument to the reincarnated adulterer who is attracted to woman after woman: 'all the complicated quarrels of lovers might with ease be traced to causes such as these' (*NFF* 135-66). So Yeats seems to assume that the misery caused by Maud Gonne's long rejection of him is a punishment for sins in a previous life. To adapt a later formulation of Yeats's, she is a 'A sweetheart from another life' (*VP* 39) whom he has injured in some previous incarnation.

In some respects this poem of 1911 represents the first development of Yeats's concept of the *Phantasmagoria*, initially termed the *Dreaming Back* in the first version of *A Vision*. Indeed Yeats's occult use of the term *Phantasmagoria* might also reflect the influence of Prasad who, in *Nature's Finer Forces* refers to what he calls the 'Cosmic Picture Gallery' in which all actions good or bad, are preserved in Prana, the life principle of the Universe (*NFF* 122-38). Prasad believed that 'everything in every aspect which has been or is being on this planet has a legible record in the book of nature, and the tattvic rays of the Prana and the mind are constantly bringing these pictures back to us. It is to a great extent due to this that the past never leaves us, but always lives within us' (*NFF* 129). Yeats reverted to a version of Prasad's conception of the Cosmic Picture Gallery when he later asked George Yeats's spirit Controls early in their marriage 'How far are pictures in *Anima Mundi* an aggregate of individual memories' following this with 'Is it image or the event itself?' (*YVP1* 86).

In his earliest direct formulation of the concept in *A Vision* (1925), when he was describing what he then termed *The Dreaming Back*, Yeats uses examples which could have been taken directly from

Pras d; in particular when referring to ‘ancient and modern tradition’ in which ‘the murderer may be seen committing his murder night after night’, a reference to Pras d’s illustration of the ‘cruel murderer’ who is forced to repeat his crime while absorbing the feelings of his victim (a phenomenon later developed in *Purgatory*). This is more succinctly formulated in *A Vision* (1937): ‘if the life was evil, then the *Phantasmagoria* is evil, the criminal completes his crime’ (*AVB* 230).

‘And I took all the blame out of all sense and reason
Until I cried and trembled and rocked to and fro
Riddled with light’.

These lines are horrifying enough but it is the question which forms the last four lines which is, in every sense, chilling

Ah! when the ghost begins to quicken
Confusion of the death bed over, is it sent
Out naked on the roads, as the books say, and stricken
By the injustice of the skies for punishment?’

Of course, since youth, Yeats, as a working folklorist, had been collecting Irish beliefs concerning the soul after death. His uncle’s second-sighted servant Mary Battle had told him of a bush where

there are two souls doing their penance under it. When the wind blows one way the one has shelter, and when it blows from the north the other has shelter.⁶

He published another such story in ‘The Tribes of Danu’, a story evidently collected by Lady Gregory, telling of a ghost which spent

seven years in a tree at Kinadyfe and seven years after that under the little bridge beyond Kilchreist, below the arch with the water running under her and while she was in the tree whether there was frost or snow or storm, she hadn’t so much as the size of a leaf to shelter her (*UP2* 61).

Yeats also would have known of the folk-tale collected by Jeremiah Curtin and published in *Tales of the Munster Fairies*, of ‘ghosts . . . on the strand, walking back and forth, perishing with the

⁶ Ms NLI 30481. WBY had been told this by Mary Battle in October-November 1898.

cold'.⁷ Yeats was also fascinated by a story in Herodotus of the wife of Periander returning as a ghost to complain of the cold. He uses this anecdote in *Swedenborg, Mediums and the Desolate Places* to gloss an Irish folk anecdote which he gathered in 1897 from a shepherd at Doneraile, haunted by the ghost of a relative who appeared stark naked and who pleaded for clothes to be given in her name to a beggar, so that she could be clothed in the otherworld (*CW5* 72).

This material which assumes a freezing cold punishment was not confined to folklore, but also drew on old Irish conceptions of Hell as cold. The most spectacular account of the frozen Celtic hell is to be founded in the *Fis Adamnan* which was available to Yeats in C. S. Bowell's edition of 1908.⁸ This is evidently one of the 'books' (in the draft this read 'old books') to which Yeats refers at the conclusion of the poem. The vision has been attributed to Saint Adamnan, although it is now thought to be a work of the early middle ages, but attributed to the earlier saint who is described as the 'High Scholar of the Western World',⁹ presumably as an act of piety. When Adamnan's soul departs from his body he first passes into a conventional blissful Christian afterworld, the land of saints, angels and the divinity. Adamnan sees the veils of fire and ice which separate this stereotypical heaven from various purgatories and hells; he views a river of fire and various purgatorial landscapes, 'marshy places', then the nethermost Hell, 'a land burned black, waste and scorched', then 'a glen of fire', then a barren landscape 'very rugged, icebound', transversed by four rivers, 'one of snow'.¹⁰ Although punishment by fire is included in this vision, this Irish Hell has also cold, ice, snow and a barren and bleak landscape. This combination of fire and ice is perhaps recalled in 'As if ice burned and was but the more ice'.

This hell does not draw on a pre-Christian underworld, although bleaker Otherworld landscapes were to be found in pre-Christian

⁷ London: David Nutt, 1895, 146.

⁸ *An Irish Precursor of Dante: A Study on the Vision of Heaven and Hell ascribed to the Eighth-century Irish Saint Adamana, with Translation of the Irish Text* (London: David Nutt, 1908). This volume was in Nutt's series *The Grimm Library* with which WBY was familiar as he had reviewed two volumes from it in 1897 (*The Voyage of Bran*).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 29-37.

narratives. Cuchulain travels through one such dark and bleak Otherworldly landscape in *Tochmarc Emere*, a journey to which Yeats was to revert in his final poetic exposition of the *Phantasmagoria*, ‘Cuchulain Comforted’. However, between the ‘The Cold Heaven’s’ account of the horror of mid-life looking back to ‘love crossed long ago’, and the dying man’s writing ‘Cuchulain Comforted’, a deathbed dramatization of the fear of the afterlife, lies the Automatic Script, with its prolonged exposition of the afterlife and its punishments and transformations. These are what Yeats called ‘George’s ghosts’, her spirit revelations, which replaced the printed authority of ‘the books’, and allowed Yeats to discover a vocabulary for the distinct phases of the period after death.

George Yeats later told Richard Ellmann that for many years Yeats had ‘been very frightened of death until his very serious illness 3 years before his death, after which he had said to her; “It is harder to live than to die”’ (YA16, 316). His fear would not have been the agnostic’s or an atheist’s fear of annihilation, of extinction, as in Philip Larkin’s overwhelming fear of a death as

a black-
sailed unfamiliar, towing at her back
A huge and birdless silence'.¹¹

Given his belief system, Yeats’s fear would have been of the period after death, of the *Phantasmagoria* and the *Shiftings*. His poor health from 1929 onwards had given him plenty of material for reflection on mortality. His blood pressure was at one point a horrifying 260 systolic (the normal systolic reading is 120). He later optimistically anticipated the possibility of its being reduced to a mere 190 systolic—still life-threateningly high. His blood pressure was probably controlled to some extent by hearty doses of liquid morphine at night. Yeats’s own remedy for hypertension was to live on olives, burgundy and bread when away from home. Consciousness of rapidly impending death comes in letters of 1938 such as his reference in a letter of 18 May 1938 to Olivia Shakespear to ‘my remaining life’

¹¹ ‘Next, Please’, *The Less Deceived* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1960), 20.

(*CL InteLex* 7239). Her death in October 1938 evidently shocked Yeats greatly. Indeed, this would have been a case of Larkin's 'Next, please'.

Awareness of death is also omnipresent in his great late play *Purgatory*, first drafted in April 1938. When writing to Ethel Mannin on 20 October 1938 he discussed the significance of his final play *The Death of Cuchulain* which he was then drafting, despite great physical weakness. He told her that his 'Private Philosophy' was in the play (his 'public philosophy' 'was to be found in *A Vision*: see *CL InteLex* 7315.) He had already written to her on 9 October to tell her of 'true death' which would occur when 'all the sensuous images are dissolved' (*CL InteLex* 7312). In *Purgatory* Yeats had very much returned to the ideas of Ráma Prasád and of the endless re-enactment of evil deeds. So that the 'souls in Purgatory that come back . . . [r]e-live their transgressions'. As Prasád puts it 'the murderer still yearns to murder and destroy'.

And in *Purgatory*, which Yeats described, on 15 March 1938, to Edith Heald as 'a scene of tragic intensity', having told her that it had evolved from a 'long dream like absorption in my work' (*CL InteLex* 7201) the Old Man tells his son that that they will see the 'souls in Purgatory that come back | To habitations and familiar spots' (*VPI* 1042). In fact, in a dramatic *tour de force* quite extraordinary for a play to be staged in an Ireland still subject to powerful clerical censorship, Freud's primal scene, the parental intercourse which leads to the Old Man's conception, is played out again by the ghosts of his parents in the ruins of the ancestral house, an ancestral house evidently based upon Coole.¹⁶ Yeats to some extent gives voice

¹² Hints of the burning of Moore Hall by the IRA in 1922 also resonate in the play especially given Yeats's belief that the Moore family had become degraded by marriage with those of peasant origin (*Mem* 270–71). Roy Foster locates the germ of the play, the destruction of a big house by marriage with peasants, in Tyrone House in Galway (*Life* 2, 618). There was a controversy in the *Irish Times* after the first night of *Purgatory* but it turned less on the content of the play (which few understood) than on Yeats's appearing to appropriate a Catholic concept, that of Purgatory. Yeats refers in letters to the misreporting of his curtain speech which the London *Times* gave as 'he had put his thoughts about this world and the next into the little play' (16 August 1938, 10). He told Dorothy Wellesley that he had said 'I have put no thoughts into this play because they are picturesque but my own beliefs about this world and the next' (15 August 1938, *CL InteLex* 7290). When badgered as to the meaning of the play by Father Terence Connolly S.J., whom Yeats called a

to his own sentiment through the old man who, reflecting on the ruin of this Big House, says

‘to kill a house
Where great men grew up, married, died
I here declare a capital offence’ (*VPI* 1044).

In a purgatorial afterlife The Old Man’s mother ‘must live | Through everything again in exact detail’ (*VPI* 1046). After the horror of this scene the Old Man seeks to end the cycle by killing his son as he had killed his own father. So his mother, the ‘consequence’ of her crime not being at an end, must continue the ‘dream’. To the Old Man’s horror the purgatorial drama re-enacts itself in the ruined house and he exclaims ‘Twice a murderer and all for nothing’ (*VPI* 1049). *Purgatory* displays even more vividly than the punishments of ‘The Cold Heaven’ Yeats’s sense of horror at the *Phantasmagoria*, of the endless re-enactment of a crime. In fact, when *Purgatory* was staged, two distinct conceptions of *Phantasmagoria* were presented, first the purgatorial re-enactment of the crimes of this life in the afterlife, and second its actual representation as theatrical *phantasmagoria*. Yeats had asked for a bare stage design and Anne Yeats produced something which must have been very close to his wishes, an almost empty stage with a bare white tree and a backcloth with a window opening in it. Yeats had asked for ‘gauzed’ windows through which the dead parents’ bridal night could be seen, and on 26 July

‘smooth rascal’ (*CL InteLex* 7290) he replied ‘In my play, a spirit suffers because of its share, when alive, in the destruction of an honoured house; that destruction is taking place all over Ireland today’ (*Irish Independent* 13 August 1938). Father Connolly had got hold of a text of the play after the first performance on 10 August and had hoped to create a scandal concerning the theology of the play. Connolly, a man of deep culture (he edited Francis Thompson and Coventry Patmore) later presented his part in this controversy as that of an innocent led astray by the Irish Press and concluded ‘The incident greatly hampered my study of Irish playwrights and poets’ (*The Book of Catholic Authors*, III, 1945). In response to Connolly’s questions Yeats told the *Irish Independent* that ‘Father Connolly has said that my plot is perfectly clear but that he does not understand my meaning. My plot is my meaning. I think the dead suffer remorse and re-create their old lives just as I have described. There are mediaeval Japanese plays about it, and much in the folklore of all countries’ (13 August 1938, 9).

1938 George Yeats told Hugh Hunt, the producer, that Yeats wished the production to be ‘bald’ without music (*CL InteLex* 7281) and when discussing the staging of the ghostly re-enactment of the bridal night Yeats, writing from Steyning on 28 July 1938, declared ‘I suggest two gauzed windows. So that the marriage chamber window will not be that where the bride is alone, nor that where the husband fills his whiskey glass’ (*CL InteLex* 7282). The *Times* reviewer praised Anne Yeats’s designs for bringing ‘the ghostly vision of the pedlar’s mind before the audience with startling vividness’ (16 August 1938, 10).

The dead woman, whose folly destroyed a great house by her marriage to a groom from a racing stable will re-enact her marriage night perhaps for hundreds of years in the ruins of the house. Her son, the Old Man, says 'she knows it all, being dead' (*VPl* 1043). He cries at the conclusion of the play

In *A Vision* 1925 Yeats says of this experience, speaking of the dead person, that if 'his nature had great intensity, he may dream with slowly lessening joy and pain for centuries' (*AVA* 246).

When Yeats came to dramatise Cuchulain's experience of the *Phantasmagoria* or *Shiftings*, he did so in a version then entitled 'Cuchulain dead'. He worked from a prose version of the poem, which he had read out to Dorothy Wellesley and her friend Hilda Matheson in the early part of January 1939. Dorothy Wellesley also recalled the fact that Yeats had already proposed to write it in *terza rima*, by the time that he read her the prose version. George Yeats had taken down the dream upon which the poem is based from his dictation at night, and this prose fragment was preserved by Dorothy Wellesley. George Yeats told T. R. Henn that Yeats had dictated this

to her at 3 am on the night of 7 January, although unambiguously dated letters indicate that he was already working on the poem well before this date. Thus, he had already written to Edith Heald on 1 January telling her 'I am making the prose sketch for a poem—a kind of sequel—strange too—something very new'. This is the narrative which Yeats dictated to George late at night:

A shade recently arrived went through a valley in the Country of the Dead; he had six mortal wounds, but had been a tall, strong, handsome man. Other shades looked at him from among the trees. Sometimes they went near to him and then went away quickly. At last he sat down, he seemed very tired. Gradually the shades gathered round him, and one of them who seemed to have some authority among the others laid a parcel of linen at his feet. One of the others said: 'I am not so afraid of him now that he is sitting still. It was the way his arms rattled.' Then another shade said 'You would be much more comfortable if you would make a shroud and wear it instead of the arms. We have brought you some linen. If you make it yourself you will be much happier, but of course we will thread the needles. We do everything together, so everyone of us will thread a needle, so when we have laid them at your feet, you will take which ever you like best.' The man with the six wounds saw that nobody had ever threaded needles so swiftly and so smoothly. He took the threaded needles and began to sew, and one of the shades said: 'We will sing to you while you sew; but you will like to know who we are. We are the people who run away from the battles. Some of us have been put to death as cowards, but others have hidden, and some even died without people knowing they were cowards.' Then they began to sing, and they did not sing like men and women, but like linnets that had been stood on a perch and taught by a good singing master' (*LDW* 193).

This has all the quality of a dream, or a hypnagogic vision, and Yeats probably did dictate his memory to George Yeats at 3 a.m.: I feel sure that George's memory is to be trusted as to the time of night, if not the date. Yeats had already complained of sleeplessness in letters to Edith Heald and this sinister vision or dream was probably the product of a semi-sleepless night. It might have been directly caused by digitalis toxicity (digitalis, one side-effect of which is nightmares, would have been used to control Yeats's heart failure).

He had been prescribed digitalis for this purpose in September 1936, and he probably continued to take it, despite his belief that his heart failure could be cured by a milk and fruit diet. He had written to Dorothy Wellesley on 8 September 1936:

The dire effect of a plate of duck made me take the law into my own hands. I refused everything but milk and fruit. Immediate improvement. Doctor had been sent for, prescribed digitalis (foxglove). Some days later he congratulated me on my recovery. I said 'Diet'. He said 'Digitalis'. I said 'Diet'. . . now I breathe like anybody else, and walk about for the short time allowed like anybody else . . . the question is, will this pleasant state continue now that the digitalis is stopped . . . I was really ill up to about three weeks ago. My young cautious doctor had made it clear that I might expect to be henceforth an invalid, living between bed and chair. Now he talks of complete recovery (*CL InteLex* 6644).

Digitalis based medications are even in modern formularies something of a problem as there is a low therapeutic ratio; in other words, there is not much of a 'cushion' between the therapeutic dosage and the toxic dosage, especially in the elderly, in whom blood concentrations of Digitalis can rise alarmingly to toxic levels which can cause nightmares and hallucinations.

On 12 May 1938 George Yeats had written in some anxiety to Edith Heald, with whom Yeats would be staying in England asking her to 'extract from him his prescription for the digitalis mixture and make him take it twice a day while he is still with you' A second, rather more friendly letter expressed her entire confidence that Edith Heald would manage Yeats's medication competently.¹⁷ Despite medication Yeats regularly suffered from oedema of the ankles, an indication of cardiac insufficiency and thus of congestive heart failure. A grim litany of reference in letters to his swollen ankles indicates the seriousness of the condition. However, he wrote to Dorothy Wellesley on 22 June 1938 to tell her that 'an eastern sage had promised me a quiet death' (*CL InteLex* 7259). He might have hoped to die as quietly and optimistically as his father, whose last words to Jeanne Robert Foster were "Remember you have promised me a sitting in the morning" adding, 'a good death, I think' (*CL InteLex* 4071).

Yeats had told Edith Heald 8 December 1938 that following a sleepless night his mind was so full that he had done ‘a wonderful day’s work’ (*CL Intel* 7350). Helen Vendler has pointed to the fact that relatively few of the words in the ‘prose theme’ carry over into the poem.

Cuchulain Comforted

A man that had six mortal wounds, a man
 Violent and famous, strode among the dead;
 Eyes stared out of the branches and were gone.

Then certain Shrouds that muttered head to head
 Came and were gone. He leant upon a tree
 As though to meditate on wounds and blood.

A Shroud that seemed to have authority
 Among those bird-like things came, and let fall
 A bundle of linen. Shrouds by two and three

Came creeping up because the man was still.
 And thereupon that linen-carrier said:
 ‘Your life can grow much sweeter if you will

‘Obey our ancient rule and make a shroud.
 Mainly because of what we only know
 The rattle of those arms makes us afraid.

‘We thread the needles’ eyes and all we do
 All must together do.’ That done, the man
 Took up the nearest and began to sew.

Now must we sing and sing the best we can,
 But first you must be told our character:
 Convicted cowards all, by kindred slain

¹⁷ Ann Saddlymer *Becoming George: The Life of Mrs W. B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 547.

'Or driven from home and left to die in fear.'
 They sang, but had nor human tunes nor words,
 Though all was done in common as before;

They had changed their throats and had the throats of birds
 (VP 634-35).

The decision taken to write in *Terza Rima* represents an obvious tribute to Dante and to the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. The dream draws upon Dante's describing himself at the opening of the *Inferno*, as being in a dark wood 'Midway along the journey of this life I found myself in a dark wood, having lost my way'. Yet Yeats's dream also half recalls the 11th Book of *The Odyssey* in which Odysseus visits the land of the dead and meets the angry spectre of the mighty hero Heracles, who frightens the other dead, who flee from him, described as crying like wild birds. Yeats had used this episode from *The Odyssey* to conclude 'Swedenborg Mediums and the Desolate Places' in October 1914, a 'huge spirit essay' on which he had been brooding for many years, in effect from late 1898 onwards (*Ex* 70; *CW5* 72-73).

Given the extreme difficulty of using *Terza Rima* in English and Yeats's own physical exhaustion, it is remarkable that in the sole surviving holograph draft of 'Cuchulain Comforted', dated Jan 13, in which the poem is still entitled 'Cuchulain Dead', Yeats does not have a list of rhymes ready for use, that is 'dead', 'head', 'blood', 'tree', 'authority', 'three' and so on. He had done this with a far less taxing verse form (a truncated sonnet) for 'The Fascination of What's Difficult', noting months before he began to draft the poem the major rhymes 'bolt, colt, jolt', even noting a half rhyme which he did not use 'exult' (*Mem* 229).

However, in this earliest surviving draft of 'Cuchulain Comforted', as it becomes, the *Terza Rima* scheme is intact in its final version, although there are light revisions to other parts of the poem. Yeats's long established method of composition by chaunting to himself might have allowed him to prepare the rhyme scheme before he began to write, but possibly—given his physical weakness—there were drafts which do not survive. If indeed he had

already begun to compose without paper in the darkness after dictating the prose theme to George, he would have been following the practice of the classical Irish poets, who were trained in the Bardic Schools to compose orally in darkness at night in their cells or studies and who were only allowed light and writing materials when a poem was complete.

James Pethica, the editor of the manuscripts of *Last Poems*, judges 'Cuchulain Comforted' to have been written 'with a speed and certainty of aim that was rare for Yeats at any point in his career'.¹⁸ This is, however, a judgement based upon the surviving manuscript record. George Yeats, nursing a dying man and dealing with all the problems of terminal illness in a foreign country, as well as coping with all those who wanted to be with Yeats as he died, could not necessarily retain every scrap of manuscript; moreover, she gave several important manuscripts of this last winter to Dorothy Wellesley. She just might have given some manuscript materials relating to this poem to Edith Heald, as a large number of manuscript drafts of his last poems came into Edith Heald's possession. Edith Heald arrived just as Yeats was approaching the point of death and, with George Yeats, kept a vigil by his body.

George Yeats preserved the carbon of the corrected typescript of the poem in which it becomes 'Cuchulain Comforted' rather than 'Cuchulain Dead', a very significant change, which immediately signals to the reader that the protagonist is undergoing a benign transformation in the afterlife and is not merely dead or being punished. This, then, is death and transfiguration. The very late change of title owes much to the circumstances in which it was made, effectively *in articulo mortis*.

The otherworld landscape in this poem is a wood, thus linking the setting to the opening of the Divine Comedy and the dark wood in which Dante finds himself. Yet the young Cuchulain in *Tochmarc Emere* is sent on a quest by Emer's father Forgael, who wishes him dead, through a sinister otherworld plain in which the grass blades are like spear points and which was also so cold that a traveller's feet would be stuck to the ground. Cuchulain then enters a dark valley

¹⁸ See Jame L. Pethica, (ed.), *Last Poems: Manuscript Materials by W.B. Yeats* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), xxx.

which he can traverse only via a perilous bridge (a motif which also appears in Adamnan's account of Hell). Before he is able to meet *Scathach*, the female warrior whose name means 'shadow', 'shade' or 'veil' in Irish, and who will teach him battle skills in a mysterious land which is an Underworld or Hades.¹⁹ In 'Cuchulain Comforted' the landscape is equally sinister but the skills to be taught are no longer masculine but feminine, weaving and sewing, not swordplay. The eyes which stare 'out of the branches' might seem to derive directly from Dante, who places the spirits of the damned in trees in the Seventh circle of the Inferno. Like much else in Yeats's poetry, however, this motif might come from a hiding place 'forty years deep', a story of 1893, collected in 1897, 'The Curse of the Fires and the Shadows' in which the Irish folk belief that 'the dead in Purgatory are said to be spitted on the points of the trees' is used (*M2005* 120). This Irish folk belief is also found in 'The Rose of Shadow' a story of 1894 (*VSR* 228).

What is unambiguous is that Cuchulain is being obliged to undergo not the *Phantasmagoria* but the *Shiftings* in which, after death and placed beyond good and evil, a person is obliged to become his or her antithesis, or as Yeats puts it in 'The Gates of Pluto' 'to live through a life which is said to be in all things opposite to that lived in the world' (*AVB* 229). Thus the great warrior is forced to do women's work and to consort with 'convicted cowards'. Then he is implicitly rewarded by transformation into a bird, just as Cuchulain, when dying in Yeats's play *The Death of Cuchulain*, foresees. There, Cuchulain's last words are

There floats out there
 The shape that I shall take when I am dead
 My soul's first shape, a soft feathery shape
 And is that not a strange shape for a soul
 Of a great fighting man? (*VPI* 1060-11)

¹⁹ Eleanor Hull, ed., *The Cuchullin Saga in Irish Literature* (London: David Nutt, 1898), 73-6.

According to Phillip Marcus, the germ of Cuchulain's experience of the *Shiftings* after death had already come to Yeats when drafting the play.²⁰

The sinister shrouded beings who are 'bird-like things' have a relationship with the *Morrígu*, the Irish triple war goddess with a crow's head who triumphs over the dead Cuchulain and holds up his severed head at the conclusion of the play. There is also in the 'bird-like' aspect of these sinister beings in 'Cuchulain Comforted' a recollection of an earlier episode in the life of Cuchulain when he ventures into *Gleann na Mboher*, the Glen of the Deaf, where the three deformed one-eyed daughters of Maeve's Druid, the wizard *Caitlin*, persecute him. In Eleanor Hull's redaction of this narrative the 'three maimed daughters, lightly fluttering, swiftly swooping . . . sought the spot where the day before they had descried Cuchulain . . . Up then they rose bird like, airy soaring, soaring with the moaning magical wind of their own making'. The three witches, identified with the *Morrígu* by Eleanor Hull, then by enchantment make from puff balls and fluttering leaves in the wood the illusions of warriors so that the entire glen is apparently filled with soldiers. Although Cuchulain is warned that these battalions are phantoms, he fights them.²¹

Thus Yeats's dream or hypnagogic vision represents a transformation of myth and legend; the bird-like creatures are not malevolent and they do not tempt Cuchulain to battle, as do the *Morrígu*; rather they direct him to harmless female activity. The shrouded figures represent a benevolent transformation of the supernatural being (or beings) who arranged Cuchulain's death in his last battle and who perch on his shoulder in the form of a bird (a scaldcrow or hooded crow) when he is dying.

The shrouds at first are sinister, but then become increasingly benevolent. They are possibly also to be identified in terms of Yeats's system, with the 'teaching spirits' who may assist the dead person in both versions of *A Vision*. We move from a narrative in which a

²⁰ Phillip L. Marcus, ed., *The Death of Cuchulain: Manuscript Materials by W. B. Yeats* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 7.

²¹ *The Cuchullin Saga in Irish Literature*, 239-242.

wooded mysterious glen is filled with the shouts of phantom soldiers and the noise of their phantom weapons, to the shrouds warning Cuchulain ‘the rattle of those arms makes us afraid’, and pressing him into gentle, transfiguring activity.

Yeats had a long-established identification with Cuchulain, more with Cuchulain’s emotional life than with his career as hero. This was endorsed in the automatic script as early as November, 1917 when George Yeats’s controls patiently confirmed Yeats in his belief that each of the Cuchulain plays when being written had a relation to his own life. He was then drafting a penultimate Cuchulain play, *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, closely based on the very recent crisis in his emotional life, the conflict between his infatuation with Iseult Gonne and his marriage to George Hyde-Lees. Indeed, on 21 December, 1917 Yeats had asked George’s spirit controls whether his own ‘sins’ were to be compared with Cuchulain’s (*VPI* 67).

As we have seen, Yeats told Ethel Mannin in October 1938 that *A Vision* contained his public philosophy but that something of his private philosophy was to be found in ‘The Death of Cuchulain’ and that this philosophy (which he did not yet fully comprehend) had guided the play (*CL InteLex* 7315). Later, on 20 October, he added that the philosophy should not be apparent, and that the play should be like ‘an old faery tale’. It was however a ‘faery tale’ which demanded severed heads and a Salome-like dance by Emer around the head of her husband, Cuchulain.

On 14 January, 1939, Yeats described ‘Cuchulain Comforted’ to Edith Heald as ‘a lyric which has risen out of’ *The Death of Cuchulain* (*CL InteLex* 7371). We might therefore ask why he had this obsession with Cuchulain’s after-life? When Yeats had read the draft version of the play ‘with great fire’ to Dorothy Wellesley, she was very moved ‘half aware that it was in some sense a premonition of his own death’. In the letter of to Heald, written just after having completed the poem, Yeats said that his ‘whole mind has changed, it is more sensitive, more emotional’ (*CL InteLex* 7371).

In ‘The Cold Heaven’ Yeats, then in mid-life, had already projected the horrors of the *Phantasmagoria* and its punishments, but he was now asking himself, only two weeks before his death, through

the figure of Cuchulain, what transformation and frightening submission to his antithesis must a great poet undergo in the *Shiftings*, 'confusion of the death-bed over'? If, in the after-life Cuchulain, the Champion of Ulster and greatest Irish hero, must submit to cowards, sew and weave like a woman and be transformed into a singing bird, what transformation might a great poet expect, when he experiences the *Shiftings*? Gone is the euphoric conception of the after-life which Yeats had delineated in 'Broken Dreams', a poem of late October 1915:

But in the grave all, all shall be renewed,
The certainty that I shall see that lady
Leaning or standing or walking
In the first loveliness of womanhood,
And with the fervour of my youthful eyes
Has set me muttering like a fool (*VP* 356)

The ecstatic, paradisal confidence of this poem, 'The certainty that I shall see that lady', is utterly remote from the sinister purgatorial prospects of the *Phantasmagoria* or of the *Shiftings*. In 'Broken Dreams' the after-life is conceived of in terms of renewal and recompense, reparation for the sorrows of this life rather than in terms of suffering, punishment and transfiguration.

In the Automatic Script, on which Yeats drew for *A Vision*, Yeats placed himself at Phase 17, the *Daemonic Man*, although he does not acknowledge this in either published text. He gives Dante, however, as an example of this Phase, and describes it as so named because 'Unity of Being' and consequent expression of *Daemonic* thought is 'now more easy than at any other phase in the Great Wheel'. This might indicate that what such a figure must face in the *Phantasmagoria* is fragmentation, dispersal. Yeats describes Phase 17 as one in which 'all mental images . . . flow, change, flutter, cry out, or mix into something else . . . without frenzy' and states that 'this phase has for its supreme aim . . . to hide from itself and others this separation and disorder'.

In one sense this fragmentation and dispersal had already been realised in his last play. *The Death of Cuchulain* offers a phantas-

magoria—in the aesthetic and the theatrical sense of the word, a crowd of phantasms—of Yeats's ruling symbols and obsessions. The dance, the severed head, the blind man, the ballad singer and not least Cuchulain himself are paraded almost indulgently. As the very old man ('looking like something out of Mythology') who introduces the play says 'Emer must dance, there must be severed heads—I am old I belong to mythology—severed heads for her to dance before' (*VPI* 1052). This brief, symbolically charged play does not cohere, it disperses. On about 21 January Yeats, perhaps slightly defensively, had told Dorothy Wellesley, to whom he had already read a draft of *The Death of Cuchulain*, 'that "Shakespeare is only a mass of magnificent fragments" and that perhaps thousands of years might pass before the perfection of Greek drama and its Unity of Being could be once more achieved' (*LDW* 194).

Whatever happened to Yeats's spirit at 2.30 pm. on 28 January, 1939 after a prolonged period of unconsciousness, we may be grateful that his own fears and his fusion of Hindu philosophy and Catholic theology *via* Dante had produced a magnificent deathbed poem, perhaps the greatest poem ever written *in extremis*. He had told Dorothy Wellesley only shortly before his death that 'I feel that I am only beginning to understand how to write' (*LDW* 194).

'Cuchulain Comforted' remains an extraordinary testimony to Yeats's not having developed what, writing to John Quinn in September 1921 concerning his father, he said that he most feared 'the clouded mind of . . . old age'. 'I have been praying that I might be spared that mind or the years that bring it' (*CL InteLex* 3985). Thomas Hardy, another great poet of old age, self-accusation and death, had said in 1899 that 'no man's poetry can be truly judged till its last line is written. What is the last line? The death of the poet'.²²

²² Florence Hardy and Thomas Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy* (London: Macmillan, 1930), 80.

Question Me Again: Reflections on W. B. Yeats and Seamus Heaney

Neil Corcoran

I

IN 1967 Richard Ellmann, who had already written extensively on Yeats, published a book called *Eminent Domain* which, its subtitle tells us, is a study of Yeats ‘among’ a number of other writers, including Joyce, Eliot and Pound. It’s a book about literary inter-relationship and influence, what most of us nowadays would probably call ‘intertextuality’. The metaphor of Ellmann’s title, drawn from the sovereignty of property rights, suggests the view of literary community which the book advances; and its opening paragraph tells us that ‘influence’ is a term which ‘conceals and mitigates the guilty acquisitiveness of talent’:

That writers flow into each other like waves, gently rather than tidally, is one of those decorous myths we impose upon a high-handed, even brutal procedure. The behaviour, while not invariably marked by bad temper, is less polite. Writers move upon other writers not as genial successors but as violent expropriators, knocking down established boundaries to seize by the force of youth, or of age, what they require. They do not borrow, they override.¹

This may itself derive from T. S. Eliot’s well-known contention that

¹ Richard Ellmann, *Eminent Domain: Yeats among Wilde, Joyce, Pound, Eliot, and Auden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 3.

'Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal', even as it adds to it an apparent readiness to be impressed by the manners of the jungle.² So Ellmann's observation may be thought to practise what it preaches, by performing its own act of over-riding.

Eminent Domain is cited in the preface to the book Harold Bloom published on Yeats in 1970, and Ellmann is one of its dedicatees.³ Bloom's book is taken up largely with the poet not among his peers and successors but among his Romantic forerunners, notably Blake and Shelley. It was while writing this book that Bloom began to construct his theory of what he called, now famously, 'the anxiety of influence'. Even though Bloom's stated preoccupation is not with psyche but with pneuma—with the spirit of poetry that bloweth where it listeth—this is essentially Ellmann's conception of writerly inter-relationship as a kind of ferocious rapacity, but now immensely and arcaneously complicated. Bloom's neo-Freudianism, as we know, reads literary history as Oedipal struggle and stress, a revisionary battle in which the successor poet accrues strength by contesting a precursor poet and swerving away from him according to what can be drawn as a 'map of misreading'.

This theory has of course been enormously influential, even among those who dislike what they perceive as its congruity with certain kinds of corporatist or masculinist competitiveness. I have referred to it myself as the 'Promotions Board' theory of poetry; and Naomi Segal speaks of Bloom's 'waste land of reading'—taking a kind of feminist issue with Bloom's own issue with Eliot—in which 'poetry is begot by a just war between fathers and sons, strength passed on by the resolute refusal to inherit meaning; these texts have no mothers and no sisters'.⁴ In his book on literary allusion Christopher Ricks has observed that 'we are all both beneficiaries and victims' of Bloom's 'energies': 'Beneficiaries, granted his passion, his learning, and his so giving salience to the impulse or spirit of allusion. Victims, because of his melodramatic sub-Freudian parri-

² T. S. Eliot, 'Philip Massinger', in *Selected Essays*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 205-20 at 206.

³ Harold Bloom, *Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

⁴ See Neil Corcoran, *English Poetry since 1940* (London: Longman, 1993), xv, and Naomi Segal, *The Adulteress's Child: Authorship and Desire in the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 11.

cidal scenario, his sentimental discrediting of gratitude, and his explicit repudiation of all interest in allusion as a matter of the very words'—which appears to make it plain that Ricks is in fact antagonised by being Bloom's victim far more than he is enticed by being his beneficiary.⁵ However, despite such objections, it is not hard to account for the success of Bloom's theory. He is a busily efficient cartographer who does indeed provide a map of difficult terrain. Yet his efficiency is often apologetic, shadowed by a palpable and mitigating melancholy. In his most arresting work he makes one aware of the weighty personal sadness which attends, for him, the responsibility of bringing us the bad news that poetry is the sublimation of aggression. I think of this combination of efficiency and a melancholy rebuke to efficiency as a kind of Woody Allen effect, and a very potent one; and indeed, it is sometimes not without its rather lugubrious humour: as when, for instance, Bloom says of 'The Witch of Atlas' that Shelley had been reading far too much late Yeats when he wrote it.⁶

It is of great interest, though, that Bloom's theory was developed in relation to Yeats, a poet in whom violent acts of appropriation and contestation figure largely at the level of subject matter. There is his poetry of Anglo-Irish virtue and decay, in particular, poetry immersed in that late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century history of Ireland, where antagonism was not merely a literary trope but an all too literal revolutionary war of independence succeeded by an appallingly bitter civil war. This resulted in the creation of a political state which Yeats found increasingly antipathetic, even though it was generous, or pragmatic, enough to make him a senator in its parliament: his hostility provokes some of his most rancorous later works. But such antagonisms figure even in Yeats's poems of love and sexuality—in those magnificent and terrifying poems 'Solomon and the Witch' and 'Leda and the Swan', for instance—as they do also in his speculations on the 'gyres' of human history. Yeats is the poet to go to, in other words, if you want a view of creativity as contestation.

⁵ Christopher Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5–6.

⁶ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 153.

Perhaps because it was developed in relation to this particular, and peculiar, poet, the only thing wrong with Bloom's theory, successful as it has been, is that it is not actually true—or at least, not universally true. It would be sentimental to think that there are not truths in it, to believe that poets move upon one another as harmonious reconcilers; but it's a sort of inverted sentimentality to believe that it's the sole or whole truth. I want to defend an alternative model of literary history, one I think appropriate to the relationship I am about to consider here, and one which also proposes that any purely psychoanalytic theory of literary history is likely to be deficient if it ignores, as Bloom's almost entirely does, the category of history itself. In the relationship between Yeats and Heaney, poets of modern Ireland, that category is inescapable.

II

Terence Brown ends his excellent critical biography of Yeats with a chapter on his 'afterlife', an account of the various ways in which his work survives in the valley of others' saying. He says there that Seamus Heaney 'has engaged as critic with the poetic achievement of Yeats more fully than any other Irish poet since MacNeice'—who published the first full-length critical book on Yeats in 1941.⁷ In fact, Heaney's writings on Yeats to date would almost make a book too—relatively slim, but intellectually substantial. These are also, in the main, instances of Heaney at his best as a critic. Elsewhere, on occasion, his critical prose can be prone to a certain reflexivity or even orotundity, in which the work in question is not so much analysed as celebrated or even flattered; but Yeats always proves much less compliant to such procedures, provoking Heaney into some of his most alert and challenged acts of attention.

A collection of Heaney on Yeats would begin with two essays of 1978. One, 'The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats', sustains a contrast between the different kinds of poetry represented by the names of these two poets, a poetry of 'surrender'

⁷ Terence Brown, *The Life of W. B. Yeats: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 381.

and a poetry of ‘discipline’—a contrast which, it may be, would not survive a confrontation with poems of Wordsworth’s different from those cited by Heaney. The other, ‘Yeats as an Example?’, adds a question mark to the title of an essay by W. H. Auden to suggest how deeply problematic a figure Yeats is for Heaney. ‘Yeats as an Example?’ is central to my sense of this relationship, and I shall return to it shortly.⁸ Other essays would include the uncollected ‘A Tale of Two Islands: Reflections on the Irish Literary Revival’, published in 1980, in which the Protestant Anglo-Irish Yeats is compared with the nineteenth-century Catholic apostate novelist William Carleton; and the comparison introduces the denominational element which even now bristles in some modern Irish literary and cultural criticism.⁹ Then there is an essay of 1988, ‘The Place of Writing: W. B. Yeats and Thoor Ballylee’, in which Heaney meditates on the various meanings of the Norman tower in the West of Ireland in which Yeats lived for a few years, and which he figured extensively in his poetry. The essay is one of three—the others are frequently allusive to Yeats too—which made a short book, also called *The Place of Writing*, published in the United States in 1988, excerpts from which were reprinted in the prose collection *Finders Keepers* in 2002.¹⁰

This putative collection of Heaney on Yeats would continue with an essay of 1990 called ‘Joy or Night’, which compares attitudes to death in Yeats and Philip Larkin, decisively favouring Yeats as ‘more vital and undaunted’, and proposing, in its affirmation of a persisting value in Romantic transcendence, that Larkin’s rejection of Yeats may have been ‘too long and too readily approved of’.¹¹ It would include the lengthy essay on Yeats for *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* in 1991, a revised version of which forms the introduction to the Faber selection of Yeats which Heaney published in

⁸ These essays are collected in Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980).

⁹ Seamus Heaney, ‘A Tale of Two Islands: Reflections on the Irish Literary Revival’, in *Irish Studies*, 1, ed. by P. J. Drudy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 1-20.

¹⁰ Seamus Heaney, *The Place of Writing* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, [1988]), and *Finders Keepers: Selected Prose 1971-2001* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002).

¹¹ Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), 160, 147.

2000.¹² And it would end with the Nobel Prize acceptance speech delivered in Stockholm in 1995 entitled ‘Crediting Poetry’, which he subsequently reprinted at the end of his not-quite-collected volume, *Opened Ground: Poems 1966–1996*, in 1998.¹³ An account of his own career as a poet in relation to the circumstances of Northern Ireland since 1969, this lecture is also much taken up with Yeats, that earlier Irish winner of this same prize—with Yeats’s own Nobel speech, and with some of the poems he wrote out of the political turmoil of Ireland in the 1920s. Peter McDonald has said that ‘this feels like the last word on a topic Heaney knows must now be dropped’; but it’s hard to agree that this must necessarily be so, given that Yeats remains the supreme model for poetic persistence into old age, and persistence in precisely the self-challenging or even (notably in the Crazy Jane poems) the self-deconstructive ways which may well compel a poet of Heaney’s restlessly, and long since provenly, protean kind.¹⁴

Yeats has been, then, a constant presence in Heaney’s criticism since the late 1970s, and a central figure in his consideration of poetic influence. Auden, in his elegy for Yeats on his death in 1939, famously said that ‘The poet became his admirers’. One of the admirers Yeats has most crucially become is Seamus Heaney.

III

The strenuousness of Heaney’s ongoing engagement with Yeats is of keen interest not least because it sets him in the midst of one of the most fraught and contentious debates in recent Irish literary and cultural criticism. In this debate the voice of the critic Seamus Deane

¹² ‘William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)’, in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, ed. by Seamus Deane (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1991), II, 783–90, and Introduction to *W.B. Yeats: Poems selected by Seamus Heaney* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000).

¹³ Seamus Heaney, *Opened Ground: Poems 1966–1996* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 445–67.

¹⁴ Peter McDonald, ‘Faiths and Fidelities: Heaney and Longley in Mid-Career’, in *Last Before America: Irish and American Writing: Essays in Honour of Michael Allen*, ed. by Fran Brearton and Eamonn Hughes (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2001), 15.

has been particularly penetrating, with its articulation of Yeats's later career as an exercise in 'the pathology of literary Unionism', and with its inveighing against a criticism complaisantly tolerant of certain presumably Yeatsian formal procedures in contemporary Northern Irish poetry, in which '[t]he literature—autonomous, ordered—stands over against the political system in its savage disorder'.¹⁵ But it's of keen interest also because Heaney's place in contemporary Irish national life is of a kind that no Irish poet since Yeats has enjoyed, or endured. One consequence of this has been that, as early as the mid-1970s, Yeats was adduced in critical discussions of Heaney with the clear implication that he was to inherit the mantle. This must have been at least as daunting as it was encouraging; and it certainly put him in the way of the scepticism of his younger contemporary Paul Muldoon, who, in a prominently placed review of *Station Island* in 1984, said tartly that 'a truly uninvited shade' to the title poem's purgatorial setting would advise this poet 'that he should resist more firmly the idea that he must be the best Irish poet since Yeats, which arose from rather casual remarks by the power-crazed Robert Lowell and the craze-powered Clive James, who seem to have forgotten both MacNeice and Kavanagh'.¹⁶ That advice may not have been entirely innocent of this reviewer's jostling at the time for his own place in the firmament, not least because it would be hard to credit that these power-crazed and craze-powered international luminaries would ever, in the first place, have remembered Patrick Kavanagh sufficiently to have forgotten him; and I have written elsewhere of the complexities of the Heaney-Muldoon entanglements, to which I do, in fact, find the Bloomian categories in some ways appropriate.¹⁷ But Muldoon's review certainly makes it plain that the relationship between Heaney and Yeats which I am discussing here is an affair of peculiar delicacy, in which the bold but wary subtleties of Heaney's negotiations over the years may have

¹⁵ Seamus Deane, *Heroic Style: The Tradition of an Idea* (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1984), reprinted in *Ireland's Field Day* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), 50; and General Introduction to *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, I, xxvi.

¹⁶ Paul Muldoon, 'Sweeney Peregrine', *London Review of Books*, 1-14 November 1984, 20.

¹⁷ Neil Corcoran, *Poets of Modern Ireland: Text, Context, Intertext* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 121-36.

been almost matched by the subtleties of suspicious scrutiny to which they have been subjected.

But I am interested here in the way Yeats figures in Heaney's poems as well as in his critical prose. Any full treatment of this would prominently consider the sequence 'Singing School' in *North* in 1975, whose title derives from 'Sailing to Byzantium', and whose epigraphs set a quotation from the *Autobiographies* against another from Wordsworth's *Prelude* in a way that makes, of itself, an ironic political point; and it would examine many other poems in that volume too. It would think about the poem 'The Master' in the sequence 'Sweeney Redivivus' in *Station Island*, published in 1984, where the anonymous figure of authority is dressed in very Yeatsian imagery; and it might think about that poem all the more because Heaney in fact identifies the master in an interview as the Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz.¹⁸ It would consider the poem 'A Peacock's Feather', published in *The Haw Lantern* in 1987, but punctiliously dated 1972—an extremely significant date in Irish history, about which I shall have more to say shortly. This is an apparently occasional poem written for the christening of a niece, but its ironically Marvellian octosyllabics offer a consideration of Anglo-Irish and class resentments in which prominent reference is made to Yeats's poems of Coole Park, the Irish house owned by his patron, Lady Gregory. A full treatment of the topic would also examine the references to Yeats in the sequence 'Squarings', published in the volume *Seeing Things* in 1991, in some of which we would discover, I think, a poet learning from Yeats's astonishing poem 'The Cold Heaven' one way of registering a religious sensibility without using the terms of religious orthodoxy. However, I want here to focus the relationship between Heaney and Yeats by bringing three texts together: the essay of Heaney's to which I have already referred, 'Yeats as an Example?', written in 1978 and published in *Preoccupations* in 1980;

¹⁸ Rui Carvalho Homem, 'On Elegies, Eclogues, Translations, Transfusions: An Interview with Seamus Heaney', *The European English Messenger*, 10.2 (2001), 30. ('But "The Master" is specifically about meeting with my hero, Czeslaw Milosz. Many people think it's about Yeats because it's set in a tower and so on'.)

¹⁹ Heaney, *Preoccupations*, 100.

Yeats's poem 'The Fisherman', published in *The Wild Swans at Coole* in 1919; and Heaney's poem 'Casualty', published in his volume *Field Work* exactly sixty years later, in 1979.

IV

'Yeats as an Example?' is one of the most spirited of Heaney's earlier essays, in which we witness his approach to another writer with the clear awareness that this is going to be a significant phase of self-development. The essay notices, as much criticism has, something cold, violent and implacable in Yeats's art, and asks if this can be regarded as in any way exemplary. Heaney does admire, he tells us, what he calls Yeats's 'intransigence', and admires too the way 'his vision did not confine itself to rhetorics, but issued in actions'.¹⁹ He respects, that is to say, the inextricability of the life and the work in this poet who nevertheless maintained a theory of their separation. He then offers a quite unpredictable reading of a couple of moments from the life. One is from the 1890s, in the first flush of Yeats's enthusiasm for spiritualism, and the other from 1913, when he spoke in outrage against Irish middle-class philistinism. He did so on this occasion because Dublin Corporation had refused to fund a gallery for a collection of Impressionist paintings offered to the city by Lady Gregory's nephew, Hugh Lane: this episode also lies behind such poems as 'To a Wealthy Man', 'Paudeen', and 'September 1913'. Where others have found only Yeats's silliness or snobbery in these episodes, and have ridiculed him, Heaney reads them as moments in which Yeats admirably 'took on the world on his own terms, defined the areas where he would negotiate and where he would not'. Heaney assumes that 'this peremptoriness, this apparent arrogance, is exemplary in an artist, that it is proper and even necessary for him to insist on his own language, his own vision, his own terms of reference'.²⁰ Such admiration is in fact tempered in the essay as a whole by a concerted attempt to find in Yeats moments not peremptory or arrogant at all, but instinct with

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 101.

a kind of saving humanitarianism. The end of the essay, for instance, finds Yeats's poem 'Under Ben Bulben' unfortunate, even ethically obnoxious, in itself—this is not hard to do—and particularly so as the intended final poem of his *Poems*. Heaney would, he says, 'put a kinder poem last'—and he believes that he has found such a thing in the certainly superb 'Cuchulain Comforted'.²¹

But, to understand why, nevertheless, Heaney might approve of Yeatsian 'arrogance', I turn to the 'image of Yeats' which 'the malicious eyes of George Moore cast into shape'. Heaney quotes extensively if selectively from *Hail and Farewell*, wondering as he does so whether "maliciousness" is too severe an adjective. 'As soon as the applause died away' after a lecture of Moore's on the Impressionists,

Yeats, who had lately returned to us from the States with a paunch, a huge stride, and an immense fur overcoat, rose to speak. We were surprised at the change in his appearance, and could hardly believe our ears when, instead of talking to us as he used to do about the old stories come down from generation to generation he began to thunder against the middle classes, stamping his feet, working himself into a temper, and all because the middle classes did not dip their hands into their pockets and give Lane the money he wanted for his exhibition. When he spoke the words, the middle classes, one would have thought that he was speaking against a personal foe, and we looked round asking each other with our eyes where on earth our Willie Yeats had picked up the strange belief that none but titled and carriage folk could appreciate pictures... .

We have sacrificed our lives for art; but you, what have you done? What sacrifices have you made? he asked, and everybody began to search his memory for the sacrifices Yeats had made, asking himself in what prison Yeats had languished, what rags he had worn, what broken victuals he had eaten. As far as anybody could remember, he had always lived very comfortably, sitting down invariably to regular meals, and the old green cloak that was in keeping with his profession of romantic poet he had exchanged for the magnificent fur coat which distracted our attention from what he was saying, so opulently did it cover the back of the chair out of which he had risen...²²

²¹ In fact, as Warwick Gould has demonstrated, the decision to place 'Under Ben Bulben' last was not Yeats's but George Yeats's after his death. For the details of the arrangement and ordering of the poems, see Warwick Gould, 'W. B. Yeats and the Resurrection of the Author', *The Library*, 7th ser., XVI (1994), 101-34. I am very grateful to Professor Gould for bringing this article to my attention.

This passage has the confidence, and perhaps the condescension, of Moore's own certain knowledge that he is himself, as the scion of a (Catholic) Big House far grander than Lady Gregory's, socially several cuts above 'our Willie Yeats'. (Possibly because it would distract attention from his argument here, Heaney omits a sentence from the passage in which Moore makes the specifically directed social point: 'And we asked ourselves why Willie Yeats should feel himself called upon to denounce his own class, millers and shipowners on one side, and on the other a portrait-painter of distinction'.)²³ Nevertheless, the critique of Yeats's aristocratic pretensions hits its target. Animated by animosity, Moore deflates Yeats in a rhetoric of bathos. And one might expect Seamus Heaney to have some sympathy with this, since he seems congenitally incapable of any such behaviour himself. He does of course note the 'theatricality' of Yeats's performance, but he regards it as deliberate. Yeats is busy creating out of himself, he says, 'a character who was almost as much a work of imagination' as James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus. And, Heaney thinks, for the same reason: the exercise of intransigence is a protection, he says, of 'his imaginative springs, so that the gift would survive'—by which he means, of course, the gift of poetry.²⁴

I suppose that most poets dread the departure of the gift. There are, after all, many precedents in literary history for that, including Wordsworth, who is probably, despite Heaney's far more thorough-going critical engagement with Yeats, the most deeply informing presence in Heaney; and a lot is made in this essay of the fact that Yeats is particularly exemplary for a poet 'approaching middle age', as Heaney may well have considered himself in 1978, when he was nearing forty. Yeats is of course, paradigmatically, the post-Romantic poet who managed to go on writing and, indeed, produced some of his greatest work in, and about, old age. It's in this context of writerly survival that Heaney then quotes the ending

²² Quoted in *Preoccupations*, 106–07.

²³ George Moore, *Hail and Farewell: Ave, Salve, Vale*, ed. by Richard Cave (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1976), 540. This edition contains the text of the revised edition from 1933.

²⁴ *Preoccupations*, 108.

of 'The Fisherman' and comments: 'The solitude, the will towards excellence, the courage, the self-conscious turning away from that in which he no longer believes, which is Dublin life, and turning towards that which he trusts, which is an image or dream—all the drama and integrity of . . . 'The Fisherman' depend to a large extent upon that other drama which George Moore so delightedly observed and reported'.²⁵ The apparent silliness or snobbery of the behaviour, that is to say, is a way of making possible new developments in the art. The drama of the life and the drama of the art, which must superficially seem almost destabilisingly discontinuous, are in fact continuous at the deepest creative level.

'The Fisherman' is written in iambic trimeters: three-stress lines, occasionally varied to two-stress ones by Yeats. The form is stately but also taut, even nervous. It seems to permit the possibility of a heightened tone while at the same time preventing any such thing from being too easily achieved; and this tonal hesitation is underlined by the irresolution of the poem's pararhymes. In its first verse paragraph Yeats has disdained the urban middle classes—'The craven man in his seat, | The insolent unreproved'—and then he turns to the West of Ireland fisherman of the poem's title. Such a person must seem, on the face of it, an unlikely recipient of the work of William Butler Yeats but he is celebrated here as the work's ideal, and ideally demanding, audience:

Maybe a twelvemonth since
Suddenly I began,
In scorn of this audience,
Imagining a man,
And his sun-freckled face,
And grey Connemara cloth,
Climbing up to a place
Where stone is dark under froth,
And the down-turn of his wrist
When the flies drop in the stream;
A man who does not exist,
A man who is but a dream;
And cried, 'Before I am old
I shall have written him one

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 108-09.

Poem maybe as cold
And passionate as the dawn' (*VP* 348).

V

What exercises Heaney throughout 'Yeats as an Example?' and what 'The Fisherman' explicitly considers too is the relationship between poet and audience. The questions raised by this encounter between one Irish poet and another concern the way a relationship with an audience may become a worrying element in the attempt to survive properly as a poet; the desirability of remaking yourself, at a point in your life when you have become a public person as well as a private poet, in order to resist certain expectations; the necessity of refusing certain kinds of invitation or co-option. Heaney's poem 'Casualty', published in *Field Work* in 1979, just a year after this essay was written, makes it clear why such issues should be the focus of his attention when writing about Yeats in the 1970s; and the poem is in some significant ways the acknowledgement of debts.

'Casualty', one of several personal elegies in this volume, is Heaney's sole poem 'about' Bloody Sunday, one of the crucially defining moments in the history of Northern Ireland since 1969. Heaney's attitude to the killings then, and to the judgement of the Widgery tribunal which followed them, has never, I think, been much in doubt. My assumption is that he shares the view of Catholic nationalists, and others, that the finding represented a fundamental injustice, and his Nobel Prize speech is explicit about how 'the "mere Irish" in oneself was appalled by the ruthlessness of the British Army on occasions like Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972'.²⁶ He also published, for the first time, in the *Sunday Times* on 2 February 1997, to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the event, some of the lyrics of a broadside ballad called 'The Road to Derry', which he had written in 1972, to be sung by the Irish singer Luke Kelly of The Dubliners folk group.²⁷ These read, in part, 'In the dirt lay justice | Like an acorn in the winter | Till its oak would sprout in Derry | Where the thirteen men lay dead'—where the

²⁶ *Opened Ground*, 454-55.

metaphor, drawing on the Irish etymology of the word 'Derry' (from 'doire', the oakwood), carries minatory implications of both resentment and the necessity for reparation. It is also not without relevance that it was later in 1972 that Heaney resigned from his lecturing job at Queen's University in Belfast and moved with his family to the Republic. What bearing, if any, the events of Bloody Sunday and their aftermath had on this move I am not in a position to say, but it was the material of considerable media speculation at the time, and the figure of the poet as 'inner emigré' in 'Exposure' in *North*, published in 1975, may be thought to reflect this political and topographical move from North to South, just as one significance of the poem's title is undoubtedly the media 'exposure' which accompanied it.

Whatever the reactions of Heaney as a man and as the composer of a song lyric, however, his reactions as a poet are much more complex, and their complexity resides in, precisely, his sense of audience. 'Casualty' is, among other things, the register of that complexity. It is also, in a way insufficiently realised, I think, an affront to nationalist sentiment, since it is an elegy not for the thirteen dead of Bloody Sunday, but for one man, a fisherman, killed by the IRA in the reprisal bombing of a pub shortly afterwards: the word 'Casualty' of the poem's title is the anonymising of this person in the usual neutrally exculpating way of the military, or paramilitary, strategist who also, of course, conventionally 'regrets' such casualties. That this is Heaney's only explicit consideration of Bloody Sunday, and that he waited seven years before he published it is in itself very revealing, particularly when you remember that the much admired poet Thomas Kinsella published an outraged satire called *Butcher's Dozen* within a week of the publication of the Widgery report. In concentrating on the individual death, Heaney is honouring, first of all, a personal rather than a political obligation: the poem seems initiated by the commemorative and preservative desire to give a character back to this man who would otherwise be only an anonymous statistic. This is, that is to say, a real as opposed to Yeats's ideal, fisherman: he is 'dole-kept' indeed, even though 'a natural for work', because

²⁷ 'Nobel Poet Discloses his Despair at Bloody Sunday', *Sunday Times*, 2 February 1997, 3.

Northern Ireland in the 1970s had one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe.

There is no doubt that Heaney intends an allusion to Yeats's poem, since not only do both involve fishermen, but they share a metre (the trimeter) and the subtle and tactical deployment of pararhyme, even though Heaney does vary the rhyme scheme itself. The connection between the two poems was pointed out, in fact, by Blake Morrison in the first critical book on Heaney, in which Yeats, along with Joyce, is read as a 'governing spirit' of the poem, although not much more than this is made of the relationship there.²⁸ Heaney's revision of Yeats's ideal into a real man in a socially particularised Northern Ireland—rather than, as in Yeats, in an idealised Connemara—is managed deftly and un insistently: but it carries a large cultural freight. Some of this is explicated in one of the critical essays I referred to earlier, 'A Tale of Two Islands', published in 1980. There, Yeats's vision of the West and its noble peasantry and hard-riding country gentlemen is read as 'not ennobling but disabling'.²⁹ Yeats's image of the fisherman is found to share with other such images and symbols in his work a mystificatory quality which offers the Irish a self-image that, if accepted, could only prove sentimentalising, nostalgic or fey, an image deriving from the cultural condescensions of a post-Arnoldian Celticity and a more recent Celtic Twilightery. That essay, and this element of the poem 'Casualty', are in complete harmony with the revisionist criticism of Yeats which has dominated the study of his work since the early 1970s.

But there is also in the poem a vivid evocation of the amiably masculine relationship between fisherman and poet—an evocation that nevertheless includes a strong sense of constraint in a way that may critique, or may be allowed to critique, even as it evokes, the norms of Irish masculinity. Where Yeats's fisherman—coldly isolated from all the appurtenances of modernity in an idealised, aristocratic West of Ireland—is unambiguously the poet's ideal first audience, Heaney's, the poet tells us, finds his 'other life'—the life of poetry, that is—'Incomprehensible'. Yet it's the fisherman who rais-

²⁸ Blake Morrison, *Seamus Heaney* (London: Methuen, 1982), 79.

²⁹ 'A Tale of Two Islands', 11.

es the subject, seeking understanding, and the poet who refuses to pursue it, even if, understandably, 'shy of condescension'—because to speak at all would be to speak about all they do not share. Arguably, however, this refusal is in fact the greater condescension, the committing by silence or elision of precisely the offence which the poet claims to wish to avoid; and a readerly unease at this point matches the deep social unease which attends the encounter. The poet of 'Casualty' falters where the poet of 'Digging', the first poem in Heaney's first book, bridges a comparable gap with the metaphor of the pen as spade, and does so with apparent confidence ('I'll dig with it'), but perhaps with a certain stridency that is itself a register of vulnerability. And when the word 'educated' does finally figure in 'Casualty', it does so almost as rebuke or taunt to, and certainly as challenge from, fisherman to poet: 'Now you're supposed to be | An educated man. | Puzzle me the right answer | To that one'. In subsequent poems of Heaney's, such as 'Casting and Gathering' in *Seeing Things* (1991), as if in apology for such actual condescension, poetry and fishing are in fact soldered metaphorically together; and 'The Daylight Art' in *The Haw Lantern* (1987) runs a conceit on the conjunction when it figures 'a natural gift' for practising the art closest to one's nature as

poetry, say, or fishing; whose nights are dreamless;
whose deep-sunk panoramas rise and pass

like daylight through the rod's eye or the needle's eye.³⁰

In 'Casualty' the question to which the fisherman asks the poet to 'puzzle the answer' is 'How culpable was he | That last night when he broke | Our tribe's complicity?' and it occurs after the poem's description of the funerals of the thirteen dead in its second section, where the fisherman's refusal of 'complicity' is opposed by that peculiarly ambivalent imagery used of the mourners, the 'swaddling band, | Lapping, tightening | Till we were braced and bound | Like brothers in a ring'. In fact, the word 'braced' does occur occasionally in Heaney's prose, where it's always a term of approbation. Here, how-

³⁰ Seamus Heaney, *The Haw Lantern* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 9.

ever, when combined with ‘bound’ and ‘swaddling’, it suggests something both constricting and infantile in the kinds of complicity which the tribe may demand. The complexity of this poem’s sense of complicity is that it’s the fisherman’s refusal of it—specifically, his refusal to honour the IRA’s curfew, those ‘threats [that] were phoned’—that is paradoxically, but causally, both his freedom and his death: the fisherman has become the fish, ‘Swimming towards the lure / Of warm, lit-up places’ and, by doing so, has been lured to his death. And so the final part of the poem sets him as the object of this poet’s agonised self-enquiry, as it commemorates a shared moment—

that morning

When he took me in his boat,
 The screw purling, turning
 Indolent fathoms white,
 I tasted freedom with him.
 To get out early, haul
 Steadily off the bottom,
 Dispraise the catch, and smile
 As you find a rhythm
 Working you, slow mile by mile,
 Into your proper haunt
 Somewhere, well out, beyond . . .

Dawn-sniffing revenant,
 Plodder through midnight rain,
 Question me again.³¹

In this respect, however—and this is a kind of allusive irony in ‘Casualty’—this fisherman turns back into something much more like Yeats’s ideal. In his ghosthood, Heaney’s fisherman too is a man who does not exist, a man who is but a dream. And actually this staging of the encounter as a dialogue within the poem—which does not happen in Yeats—may represent a crossing of Yeats with Wordsworth, the poets also joined in ‘The Makings of a Music’, that essay of 1978 to which I have already referred. The moment is like the one in ‘Resolution and Independence’, for instance, where the

³¹ Heaney, *Opened Ground*, 157.

poet says of the leech-gatherer that

... the whole Body of the man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
Or like a Man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength, and strong admonishment.³²

No longer the socially realised character of his first appearance in the poem, but the symbolically challenging and questioning ‘revenant’, the fisherman cannot supply any actual answers, but only those the poet chooses to ventriloquise on his behalf and to draw from his example or admonishment: ‘How culpable was he | That last night when he broke | Our tribe’s complicity?’—where the word ‘tribe’, inflected with the demotic, also has the harshness of judgement.

I have just said that the fisherman ‘turns back’ into something more like Yeats’s fisherman; and in doing so, I am using the language of the poem itself, where the image of the turned back is prominent, and so too is an imagery of the specular. ‘Casualty’ is a poem preoccupied with watching, observing, seeing and being seen, and with how, in these processes of scrutiny, you might choose to turn, to turn your back, to turn back.³³ It’s a poem, that is to say, about how a poet, or a poem, might discover his, or its, own appropriate or ‘proper’ audience—this dead fisherman—and might do so by resisting another audience’s—the ‘tribe’s’—expectations or assumptions. ‘Casualty’ is a refusal of instrumentality, an insistence on the virtue of reflection. Far from being what he has sometimes been accused of being—a poet who, whatever he says, says nothing—Heaney is here, schooled by the Yeatsian example in self-protective intransigence, insisting on the poet’s right to do otherwise. I think that one might assume behind

³² William Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800–1807*, ed. by Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 128. I am grateful for this point to Paul Muldoon.

³³ It is striking that the same imagery recurs in the penultimate poem, no. XLVII, of the ‘Squarings’ sequence in *Seeing Things*, which figures potential and fulfilment—in life, or in poetry—as the sensing of things in an ‘offing’: ‘The emptier it stood, the more compelled | The eye that scanned it. | But once you turned your back on it, your back | Was suddenly all eyes like Argus’s’, *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 107.

the poem actual confrontations between poet and audience in Irish, and probably Irish-American, public spaces; and Heaney would have been newly returned from the United States in the mid-1970s, as Yeats was in Moore's unflattering reminiscence. But rising through the mists of the ellipsis, or aposiopesis, of the ending of Heaney's penultimate stanza—'Somewhere, well out, beyond. . .'—we can also surely just about perceive some other Yeatsian questions, those which end his best-known poem of all, and one also written in iambic trimeter, 'Easter 1916', that elegy for the dead, or the casualties, of an earlier phase of Irish political violence, which Yeats also waited some time—until 1920—to publish in its definitive form:

Too long a sacrifice
 Can make a stone of the heart.
 O when may it suffice?
 That is Heaven's part, 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.
 What is it but nightfall?
 No, no, not night but death;
 Was it needless death after all?
 For England may keep faith
 For all that is done and said.
 We know their dream; enough
 To know they dreamed and are dead;
 And what if excess of love
 Bewildered them till they died?
 I write it out in a verse
 MacDonagh and MacBride
 And Connolly and Pearse
 Now and in time to be,
 Wherever green is worn,
 Are changed, changed utterly:
 A terrible beauty is born (*VP* 394).

Yeats's poem, which, as I said earlier, is sometimes popularly read—or misread, or even unread—as though it approves or celebrates the tragic destiny of the fifteen executed leaders of the

rebellion of 1916, a destiny in which banality and routine are transformed into the aesthetics of self-sacrificial tragic fulfilment, is in fact elaborately self-questioning: ‘when may it suffice?’ ‘What is it but nightfall?’ ‘Was it needless death after all?’ ‘What if excess of love | Bewildered them till they died?’ These naggingly insistent anxieties undermine the magisterial balladic inevitability of the refrain, with its apparent assurance about transformative historical and political metamorphosis. That the poem is the place for such self-questioning, a self-questioning which is that of the individual poet first of all, certainly, but which might also be that of a culture, a community or even a ‘tribe’ too, is a lesson which ‘Casualty’ may well have inherited from ‘Easter 1916’—even if, as Terence Brown has pointed out, when Yeats did finally publish the poem, on 23 October 1920, in the London-published journal *The New Statesman*, the lines ‘For England may keep faith | For all that is done and said’ would have sounded out with ‘corrosive irony’ in the context of the contemporary war of independence.³⁴

But if, in the end, it’s Yeats who is looking at Heaney in ‘Casualty’, and the ghosts of Yeats’s metres and rhetorical inflections which haunt Heaney’s, the ethic of ‘Casualty’ is in fact the emulation not of Yeatsian arrogance or intransigence, such as Heaney found in the performing self of George Moore’s anecdote, but rather of the urge to decision, singularity, authoritative independence. The mood of this in Yeats’s ‘The Fisherman’ is passionately indicative and promissory, voicing itself in a cry; in Heaney it’s still mutedly interrogative, although the poem’s final use of the verb ‘Question’ is itself voiced in the imperative. The result is that ‘Casualty’ could never be accused, as Kinsella’s *Butcher’s Dozen*—however justified its anger—perhaps could, of being itself complicit with military action or reaction. The poem’s ellipsis and its self-questionings are a deeply meditated and a profoundly considered stepping to one side of the ethic of revenge. Even so, the questions about poetic responsibility in relation to public atrocity which are raised here, in the context of Bloody Sunday, with a painful, even piercing, intensity remain unanswered in the poem, only to be raised again and again in the work of

³⁴ *Life of W.B. Yeats*, 275.

this much-haunted and endlessly self-questioning poet. The encounter with Yeats in 'Casualty' and the formal indebtedness that it manifests also surely mark a crucial stage in the creative processes which inspire and then underwrite some of the theoretical formulations of Heaney's critical prose, with, first, its rather forbiddingly forensic concept of the 'jurisdiction of achieved form' in *The Government of the Tongue* (1988) and then with the more benignly humane concept of poetry's 'redress', a 'total adequacy' that will prove 'strong enough to help' in *The Redress of Poetry* (1995).³⁵

VI

What does the relationship between Yeats and Heaney tell us, then, about the nature of poetic inheritance; what does it say about the way literary history happens and can be described? Certainly Heaney, *pace* Harold Bloom, revises Yeats in this encounter by, as it were, putting 'a kinder poem last', since 'Casualty' is 'kinder' than 'The Fisherman', more obviously humanitarian in its emphases and empathies, even if it needs the supreme assurance of that coldly passionate 'precursor poem' to come into being. It could be, of course, that Heaney has to misread Yeats as kinder than he is in order to read him at all, has to transform him into a poet more manageable like himself. But an adjustment in the direction of kindness is hardly what Bloom has in mind, or would permit, in his theory of misprision. I hope that I have shown too, though, that Heaney means it, and means it deeply in relation to his own practice, when he admires Yeats's intransigence: and this is reading, not misreading. Sometimes too, reading Bloom, you can feel that the contest between poets is conducted at an extraordinarily remote level of abstraction that does not leave much scope for the consideration of something essential in the relationship I have discussed here: poetic form. 'Casualty' is initiated by what it calls, self-referentially, 'find-

³⁵ Seamus Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue: The 1986 T. S. Eliot Memorial Lectures and Other Critical Writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), 92; and *The Redress of Poetry: Oxford Lectures* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), 8-9. The phrase 'strong enough to help' is quoted from George Seferis.

ing a rhythm', and the rhythm is, characteristically, although not exclusively, Yeats's, just as the poem's progress is towards the realisation of a quasi-Yeatsian figure. 'Casualty', in my view, does a richly inventive and surprising thing with this rhythm and this figure. Behaving like this, Heaney is, arguably, following that famous, magisterially arrogant instruction that Yeats gave his contemporaries in 'Under Ben Bulben':

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)

But if he follows the instruction, it is in no spirit of aridly prescriptive formalism, but in the art and scope of his recognition, made in the teeth of certain antagonisms both political and literary-theoretical, that 'Yeats's essential gift is his ability . . . to make a vaulted space in language through the firmness, in-placeness and undislodgeability of stanzaic form'.³⁶

'Casualty' suggests powerfully that the relationship between successor poets need not be, or need not be only, a matter of contestation. It may also be a difficult education in the exemplary, and an education found where you might least expect it: in Yeats, a haughty Anglo-Irish Protestant kow-towing to the aristocracy and sometimes venting anti-Catholic spleen, for instance, when you are Heaney, an apparently genial Northern Irish Catholic from a farming background who was subjected in youth to some of the political results of the venting of anti-Catholic spleen. Form, which involves inter-relationship as well as self-limitation, is a kind of society; and, if you are an exceptional poet, it's where you encounter the only true society of your peers, your only true first audience. As in all well-

³⁶ *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, II, 790. In a study of the influence of Yeats's stanzaic poems on contemporary Northern Irish poetry Peter McDonald also emphasises the resourcefulness with which these poets adapt or accommodate the Yeatsian structures: Heaney, Derek Mahon, Michael Longley and Paul Muldoon, he says, 'offer a use of Yeats's forms which is something other than either ideological grudge or formalist imitation'. See *Serious Poetry: Form and Authority from Yeats to Hill* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 166.

regulated societies, contractual relationships of obligation, indebtedness and responsibility obtain. But so too, and at the most intimate level, do relationships of challenge, inquiry, scrutiny and self-advancement. Relationships between poets, that is to say, may be corroborative as well as competitive, but only when they are bravely entered into; and this is a conclusion also reached by Fiona Stafford, as part of an argument against the singularity or monodrama of Bloom's view of poetic influence, in her book *Starting Lines in Scottish, Irish, and English Poetry*, where, in her reading of one of the 'Squarings' poems in *Seeing Things*, she derives the word 'corroborative' from Heaney himself.³⁶ Formal indebtedness of the kind I have been considering here is something substantively, and ethically, distinct from intertextuality. In Julia Kristeva, in fact, the theorist who first, in her readings of Bakhtin, gave the term currency, intertextuality has nothing whatever to do with human agency, with intersubjectivity, but with the 'transposition of one (or several) sign-system(s) into another': the use of the term 'intertextuality' to denote the 'study of sources' is, she says, 'banal'.³⁷ It's far too late now in literary history and criticism to avoid that banality, and in any case I hope that what I have offered here has been something more complex in its poetics, ethics and politics than the *de-haut-en bas* Kristevan phrase 'study of sources', which seems intended as a slur, might suggest. In my view, to attempt an engagement with form, to show how and why particular forms both derive from, and meet, specific contingencies, necessarily involves criticism in the processes of agency, and not only the agency of the individual poet, but the agency also of historical and political circumstance.

In any such consideration, questions of value also matter. Heaney is braced but not bound by the Yeatsian heritage, difficult as that is to approach and assimilate, and in this he differs from many

³⁷ Fiona Stafford, *Starting Lines in Scottish, Irish, and English Poetry: From Burns to Heaney* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 294, where she quotes from Heaney's Foreword to *Lifelines: An Anthology of Poems Chosen by Famous People*, ed. by Niall Macmonagle (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993).

³⁸ Julia Kristeva, 'Revolution in Poetic Language' (1974) in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 89–136 (111). She has in mind the way the sign-system of the novel, for instance, is formed 'as the redistribution of several different sign-systems: carnival, courtly poetry, scholastic discourse'.

lesser poets. ‘Casualty’ is not so much a ‘map of misreading’ as the graph of a brave engagement with the best that is itself one of the signatures of the newly excellent. This engagement is figured explicitly in one of the ‘Squarings’ poems of *Seeing Things*, poem xxii of the sub-sequence ‘Settings’. This ends with a reference to Yeats as, here, himself the revenant, now become the object of the poet’s questions. These have their gnomic or riddling element, but they are clearly to do with the co-habitation between what the poem calls ‘spirit’, which is a substantial word in Yeats, and what it calls ‘perfected form’. ‘Spirit’ I take to be what it is traditionally, the animating principle, cognate with the more explicitly religious term ‘soul’, which is a word the poem also risks. And ‘perfected form’ is, I think, the initially daunting architecture of the Yeatsian poem, or poetic sequence (that very Yeatsian genre). The imagery of this ‘Squarings’ poem, with its birds, its dawn cold, its stone tower, its Big House statuary and horticulture, is all Yeatsian. The questions it ends with are those of a Seamus Heaney who, even if now undaunted, turns aside, in the parenthesis of the final line, with what I take to be a wry, even embarrassed, but saving, *moue* at this act of his own presumption—the poet suddenly become examiner of the schoolboy Yeats, asking impossibly large questions which, if they can be answered at all, can be answered only by the next, and then the next, and then, again, the next poem:

How habitable is perfected form?
And how inhabited the windy light?

What’s the use of a held note or held line
That cannot be assailed for reassurance?
(Set questions for the ghost of W.B.)³⁹

³⁹ *Seeing Things*, 78.

A Select Checklist of the Writings of Alexander Norman Jeffares (1920-2005)

Colin Smythe

How does one begin to describe Derry Jeffares? I first met him at the opening conference of the International Association for the Study of Anglo-Irish Literature (IASAIL) at Trinity College Dublin in the summer of 1970. Jeanne, his wife also attended, and I got to know both of them there and over the following years, visiting them in Leeds, then in Rumbling Bridge and at their final home at Fife Ness. To know them was to love them both. In 1978 I asked Derry whether he would be prepared to join my publishing company as a director, and his immediate reply—misunderstanding my reason for asking—was ‘how much money do you need?’ I told him that I needed no financial injection, but that I wanted to recognise the help and advice he had been so generously giving me, and the contacts he’d made for me, and make the close connection official. He was at the centre of a publishing and educational web: he found people teaching posts, sometimes in the most distant outposts of academia, advising some young academic to take the job, with the promise: ‘Don’t worry. We’ll get you back!’ One of his kindnesses was when he put me in touch with Dr George Sandulescu, who was in the mid 1980s running the Princess Grace Irish Library in Monaco. I was ‘vetted’ and appointed the Library’s publisher, as well as being deputed to significantly increase its holding of Irish interest publications and videos (which were at that time an exorbitant price), going through the catalogues of every publisher that had an Irish list.

Others in this volume describe how they were affected by this powerhouse of energy and influence, and I regret much that in spite of a wide-ranging supporting list of eminent people to a proposal I

made in 1997 for some suitable official acknowledgement of his work and services to this country nothing came of it. I suppose it may have been not unconnected to the change of government that year. Ireland has no such method of appropriately acknowledging its sons and daughters (other than through Aosdána in the creative art world), so they have to make do with honorary degrees and, much more rarely, honorary fellowships: Derry particularly relished the honorary Fellowship received from TCD and made full use of it.

Anyone who has asked Derry for his opinion of a manuscript knows the amazing speed with which it was returned with his, usually extremely extensive, comments—often peppered with his personal slang to precisely describe his opinion of author and/or book. It always amazed me that there were enough hours in the day for him to be able to do everything he carried out—including wall building, decorating, gardening, the founding and organisation of new societies (including the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS) in 1966, and the Association for the Study of Anglo-Irish Literature (IASAIL, now renamed, the Association for the Study of Irish Literatures—IASIL) in 1968, and journals, most still flourishing, quite apart from his editorial collaborations, the York Notes, of which he was general editor, the list is impressive.

I published two volumes of his poems, *Brought up in Dublin* and *Brought up to Leave* (both 1987), which in retrospect I think I should have combined into one, his collection of essays, *Images of Invention* (1996), *Poems and Plays of Oliver St John Gogarty* (2001) which he edited over a number of years, and maintained a constant joy of discovery, regardless of how much more work each new discovery involved, as the volume and its footnotes grew and grew from some 500 to nearly 900 pages. Then I caught him at a good moment when his workload was rather less than usual and I asked him to write a biographical introduction to *The Collected Poems of James Stephens* (2006). In astonishingly quick time he sent me his hand-written 9,000 word introduction. It was the last major piece of work he did, (apart from reading and correcting proofs of his collaborations with Peter van de Kamp—the anthologies of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, the last volume of which he had finished proof-reading the day before he died).

I look back on thirty-five years of collaboration and friendship, and remember the sorrow not only of learning of his death but the

realisation that the wonderfully enjoyable, lengthy, gossipy and often scandalous phone calls I would get from him at weekends would be no more. Helping with others to lower his coffin into the grave (a Scottish custom) in Crail churchyard on 8 June 2005 we said farewell to a wonderful man, made all the more final by Jeanne's death, and her burial in that same churchyard thirteen months later. We shall not see their like again.

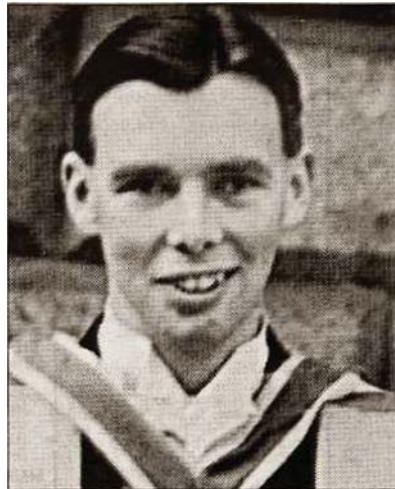
The list that follows—an updated version of the checklist published in the festschrift, *Literature and the Art of Creation* (eds. Robert Welch and Suheil Badi Bushrui, 1988)—indicates the wide-ranging interests of the late Professor A. Norman Jeffares, and particularly his long-standing preoccupation with W. B. Yeats, his first article on the poet being published over sixty years ago, in 1945.

This checklist is divided into six sections:

- a) works by A. Norman Jeffares;
- b) works edited by him;
- c) introductions and contributions to books;
- d) contributions to periodicals, including a selection of reviews;
- e) radio scripts;
- f) series and journals of which Professor Jeffares has been editor;

There are many hundreds of reviews that he wrote for over thirty journals, to many of which he was a regular contributor. They include *Australian Book Review*, *Australian Letters*, *AUMLA*, *British Book News*, *English Studies*, *Hermathena*, *The Irish Times*, *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *Levende Talen*, *The Literary Half-Yearly*, *The Literary Review*, *Meanjin*, *Modern Language Notes*, *Modern Language Review*, *Museum, Notes and Queries*, *The Oxford Magazine*, *The Review of English Studies*, *Sewanee Review*, *Stand*, *Time and Tide*, *The Times*, *The Times Educational Supplement*, *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Wascan Review*, *Wending*, *Western Humanities Review*, *World Language in English*, *Yeats Annual* and *The Yorkshire Post*.

A few of the more important reviews are included in section D, but obviously this has been a selective choice.



Plates 22-24. Three faces of Derry Jeffares, Unknown contemporary press photographers. Images courtesy of Colin Smythe Ltd. (<http://www.colinsmythe.co.uk>). All rights reserved.

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F. EDITOR OF SERIES AND JOURNALS

- Founding Editor, *A Review of English Literature*. London: Longmans, Green & Co., I-VIII. 1960-67.
- Founding Editor, *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*. Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary, I-III. 1970-72.
- General Editor, *Writers and Critics Series*. Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd.
- General Editor, *New Oxford English Series*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Co-Editor, *Biography and Criticism Series*. Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd.
- Literary Editor, *The Fountainwell Drama Texts*. Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd.
- General Editor, *Irish Novels Series*. Dublin and Shannon: Irish University Press.
- General Editor, *Macmillan Commonwealth Writers*. London: Macmillan.
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- General Editor, *Macmillan New Literature Handbooks*. London: Macmillan.
- Co-Editor, *York Notes Series*. London: Longman and Beirut: York Press.
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'MASTERING WHAT IS MOST ABSTRACT'

A FORUM ON *A VISION*

A Vision (1925) A Review Essay

Neil Mann

A Vision: The Original 1925 Version, eds. Catherine E. Paul and Margaret Mills Harper, *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* Volume XIII (New York: Scribner, 2008).

I

THE REVIEWS OF *A Vision* (1925) were notoriously few, though not limited to the solitary one that is usually mentioned, AE's singularly perceptive appraisal.¹ There were in fact five substantial reviews and a short notice but, even in this handful, *A Vision* already revealed some of its Protean nature, shifting character for each reviewer, so that the critiques reflect back the writers' own concerns almost as much as they shed light on the work itself, which is no doubt appropriate for a work that claimed to be based on *Speculum Angelorum et Hominum*, a mirror of angels and men.

Two of the reviewers, AE (George Russell) and G. R. S. Mead, were old associates of Yeats's and the pasts they shared with him inform their criticism. Both may in fact have had some form of preview of the System,² since Yeats spoke 'to AE's Hermetic Society on his lunar symbolism' in November 1918,³ and in June 1919 Yeats asked one of his Instructors if he could lecture 'to Meads Quest on system in Sep. or Oct.' (YVP2 299),

¹ This is the only review discussed in *CW13* (xxi).

² 'System' is capitalised to refer to the broader system that is partially expressed in *AVA* and *AVB*, as well as in the *Vision* papers and drafts.

³ J. S. Kelly, *A W. B. Yeats Chronology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 202.

though tonsillitis disrupted his schedule, he eventually did so.⁴ Yeats counted both among his 'old fellow students' of the esoteric (*CW13* lv), but their approaches and objections as reviewers differed markedly. AE's review in *The Irish Statesman* was the first to appear and has been cited widely because of its prescience, depth of understanding and appreciation of Yeats's construct as a whole.⁵ AE quickly focuses on the central problem of fatalism in the System as it is presented and deplores it, but continues to tease out implications and ideas, encouraging himself in his exploration,

by remembering what Neander wrote in his *Church History* when he was confronted by the task of elucidating the bewildering mythology of the Gnostics. We must remember, he said, that the mind of man is made in the image of God, and therefore even in its wildest speculations it follows an image of truth.⁶

That even a man of such generous sympathies should feel the need to invoke a touchstone of tolerance may indicate how uncongenial he found the 'hard geometrical core' of the work. He is also in the strangely privileged position of being included in the pageant of notables used to illustrate the 'phases of human life', which he incorrectly notes as 'thirty in all', but justifiably professes his bafflement at keeping company with Calvin, Luther and Cardinal Newman. He may be inaccurate with a detail such as the number of phases, but AE still grasps many key elements better than other reviewers and critics, perceiving the System's internal coherence, as well as the book's concentration of idea and language that leaves much of the thought in need of gradual unfolding and study for it to be understood.

If AE's friendship with Yeats went back to their days at art school, G. R. S. Mead's acquaintance dated to a little later, in the London Theosophical Society, which Mead left in the wake of the scandals sur-

⁴ On 27 Nov., 1921: see Ann Saddlemeyer (ed.), *W. B. Yeats and George Yeats: The Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 70. In a letter of October 1918, Oliver Gogarty made a joke of 'promising entertainments when WBY would expound his "secret doctrines of the Sun and Moon to an audience limited to 28 and selected by me"' (*Life* 2 134). Undated notes made at the Quest Society lecture (coll. private, London) will be published in a future *YA* [ed's. note].

⁵ 'A Vision', *The Irish Statesman*, 13 February 1926, 714-16; *CH* 269-73. This and the others are also available at www.yeatsvision.com/reviews.html (consulted June 2008).

⁶ *The Irish Statesman*, 13 February 1926, 715. The reviews are so short that, from here on, I shall dispense with page references.

rounding C. W. Leadbeater to found the Quest Society in 1909.⁷ His review of *A Vision* appeared in his society's journal, so was aimed at a readership acquainted with occult matters, and he makes the mistake common among occultist readers of thinking that the 'matter purports to be a scheme of lunar astrology'.⁸ This misunderstanding has no bearing on the soundness of his other criticisms, where much of the focus is on detail and which are altogether rather querulous in approach, but he is also particularly concerned about the problems of the system's origins and the form of presentation.⁹ He perceives a fundamental and inherent dishonesty in the work: it could be based on authentic traditions or on 'psychic communications', either one of which would offer genuine grounds for interest, but its origins are undeclared, indeed deliberately obscured and finally vitiated by 'the form of romance'. The prefatory fictions irritate him, as they lack the 'good equipment in science, philosophy, history and scholarship, so that the fiction may "intrigue" the educated as well as the casual reader'. He looks for sources and corroboration and, among other things, raises the first suggestion for the historical figure lurking behind Yeats's Giraldus (who remains one of the best candidates), but then proceeds to require that there should be some plausibility in his link: 'If [Yeats] supposes that the famous Humanist of that name, Gregory of Ferasa [sic], the friend of Picus de Mirandula, could supply sufficient camouflage for his purpose, he is greatly mistaken'. He seems to suspect an intent to deceive, thinking that the woodcut portrait 'will doubtless impress the unwary. But, as we are assured by a student of such cuts, the "hatching" is not mediæval, but characteristic of modern German reproductions', which Edmund Dulac might have been either amused or dismayed to read. When it comes to the Latin, Mead

⁷ The acquaintance had been maintained with visits to Woburn Buildings: 'Ezra Pound says Mead turned up about twice a month to Yeats' Monday Evenings', Virginia Moore, *The Unicorn* (New York: Macmillan, 1954) 455 n. 11 (cited *Life* 2 700 n. 19). The Meads visited George in Oxford in 1920 (*Life* 2 174). The younger Yeats had memorably dismissed Mead's intellect as 'that of a good sized whelk' (*Mem* 282).

⁸ Yeats had to redirect Frank Pearce Sturm repeatedly: 'You will get all mixed up if you think of my symbolism as astrological or even astronomical in any literal way... [Sun] is a symbol of one state of being, [Moon] of another, that is all' (*CL InteLex* 4825, 21 January, 1926); also in Richard Taylor, *Frank Pearce Sturm: His Life, Letters, and Collected Work* (Urbana, Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1969), 88.

⁹ 'A Vision', *The Quest* 18:1. October 1926, 96-98.

enjoys a moment of mild apoplexy at Yeats's *Homenorum*, 'a "howler" for which Smith Minor at a Preparatory School would receive condign punishment'. On more substantial points, he pulls Yeats up for relying too much on secondary sources and then adapting them rather freely and points out that it is a strange survey of European history which mentions neither the discovery of the New World nor the Reformation. If Yeats truly intended *A Vision* 'for students of Plotinus, the Hermetic fragments & unpopular literature of that kind',¹⁰ there were few readers more qualified than Mead, and the disappointment of this scholar versed in Gnostic complexities, Orphic mysteries and Neo-Platonic systems is genuine: 'But when we are asked to subscribe £3 3s. for a copy of a book, we expect it to be either one that contains some very valuable reliable information or a literary masterpiece; and it cannot be said that *A Vision* as a whole comes up to either expectation'.¹¹

Both AE and Mead shared many of Yeats's esoteric interests and were writing for audiences that might want to read about the Free State's Nobel-Prize-winner's works or revelations of an occult nature, but the more literary critics of *The New Statesman* and *The Times Literary Supplement* did not wish to trouble either their readers with too engaged an analysis or perhaps themselves with too much detail. *The New Statesman*'s reviewer was content to skirt the issues with a hedge of background, giving prominence to the phantasmagoria of Robartes and Aherne, and then to skim rapidly over an undigested list of terms and categories of the 'dark and difficult study'.¹² However, the review concludes that 'no one interested in Mr. Yeats should altogether ignore a book which, if as an explanation of life it is as bewildering as life itself, does at any rate out of its very darkness throw a certain light on one of the most curious minds of our time'. In the *TLS* Ernest de Selincourt was more sceptical about 'Mr. Yeats's latest excursion in the realms of the ambiguous'.¹³ He sees the work as further evidence of the disquiet of a dissatisfied mind 'searching ever for deep and deeper significances of things, yet never wholly accepting, never yielding himself to the signifi-

¹⁰ Letter to Ignatius MacHugh (*CL InteLex* 4874, 28 May [1926], also cited in *Life* 2, 313).

¹¹ The quibble about price may seem rather petty but, as Paul and Harper clarify, this is 'well over £100 in today's currency' (*CW13* 213). The price given by Mead, 3 guineas, is correct, however, and it was not 'selling for £3.6s' (*CW13* xxi).

¹² 'The Visionary Yeats', *The New Statesman*, 27 March 1926, 749-50.

¹³ 'Mr. Yeats's Occultism', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 22 April 1926, 296.

cances he actually unveils' which is in its turn 'the outcome of a slightly wistful, slightly petulant, distaste for the surfaces of things'. Beyond the briefest adumbration of the book's contents, de Selincourt's analysis extends only to the 'Dedication To Vestigia' and, paradoxically, he appears to accuse the man who has 'distaste for the surfaces of things' of superficiality. De Selincourt quotes Yeats's sentence about the reasons for his dedication, which sketches his shared past with Moina Mathers and refers to their copying of 'the Jewish Schemahamphorasch', and he dismisses it with the comment:

Pretty as this is, it is obviously not serious; it is 'style'; and so we know that it is style again, when Mr. Yeats declares later,

I wished for a system of thought that would leave my imagination free to create as it chose and yet make all that it created or could create part of one history, and that the soul's.

It is, of course, 'style again' when Yeats writes of the 'learned brassfounder' who 'was convinced that there was a certain moment in every year which, once known, brought with it "the Summum Bonum, the Stone of the Wise",'¹⁴ and de Selincourt considers that this seeker for the Philosophers' Stone is as likely to have success 'as is Mr Yeats to have struck the system which will free his imagination for the unrolling of final poetic truth'. Modern readers benefit from the hindsight of having seen Yeats's subsequent works and Yeatsian scholars in particular have a greater engagement with his works, but de Selincourt's view seems unduly jaded. In Yeats as man or as writer there is often an element of mask or even pose, but never just that, and even at its most artificial and polished his style is not insincere or simply 'style'. It is almost as if de Selincourt mistakes Yeats for the character who narrates *Rosa Alchemica*, an aesthetic dandy yearning for immortal essences but unwilling to engage with life. It is even possible that Mr Yeats, the character within *A Vision*, is a revived version of that narrator, along with the resurrected figures of Robartes and Aherne; the relationship between this figure and W. B. Yeats, the investigator, shaper and maker of *A Vision*, is another fascinating question. De Selincourt considers neither of them, however, and simply concludes that 'his book, with its accom-

¹⁴ In the phrase 'The Summum Bonum', 'the' has a capital in *AVA* (and *CW13*) but not in the review.

plishment, its genius of intuition, its fleeting beauty, is tiresome' because Yeats must be as aware as anyone that he will not 'free his imagination' by means of this work. This response reminds us how unlikely it must have seemed, when faced with *A Vision* in 1926, that this schema would provide anything but the most schematic of keys to free the poetic imagination. Some of the evidence was already available in poems such as 'The Second Coming', but the more direct progeny such as 'The Phases of the Moon' must have seemed more prophetic of what was to come.

Apart from a brief notice in *The Adelphi*,¹⁵ which echoes some of de Selincourt's points in particular, the only other review took almost three years to appear. It was possibly the most widely read of all, since, after it had appeared in *New Republic*, Edmund Wilson reused much of it in *Axel's Castle*, shorn of some of the more ephemeral elements and colourful opinion.¹⁶ The review largely follows the book's thesis, viewing *A Vision* as an 'explanation of his symbolism' and was the first to bring Poe's *Eureka* into the consideration of how to classify or approach the work. He addresses more openly than Mead or de Selincourt the problems of fictions and intrinsic value, of pose and commitment, wondering:

Yet is Yeats really attempting, in a sense, to eat his cake and have it, too? Would he be glad to have us take him at face value and swallow him entire, at the same time that, if we were inclined to laugh at him, he has protected himself with a device for passing the whole thing off as a fantasy?¹⁷

This problem of commitment, both that of Yeats to the System and that required of his readers, remains irresolvable but important and has been dealt with most recently and subtly by Margaret Mills Harper in *The Wisdom of Two: The Spiritual and Literary Collaboration of George and W. B. Yeats*.¹⁸ Wilson, however, concludes that *A Vision's* various wheels 'have

¹⁵ *Adelphi*, 4:4, 26 October 1926, 266.

¹⁶ 'Yeats's Guide to the Soul', *New Republic*, 16 January 1929, 249-251. *Axel's Castle* (1931; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), 47ff.

¹⁷ In a rather different context, comments by the control Ameritus, which expressed George Yeats's *Daimon*, hint at a similar problem from the other side. The script treated deceit: 'I mean also the kind of thing you did this morning in writing about personal script | I have wonderful things to tell you | You cannot have your cake and eat it' (YVP2 304, and see *Wisdom of Two: The Spiritual and Literary Collaboration of George and W. B. Yeats* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 322).

¹⁸ See Ch. 1., and above n. 17 for bibliographical details. Hereafter *WOT*.

ended by grinding to bits both Yeats's intelligence and his taste' and that the 'misapplication on this scale... of one of the first intellects of our time is probably the price that our time has to pay for the possession of a great poet'.

The reviews of these five or six journals that did notice *A Vision* raise many of the issues that continue to bedevil consideration of this work, while the silence of the rest of the press speaks of the greatest problem of all, whether the work merits attention at all and, if so, why. As those who chose to review it felt, the work deserves notice because it is by Yeats, the poet and creative artist, but beyond that they are not necessarily sure how to approach it. On the surface it aims to set forth an esoteric 'explanation of life', but assessed according to that (admittedly extremely demanding) standard, few would judge it of great worth. It does not seem either to contain 'very valuable reliable information' or to be 'a literary masterpiece', so the reviewers are left seeking other reasons. For some its value lies in the light it sheds upon the mind of Yeats and his work, for others it is probably best dismissed as 'tiresome' and, if not ignored, put to one side or approached through secondary literature. Others give it broader relevance, considering that as a construct 'even in its wildest speculations it follows an image of truth', and a few search it for an esoteric key to understanding. All have some problem with how much Yeats invested in the System's truth, how much he really believed these ideas and in what way.

II

Such critiques remind us of the scene in which this work appeared and how differently we view *A Vision* today, yet the array of perspectives remains. There is no question that *A Vision* is an important part of the *Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*, but quite how or why we should read and study it is not as simple as with the other works in the series, which creates a number of challenges for the editors of *A Vision* (1925), Catherine E. Paul and Margaret Mills Harper. Here is a piece of work that arguably took more hours than any other single work which Yeats wrote, which provides a insight into his thinking and poetic vision and of which he himself claimed, '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 words; they must affect my judgment of friends and of events'.¹⁹ This is not just 'style' and it deserves credit. Yet faced with its scope and variety—'its elaborate blend of astrology and psychology' (de Selincourt), 'its hard geometrical core' (AE), its 'many dogmatic statements' (Mead), and its 'elaborate discussion of the adventures... of the human soul after death' (Wilson)—scholars find that it defies acceptance into any normal category and contains too much for any simple interpretation or purely literary use. The editors are faced with the problem of the constituencies within their readership and exactly what needs explaining each one, what needs justification and what is best ignored. And they are never going to get it right for everyone.

Even once we are clear that the work merits study and why, we must then consider to what extent this edition, dated 1925 (*AVA*), was superseded by the revised version published by Macmillan in 1937 (*AVB*). Although Yeats declared that it filled him 'with shame', two of the four sections of *AVA* were repeated 'without change' (*AVB* 19), or largely so; to what extent, therefore, do we treat them as separate works and to what extent as versions or even just editions of the same work? The second edition removed the cloak of Arabian fiction and made clear the basis of the revelation, no historic symbolism derived from ancient wisdom but 'psychic communications', and in other ways addressed most of Mead's criticisms.²⁰ *AVB* also offers greater indications, both direct and indirect, of Yeats's own belief in the system—and more importantly the limits of his commitment, addressing one of Wilson's objections or at least acknowledging it. Yet if anything it asserts the importance of the harsh geometry even more than its predecessor and can seem even more fatalistic in its inexorable cycles. Yeats's later, more considered version in *AVB* must be seen as having greater authority with respect to the System and, at the other extreme, the foul papers of the automatic script, sleeps, notebooks and drafts published in the four volumes of *Yeats's Vision Papers* offer the student the fragmentary, disorganised and more complete originating quagmire. In this context does *AVA* have anything more than the status of an interim report? Such a question assumes that we read *A Vision* for the System and the 'explanation of

¹⁹ *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (Dundrum: Cuala, 1929), 32–33, dated 'November 23rd. 1928'.

²⁰ The cloak had been publicly lifted in *A Packet for Ezra Pound*.

life', but that is often not the case. In all areas except the System itself *AVA* is certainly more than provisional and even there it shows Yeats's understanding of concepts at a particular point in time. It may also formulate some ideas with a clarity or felicity which was lost later on and 'no one interested in Mr. Yeats should altogether ignore a book which... [throws] a certain light on one of the most curious minds of our time' at this particular stage of his poetic career, during the creative period leading to *The Tower* and his later poems.

Although it would in theory have been possible to publish a single volume encompassing the two versions, the general editors of the *Collected Works* long ago decided that *A Vision* would be published separately as two volumes, though the fact that one of these editors was George Mills Harper, who long advocated the importance of *AVA*, probably made this a foregone conclusion. No doubt partly to ensure uniformity and to avoid needless duplication, the two volumes were assigned to the same editors, originally Walter Kelly Hood and Connie Hood, who passed the editorial task on to Margaret Mills Harper joined by Catherine E. Paul. The solution of dual publication is, of course, a very literary one. It implies that the work's two states both have great if not equal interest and that they cannot adequately be appreciated unless each is presented as a separate unified whole. Paul and Harper refer to Donald Reiman's advocacy of 'versioning', providing 'critics and students with complete texts of two or more different stages of a literary work, each of which can be read as an integral whole' rather than creating readings and variants (*CW13* xlvi),²¹ and certainly in this case it is hard to argue against. It also demonstrates the extent to which *A Vision* is accepted as necessary to an understanding of Yeats and to which Yeats's hope has been fulfilled: 'I want it to be taken as part of my work as a whole, not as an eccentricity'.²² Still sometimes seen as an eccentricity, it is certainly part of the work as a whole, one of the only texts of Yeats's much revised *oeuvre* to appear in two distinct versions within the *Collected Works*

²¹ Donald H. Reiman, *Romantic Texts and Contexts* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987), 170.

²² Letter to Macmillan, 9 March 1934, pressing for *AVB* to be published (B.L. Add. MS. 55003/f. 161), cited in Connie K. Hood, 'The Remaking of *A Vision*', *YAACTS1* (1983), 59; *CL InteLex* 6019.

²³ Others include plays such as *The Hour-Glass*, *The Unicorn from the Stars/Where there is Nothing*, *The Only Jealousy of Emer/Fighting the Waves* in *CW2*.

series, certainly the only one to appear as two separate volumes.²³

Though many critics compare the two versions and all of them stress the greater immediacy and more direct, if fragmentary, approach of *AVA*, there are not many who champion the earlier version on its own. Thomas Parkinson's essay 'This Extraordinary Book' from 1982 (*YA1* 195-206), written in response to the publication of *A Critical Edition of Yeats's A Vision* (1925) edited by George Mills Harper and Walter Kelly Hood (*CVA*), comes closest and gives possibly the most satisfactory arguments for the general reader (though in some instances the publication since then of Yeats's *Vision Papers* has changed the situation significantly). Simplifying slightly, Parkinson contends that:

The difference between the A and B versions rises from Yeats's concern, especially in the first book, with defining his own incarnate being.... The two versions of *A Vision* are really two separate books, the first subjective and personal, the second at least an attempt at objectivity and impersonality, leaving aside the extensive prefatory material. The first book is a personal definition; the second moves toward creating a view of the world that is not dependent on personal or even contemporary material... (*YA1* 204).

Though, as Parkinson says, the schism between 'the secular critics who took [Yeats] primarily and sometimes only as a poet and those who saw him as the voice of the perennial philosophy' (*YA1* 205) need not exist and in most cases does not nowadays, the distinction still has some validity. Thus Parkinson, who identifies himself as a secularist, focuses mainly on the elements of *AVA* that illuminate Yeats's biography, his conception of self and self-understanding, singling out the role of the *Daimon* and its relation to the women in Yeats's life, mostly material from Book I ('What the Caliph Partly Learned') that was cut from *AVB*. He does not mention large sections which may be of more interest to the 'perennialist', for instance of Book II ('What the Caliph Refused to Learn'), where the concepts of the Critical Moments are hinted at and in particular those moments of harmonisation when the Sphere supervenes, or of Book IV ('The Gates of Pluto'), where the nature of sleep and dream are dealt with, all of which are excluded from rather than superseded by *AVB*. Yet these also all underlie certain themes in the poetry and so have their secular interest as well, and

it is true that *AVA* represents a stage of Yeats's synthesis and understanding of the System's concepts and that many poems are illuminated better by this stage than by the more honed understanding of *AVB*.

The justifications put forward by Catherine E. Paul and Margaret Mills Harper include all these elements. For them the 'text expresses with immediacy WBY's views from one of his most important periods' (*CW13* xliv) and they choose the example of how some of the ideas of group souls and 'coven', only dealt with in *AVA*, are relevant to understanding Yeats's politics and attitudes to modernism (*CW13* xliv-xlv) to show that it is no exaggeration to claim that '*AVA* is a linchpin for informed readings of the developing thought of both WBY and GY' (*CW13* xlv).²⁴ As this comment might indicate, they tend to view *AVA* as first and foremost the culmination of the joint enterprise of the automatic script (using that term to include all the accounts of sleeps, notebooks, card files, diagrams, codifications and preparatory reworkings) in which both George and W. B. Yeats were engaged:

Both coauthors are immediately present, despite the text's air of mystery. GY's ideas can be traced from this book backward through the genetic material, upon which *AVA* relies heavily. Ironically, given that in this Vision she is not mentioned by name, she is more present in this text as a silent coauthor than in *AVB* (*CW13* xlivi).²⁵

In many ways, therefore, *A Vision: The Original 1925 Version* is the edition that the reader of Meg Harper's *Wisdom of Two* would expect, and though the introduction here does not address the theme of the collaboration at length, Harper gives a cogent account of her thinking there. It is also the product of an intimate knowledge of Yeats's *Vision Papers*, of which she was an editor of Volumes 3 and 4. *Wisdom of Two* is a dual intellectual biography, centred on the process of the collaboration, the dynamics between the couple, their separate contributions and their synergy, and how

²⁴ Catherine E. Paul has written on these themes in *Poetry in the Museums of Modernism: Yeats, Pound, Moore, Stein* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002) and (with Barbara Zaczek) in 'Margherita Sarfatti & Italian Cultural Nationalism' in *Modernism/modernity*, 13:1, January 2006, 889-916.

²⁵ With appropriate caveats, Harper might also add the cloud of unseen collaborators: 'GY's active participation is still traceable [in AVA], and so are the voices of the various controls and guides of the automatic script' (*WOT* 86).

these make their appearance in concepts, in schemes, in words and finally on paper, with the automatic script and the drafts as the main body of evidence. If the annotation concerning the drafts of 'The Discoveries of Michael Robartes' and 'Version B' contained in *YVP4* looks forward to *AVA*, here the references keep looking back to the drafts and automatic script. They draw the reader back to the period when the creation of the System was still the collaborative process examined in *Wisdom of Two*, one which is portrayed there as vital, sexual, fluid and intensely shared, and suggests that for W. B. Yeats, 'The continual process was more essential than the intellectual product' (*WOT* 264). It seems that this remains similarly essential for Harper and Paul, and that much of *AVA*'s value therefore lies in the fact that it is process arrested rather than journey's end.

Wisdom of Two concludes that neither *AVA* nor *AVB* contains the multiplicity of the script, the 'voices in this world and the next, between human souls and daimonic others, and, most intensely, between generations' (*WOT* 336). Without this context, printed versions 'lack intellectual and creative linkages as well' and, because of this:

The Great Wheel becomes a prison rather than an opportunity for second chances for fullness of life; communicators deteriorate into ventriloquist's dummies; daimons become images in mirrors rather than passionate lovers who explain the attractions between philosophical abstractions and concrete images. The system itself becomes not only disjointed but sterile (*WOT* 336).

In this reading, neither of the books has the richness or drama of the automatic script, and Yeats depersonalises his material by abstracting the concepts from the fabric of the interchange, giving an impression of fatalism and remorseless repetition. *AVA*, however, remains closer to the diversity of the script, so is preferable. It proceeds 'more meditatively than mathematically, anecdotally rather than analytically.... Yet the authorial voice also speaks in absolutes... in rhetoric that is filled with logical connectives joining concepts that are not linked by logic' (*WOT* 288), so that there is a tension between the contents, straining to assert their multiplicity, and the authorial control exerted to retain coherence: 'The separated fragments seek images rather than ideas, and these the intellect... must synthesise in vain, drawing with its compass point a line that shall but represent the outline of a bursting pod' as Yeats wrote of his own Phase 17 (*CW13* 63). If the two

versions further reflect ‘the artful occultist of 1925 and the aged mythographer of 1937’ (*WOT* 340), *AVA*’s proximity to the automatic script is its strength and its still inchoate state alludes to the congeries that lies behind it pushing against any spuriously unified voice of authority, whereas in *AVB* the author has imposed more *primary* unity on the heterogeneous *antithetical* multiplicity of the script.²⁶

III

Paul and Harper are particularly strong on the genetic process and *A Vision*’s relationship to the intellectual biography of husband and wife, the couple’s sessions, spiritism and psychical research in general, along with details of the various communicators, guides and controls. In general they follow Richard Finneran’s series policy,²⁷ eschewing interpretation and confining themselves in the first instance to explaining proper names, more abstruse terms and references, citing sources and suggesting literary parallels. As would be expected, the annotation is helpful on the connections to Yeats’s writings both before and after *AVA*, though occasionally it either limits itself unnecessarily or gives undue prominence to a tangential link. Since many of the direct sources are in the automatic script and the editors’ knowledge and understanding of this material is unmatched, they frequently illuminate where an idea comes from, even if they tend to hold back from further elucidation of its significance, and they give the reader a good idea of the System as a construct going beyond *A Vision*. Indeed, though a large proportion of the notes are based on *CVA*, a crucial difference is that in this edition the quotations can have full references to Yeats’s *Vision Papers*, as the editors note (see *CW13* xliv), rather than floating as snippets from an unknown context.²⁸

²⁶ For the opposition of ‘congeries’ to ‘unity’ see e.g. *Pages from a Diary Written in 1930 XXI* (*Ex* 305). The revisions for *AVB* were substantially finished in 1931, so that Yeats was not so much more aged than in 1925, even if Macmillan’s slowness to publish it resulted in a rather greater lapse of time.

²⁷ See, e.g., in volumes he edited, *CW1* (9-13), *CW3* (13-29), *CW8* (xvii-xl).

²⁸ Long before the full transcription of the script, George Mills Harper recognised almost all of the key passages, and very few references have been added to those cited in *CVA*. There are a few variant readings: for example, the soul ‘must give up the endeavour to rela[te] that supersensual environment to itself’ (*CW13* 265; *YVP4* 233) instead of ‘to reach that superessential environment for itself’ (*CVA* Notes 30).

The notes give far more help and detail on problematic areas in Book IV to do with the after-life, in particular victimage, than *CVA* and many of the notes here have no counterpart in the earlier edition. In general, however, the editors have ‘used Harper and Hood extensively, often borrowing without major change from their notes’ (*CW13* xl ix). Since Walter Kelly Hood was ‘primarily responsible... for the Notes’ (*CVA* vii) of *CVA* and was formerly a designated editor of this volume, it is to be expected that Paul and Harper would build upon his earlier research, and that there would be no reason for change in many instances. In many ways they are to be commended for not changing it and there is certainly no reason to rediscover each detail anew. But in this situation the ubiquitous minor changes of wording seem to be unnecessary and to serve solely to mark difference. To take a short example at random, *CVA*’s note on the reference to Theocritus in the description of Phase 3 comments, ‘His Idylls about the rustic life of his native Sicily are the first examples of pastoral poetry in Greek and have been widely imitated since’ (*CVA* Notes 15). *CW13* reads ‘The reference is to Theocritus’s idylls about rustic life in his native Sicily, the widely imitated first examples of pastoral poetry in Greek’ (243). Why bother?

In general the bibliographic references within the notes are far fuller than *CVA*, since the volume dispenses with a bibliography in line with series practice. There are a few cases where the transfer has brought in mistakes, as when ‘Madame Blavatsky’s *Secret Doctrine* (I, Ch. xi)’ (*CVA* Notes 14) becomes a fully referenced ‘H.P. Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine* (2 vols. [1888; rpt., Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1963], vol. I, chap. 9)’ (*CW13* 239)—given the nature of Blavatsky’s writing, a reference to a whole chapter is fairly unilluminating in any case and part of the point of giving the edition is to fix the page number, but it seems that it is Chapter 11, ‘Demon Est Deus Inversus’, as *CVA* offers, rather than Chapter 9, ‘Deus Lunus’, that is the desired reference, though it is hard to tell. A reference on page 325 to Yeats’s *Golden Dawn* is incorrect (‘183n20’ for ‘n22’ [*CVA* Notes 70]) and would better refer directly to the pamphlet ‘Is the Order of R.R. & A.C. to remain a Magical Order?’ rather than to a note commenting on the text commenting on the pamphlet. Certainly in other cases *CVA*’s mistakes are corrected, so a non-existent verse, Exodus 34: 39 (*CVA* Notes 18), has been changed to the correct one, 34: 29 (*CW13* 249), and the strange ‘Initial Point Gregorian Zodiac Fixed by Hipparchus at Equinox 150 B.C.’ (*CVA* Notes 38) is restored to ‘Initial Point Grecian Zodiac’ (*CW13*

283).

The vast majority of the notes are full and excellent (and I would emphasise that) and the editors have certainly addressed gaps and errors in the annotations of *CVA* and *YVP*, including such points as Yeats's knowledge of Dante's *Convito* (*CW13* 18; 237), the dancing faun (36; 242), the soul's coming 'into possession of itself for ever in one single moment' (61; 253), the source for 'the groves pale passion loves' (64; 255), the nightingale refusing the thorn (67; 257).²⁹ In a few cases, however, the editors adopt unsatisfactory sources—in almost all cases those adopted by *CVA*—and in a few more are too willing to accept things as unknown. It is completely inadequate to repeat *CVA*'s suggestion that 'WBY may have encountered [Kusta ben Luka] in Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*' (*CW13* 226), when the most cursory glance at the single reference to 'Costaben Luca' in that tome scotches the idea.³⁰ In many places the editors use the letters of Frank Pearce Sturm to great advantage, and the letters often offer a perfect way of correcting Yeats without too much obvious editorial intervention, but this is surely a place where Sturm's comment about Sir Edward Denison Ross is a clear indication that Yeats had told him the source of the name: 'For an Orientalist who knows forty languages to know anything else... would be an impropriety, so I forgive him Kusta ben Luki, & accept his version of the name'.³¹ It is far from neat or even conclusive, but it is far more suggestive than the lists encountered in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

Kusta ben Luka, as the speaker of 'Desert Geometry or the Gift of Harun Al-Raschid', asks his correspondent to:

Recall the year
When our beloved Caliph put to death
His Vizir Jaffer for an unknown reason.
'If but the shirt upon my body knew it

²⁹ A number of these were raised by Warwick Gould's review of *CVA* in *Notes and Queries*, 28 (1981) 458–60, including the reference to the soul's self-possession, which was still given as unknown twenty years later in *YVP4* 252 (and see Colin McDowell's review of *YVP4*, *YA16* 377–82). Brian Arkins offered classical sources in *Notes and Queries* and *Builders of My Soul: Greek and Roman Themes in Yeats* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1990) which have not been adopted.

³⁰ It occurs at the opening of the Second Partition, 'The Cure of Melancholy', The First Section, Member, Subsection, 'Unlawful Cures rejected'.

³¹ *Frank Pearce Sturm*, 86.

I'd tear it off and throw it in the fire.
That speech was all that the town knew.... (*CW13* 98)

It adds little for the editors to say that 'Vizier Jaffer governed under the caliph Harun al-Rashid from 786-803 CE, and was then imprisoned and executed for unknown reasons' (*CW13* 268), especially when their summary of Yeats's note from *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems* (266-67) omits the opening mention of Jaffer. It is clear that Yeats has other ideas since, in the 'copy of Powys Mather's [sic] *Arabian Nights*' awaiting his return home (*CW13* lvi; referring to YL 251), on the nine-hundred-and-ninety-fourth night Shahrazād starts to tell of 'The End of Jafar and the Barmakids', 'that sorry tale which mars the reign' of the Khalifah Harun al-Rashid 'with a bloodstain'.³² She relates how, when the caliph's sister Alīyah asked him the reason, he answered, 'If I thought that my shirt knew, I would tear my shirt to pieces'.³³ Shahrazād herself proceeds to give some of the differing reasons that circulated, favouring the story of Jaffer/Jafar's relationship with the caliph's favourite sister Abbāsah, a more complicated variant of the situation between the caliph's companion and the favourite slave which serves as the starting point for Yeats's fictions (*CW13* 10).

Identifying the quotation 'Man does not perceive the truth; God perceives the truth in man' as coming from Jacob Boehme is helpful, though not giving the location in Boehme's voluminous works is not. As the note makes the identification by quoting from Arthur Symons's essay 'Maeterlinck as a Mystic', it is not clear whether the editors are suggesting influence from Symons to Yeats or *vice versa*, but the essay first appeared in 1897,³⁴ when the two men were very close and had shared accommodation and, given the extent of Yeats's reading in Boehme both directly and indirectly for his work on Blake, it seems more likely that he introduced

³² *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*, rendered into English from the literal and complete French translation of Dr J. C. Mardrus by Powys Mather, 4 vols. (1923; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), 4: 508. It is the penultimate tale in this version of the collection. For fuller details see Stallworthy, *Between the Lines* (Oxford: OUP, 1963), 63-64 and Gould, 'A Lesson for the Circumspect: W. B. Yeats's Two Versions of *A Vision* and the *Arabian Nights*', in Peter L. Caracciolo, ed., *The Arabian Nights in English Literature: Studies in the Reception of 'The Thousand and One Nights' into British Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 246-47.

³³ *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*, 4: 513.

³⁴ *The Contemporary Review* LXXII, September 1897.

Symons. More importantly, though, Yeats had recast the same quotation in the *North-American Review* version of *The Hour-Glass* (1903): ‘One sinks in on God; we do not see the truth; God sees the truth in us’ (*VPI* 634).³⁵ As Roy Foster notes (*Life* 2 650), this idea also lies behind the famous dictum written to Elizabeth Pelham in his last month (which now famously has to be revised): ‘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 find it”’.³⁶ The kernel is Boehme’s but removed from the divine perspective.

There is sometimes a tendency for the references to Yeats’s own works to be slightly sparse, as when ‘Chance and Choice’ (*CW13* 59) are noted with a laconic ‘A recurring set of polarities; see, for example, “Solomon and the Witch” (*Poems*, 179–80)’ (252), which is certainly a good place to start the note but hardly where to finish it—there is much more to be offered purely in factual reference, while a minimal interpretative link to the antinomies and the *Tinctures* would also be useful. In a few places the editors prefer to reference a draft source over a published source, as when mention of ‘the “Emotion of Sanctity” in the context of the gyres of history (171) is referred to the automatic script and the draft Version B which ‘may clarify the meaning’ (313) rather than the almost identical passage of Book I, treating Phase 27 (92). A few other notes take up too much space for too little benefit. In order to explain the sentence ‘He commits crimes, not because he wants to, or like Phase 23 out of phase, because he can, but because he wants to feel certain that he can’ (90), a long passage on Florence Farr from ‘Four Years’ is repeated—it illuminates none of the points well, though it is certainly fascinating and evocative (264). Possibly some decisions stem from an unwillingness to let go of a hard-won piece of research that is interesting but redundant in the context, or to jettison something from *CVA*.

Commenting on the quotations contained in the comment that ‘the world became Christian and “that fabulous formless darkness” as it seemed to a philosopher of the fourth century, blotted out “every beautiful thing”’ (*CW13* 158), the editors open their note with reference to Ellmann’s and Jeffares’s attribution of the quotation to Proclus (*CW13* 301; cf. *CVA* Notes 52), but if they must refer to this ascription at all, it should be to derogate it rather than to offer it as the first comment and leave the name in the

³⁵ The play’s revised version dates from 1914, so it is unclear what they mean by ‘The final versions of *The Hour-Glass* are concurrent with the AS’ (334).

³⁶ Quoted in *L* 922 as ‘Man can embody truth but he cannot know it’, Ann Saddlemeyer gives the wording of Pelham’s original copy (*BG* 559); see *WOT* 264.

reader's mind unchallenged. Even Homers nod. However, the alternative offered, E. R. Dodds's *Select Passages Illustrating Neoplatonism* (1923), though it correctly identifies the source in Eunapius, is unlikely to be the route by which Yeats found it.³⁷ The phrase was singled out in Yeats's prime source for *A Vision*'s material on the Great Year and antiquity, *The Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* (YL 855), in William R. Inge's article on 'Neo-Platonism' which notes: 'One of the 4th cent. Neo-Platonists, Antoninus, predicted plaintively that "a fabulous and formless darkness is about to tyrannize over all that is beautiful on earth"'.³⁸ Dean Inge repeated himself even more evocatively in his Gifford Lectures on *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (YL 954):

Pagan apologists were not slow to ascribe the decay of civilisation to the 'third race,' the adherents of the new faith. Modern historians too, lamenting the wreck of the ancient culture and the destruction of its treasures in the stormy night of the Dark Ages, have felt a thrill of sympathy with the melancholy prophecy of a certain Antoninus, son of Eustathius, that soon 'a fabulous and formless darkness shall tyrannise over the fairest things on the earth'.³⁹

There is no doubt that W. B. Yeats felt that thrill of sympathy and his rephrasing seems to draw the translations of the final phrase, 'τα ἐπι γῆς καλλίτα', together in a novel way.⁴⁰

The Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics is also behind another source that is said to be unknown, 'the rather obscure Xenaias' (*CWA* 304). This may have been the case when *CVA* wrote of 'the rather obscure Bishop Xenaias' (*CVA* Notes 54), but Brian Arkins identified the source as A. Fortescue's article on 'Iconoclasm' in the *Encyclopædia* in 1987.⁴¹ The edi-

³⁷ Dodds is mentioned in *CVA*, and also given as the source by Arkins in 'Yeats and the Prophecy of Eunapius', *Notes and Queries*, 32 (1985), 378–79 and *Builders of My Soul*, 226. Arkins considers the implications of the terms 'fabulous' (μυθώδες) and 'formless' (ἀειδές) in *Builders of My Soul*, 114.

³⁸ James Hastings, *The Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. XVII, 317.

³⁹ William Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus: The Gifford Lectures at St. Andrews, 1917–1918* 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1918), I, 26. Yeats's copy (YL 954) contains marginalia referring to *A Vision*.

⁴⁰ 'τι μυθώδες καὶ ἀειδές σκότος τυραννήσει τα ἐπι γῆς καλλίτα' as given in Thomas Whittaker *The Neo-Platonists: A Study in the History of Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), p. 133..

⁴¹ 'Yeats and Bishop Xenaias', *Notes and Queries*, 34 (1987), 56–57.

tors refer to the *Encyclopaedia's* article on 'Asceticism' for etymology with reference to the phrase 'God's athlete' (*CW13* 159) but, even if the wording is not exactly the same, the article's phrase 'spiritual athlete' seems worthy of mention at least. If an 'exact reference to the ascetic as "God's athlete" in Alexandria' is sought (302), Origen, whose work Yeats 'skimmed in [his] youth' (157), writes of how, 'Many are strengthened in the flesh, and their bodies become more powerful. But an athlete of God becomes more powerful in spirit',⁴² while Athanasius's *Life of St Anthony* refers to him as 'the athlete',⁴³ though neither of these gives the exact equivalence sought. On a related theme, to call Yeats's reference to the fool of Phase 28 as 'The Child of God' (93) 'unidentified' both undersells the editors' examples from the Bible, and ignores at least one dictionary of euphemisms which defines it as an obsolete dialect phrase meaning 'idiot', 'where the results of in-breeding were attributed to divine rather than parental agency'.⁴⁴ They also, surprisingly, pass over the comment of the Instructor Thomas who, when asked about 'the parentage of the spiritual child at 28', replied, 'The child of God' (*YVP2* 122), which shows that Yeats introduced the element of 'parentage-child' and, more importantly, that within the Great Wheel the term is no euphemism and truly indicates a closeness to divinity.⁴⁵

It may simply be that Paul and Harper require more exacting levels of congruence between source and Yeatsian formulation than is always possible. They leave the quotation that 'virginity renews itself like the moon' (*CW13* 62) unidentified (254), though it seems fair to hazard that it could well be a telescoping of other sources and possibilities have been offered.⁴⁶ I favour that of Boccaccio's proverb '*Bocca basciata non perde ventura / anzi rinnova come fa la luna*' (very literally: 'the kissed mouth does not lose its

⁴² *Homilies on the Gospel of Luke* XI:3. Alongside references to Ammonius Saccas and Origen, George noted in a copy of *AVB* (YL 2435) that Yeats 're-read in Sept. 1913'.

⁴³ *The Life of St Anthony*, 12.

⁴⁴ R. W. Holder, *A Dictionary of American and British Euphemisms* (Bath: Bath University Press, 1987), 95; this is a case where a modern reference is not amiss, since it has historical perspective. A contemporary reference from 1924 notes that, 'The "simple" or "idiot" as distinguished from the poor lunatic seems to have always had kinder treatment and was even called "God's fool," and "God's child" by his neighbours', Margaret McMillan, *Education through the Imagination* (New York: Appleton & Co., 1924), 96.

⁴⁵ Erontius had answered about the 'condition of ego' or *Will* when Phase 28 was a non-physical incarnation, calling it 'the mystical child of God' (*YVP2* 28).

⁴⁶ Gould, *Notes & Queries*, 28, 1981, 459–60; *Timon of Athens*, IV:3, 67–68.

good fortune / but renews itself as the moon does') along with its context in the *Decameron*:

So she, who had lain with eight men, in all, perhaps, ten thousand times, was bedded with [her new husband] as a virgin, and made him believe that a virgin she was, and lived long and happily with him as his queen: wherefore 'twas said:—'Mouth, for kisses, was never the worse: like as the moon reneweth her course'.⁴⁷

A moment's pause and a suitably louche frame of mind make it clear that the proverb has broader application. The translation above, taken from the version in Yeats's library, is not close, but the proverb is widely used independently—by Shelley, for instance, in 'Peter Bell the Third' and by Rossetti for a portrait of Fanny Cornforth, '*Bocca baciata*', so that it did not even require George's Italian to bring the phrase to Yeats's attention, although she might have been able to alert him to the bawdier *double entendre* of '*ventura*'.⁴⁸

Since Yeats's phrase is associated with Maud Gonne's Phase 16 and with the dock-haunting Muses (*AVB* 24), it is possible that this renewing virginity is further conflated with the goddess Hera's yearly renewal of her virginity in the spring at Canathus, as well as Yeats's well-known comment to John Sparrow which implies that the soul's virginity needs no renewal (*LDW* 174). However, we should hardly be surprised at Yeats transmuting a phrase through selective memory and choice of words, if he could also do it with ascribed 'quotations': Mead upbraided him for 'embroidering' his originals, turning 'To-day at this hour the Virgin hath given birth to the *Æon*' into 'The Virgin has given birth to the God', which possibly suited his argument better, and certainly needed less explanation (see *CW13* 132 and 285).

Very occasionally the notes are slightly off focus or side-track themselves. When Yeats writes of the Lunar and Solar becoming 'a single being

⁴⁷ Trans. J. M. Rigg, *The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio*, 2 vols. (London: A. H. Bullen, 1903; YL 132) Second Day, Seventh Novella.

⁴⁸ The couplet is also used by Arrigo Boito, the librettist of Verdi's *Falstaff*, and a commentary on that opera notes: 'Giuseppe Petronio, in his edition of the *Decameron* (Turin, 1950), identifies the couplet as a proverb... and in another tale in the volume (Second Story, Eighth Day, II, 122, n. 20) he identifies *la ventura* as a slang expression for *membro virile*', James A. Hepokoski, *Giuseppe Verdi: Falstaff* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 29.

like man and woman in Plato's Myth' (*CW13* 121), the note starts by explaining the reference to Aristophanes' speech in *The Symposium*, but is then side-tracked onto the idea of the androgynous mind from a draft type-script rather than continuing to explain how the gods split this being and its relevance in explaining love (277). Indeed a reference to the alchemical androgyne or rebis, a melding of Solar and Lunar principles, would be more pertinent, but the note on Yeats's comment that the dark and light of the moon could be depicted in 'gold and silver' (13) shows an uncertain grasp of alchemical ideas, stating that 'The unification of these traditional solar and lunar symbols represents perfection, the aim of the alchemist' (234)—the unification of solar sulphur and lunar mercury might be the alchemist's aim, but gold and silver are the proofs of success in achieving the solar and lunar tinctures respectively. There would in fact be far more fertile examples in the Maud Gonne Notebook, which is cited on the previous page of the notes (233; quoting Felkin's account of a dervish dancing a horoscope), examples which would underline the continuity of certain themes in Yeats's imaginative cosmos: 'I used on going to sleep the old symbol [two linked circles] a gold sun & silver moon' or 'I tried to image union as a mingling of gold and silver flame—she in the silver flame'.⁴⁹

In reference to the opposition of St John and Christ (*CW13* 133), it is more important to point out that the feast of St John the Baptist takes place at midsummer on the 24 June, exactly opposite to Christmas, and to focus on the substance of John's and Jesus's relationship with the equinoxes and solstices, rather than to expatiate on St John Chrysostom who made the comments (286).⁵⁰ A more trivial example can be seen in the note that gives five lines to explaining 'Connemara' (230) but does not mention the 'Connemara cloth' (3) that provokes the comment.

In general the references from *CWA* are filled out well and given a little more context, though in some cases there seems a lack of proportion or balance. The justice of Jaques's speech in *As You Like It*, 'full of wise saws and modern instances', is almost certainly behind Phase 4's 'wisdom of saws and proverbs' (*CW13* 38), but it hardly merits the five lines used to explain it (244), when an entry such as 'Marx' is kept to 'German economist and philosopher Karl Marx (1818-83)' (260). Agamemnon's story is explained relatively fully in the notes on the poem 'Leda', but not the significance of

⁴⁹ NLI MS 36,276, 2 recto and 5 recto.

⁵⁰ It might also be in order to pick Yeats up on 'the four solstices' (132) and to wonder about the proliferation of capitalised nouns in this section.

the ‘broken wall’ or the story of Zeus as a swan (290–91). Occasionally the notes over-emphasise literary sources of phrases that also have other origins. Yeats’s comment that the *Will* desires the *Mask* as ‘the dog bays the Moon’ (23) may owe its phrasing to Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* (238), though the collocation is standard enough, but the context is irrelevant and it is surely worth noting the popular proverbial lore of its fruitlessness or the traditional Tarot card of ‘The Moon’, where two dog-like beasts howl at the moon. On a more general note, it seems likely that an audience that is considered to need telling that, for instance, ‘adore’ (153) has a religious meaning (296) might have problems with, for instance, ‘Thaumaturgy’ (133).

If the editors give a strong sense of *AV*A’s genetic provenance, the links forwards to *AVB* are weaker, and so this edition is also weaker on the public System, codified by the couple and then synthesised into written form by Yeats, that emerges from *A Vision* in its two versions.⁵¹ This is partly a deliberate decision of demarcation between the two volumes, but will weaken the usefulness for the student who wishes to start from *AV*A and trace elements forwards as well as backwards. In the end it probably means that students will rely more on *AVB*, to work backwards, and that is possibly the better situation.

The most critical lack in the apparatus, however, is in its treatment of the diagrams. In *Wisdom of Two*, Harper recognises that ‘of all the difficulties posed by *A Vision* in the decades since its publication, the greatest critical acrobatics have resulted from the tasks of comprehending the diagrams and accommodating their meanings to WBY’s *oeuvre*’ (*WOT* 263) and she is probably correct. She also indicates that part of the problem comes from the fact that these were part of George’s special genius and contribution, which Yeats himself had problems understanding. It is paradoxical that, seeking to re-emphasise the work’s co-author, the editors are least generous with some of her more signal contributions quite apart from giving scant aid to readers in their acrobatics.

The edition’s lack of support with the diagrams is linked to its lack of astrological support, both at the superficial level of not explaining symbols and details that appear in the book and at the more fundamental level of not explaining the structure of thought it implies. Astrological thinking is

⁵¹ Colin McDowell commented on several occasions that George Mills Harper’s ‘knowledge of *A Vision B* is extremely sketchy’ (*YAI* 158) and, while that will evidently not be the case once the two volumes are published, the initial impression is that the editors avoid *AVB* more than they should.

essentially symbolic and diagrammatic, expressing concepts through the arrangement of celestial bodies in the sky and with respect to the Earth's rotation, creating inter-relations and patterns. These diagrams are succinct symbolic mandalas, which potentially contain volumes and which the astrologer then struggles to formulate in words. The patterns danced in the sand in minutes are explained for days by Kusta ben Luka (*CW13* 10-11) and Yeats himself instructed Frank Pearce Sturm, who complained about the errors in the text: 'If you master the diagram on Page 13 & the movements of the Four Faculties therein you will understand most of the book'.⁵² Yeats certainly had some of this imagination and was more than competent at astrology, but Harper is right to draw attention to the fact that the diagrammatic element is unique to this collaboration with George, who was a skilful astrologer.⁵³

According to the myths of Kusta ben Luka and the Judwalis ('diagrammatists'), the visual concepts are not only the methods of memory and transmission, but lie at the System's heart. At first the automatic script established the distinction of 'Gyraldus primary | Arab anti' (*YVP1* 250) and, insofar as an internalised and understood diagram often holds in a single image a wealth of detail, it effectively sets against 'our ever more abundant *primary* information, *antithetical* wisdom' (*CW13* 173), depth rather than data. Gyraldus's thought may have been designed to be more *primary*, probably code for Christian and moral, but the presentation of *Speculum Angelorum et Hominum*, which appears more clearly in the drafts (e.g. *YVP4* 126ff.), seems to have been imagined in terms of Cabbalistic image and Renaissance emblem. Both of these modes are far more intuitive and *antithetical* than *A Vision*, in either version, but most particularly *AVB*, where 'WBY had been encouraged to add to the private system various philosophical contexts that additional reading and study made available to him' (*CW13* xlivi) bringing greater distance and abstraction. It is no coincidence

⁵² Frank Pearce Sturm, 90, cited *CW13* 235.

⁵³ Yeats's independent readings in the Maud Gonne Notebook (also called the PIAL Notebook; NLI MS 36,276), for instance, show a practised application, and the books of horoscope blanks that the couple used are in both hands (e.g. NLI MS 36, 274 [28]), mainly George's with further comments by Yeats. A selection of these latter are included in the National Library of Ireland's virtual exhibition at www.nli.ie/yeats/.

that Giraldus was placed at Phase 18 (*YVP4* 24, 79), along with George, the ‘only phase where the most profound form of wisdom is possible, a wisdom as emotional as that of the Centaur Chiron was instinctive’ (*YVP4* 200), also called ‘The Wisdom of the Heart’ (*CW13* 30).⁵⁴ Giraldus or George’s ‘Emotional Philosophy’ is the quality of their Phase’s *Creative Mind* which is drawn from Phase 12 in the quarter of emotion (*CW13* 66) as opposed to the ‘Creative Imagination through *antithetical* emotion’ of Yeats himself (*CW13* 63). Arguably what becomes lost as Yeats took greater control of the material in successive versions of *A Vision* is the emotion of the philosophy, so that the philosophy becomes more abstracted while the *antithetical* emotion is directed to the creative imagination, or poetry. In the end, this is what most readers would hope for, so that the ‘metaphors for poetry’ (*AVB* 8) are used as intended or as the original communication said ‘I give you philosophy to give you new images you ought not to use it as philosophy’ (*WOT* 90).

The index is a slightly hit or miss affair, there are many strengths and a few weaknesses as well. The majority of proper names I have looked for while writing this piece have been referenced and some of the less expected headings such as ‘beauty’ offer interesting avenues, but there have also been moments of frustration. Most of the proper names from Yeats’s text are included, though taking ‘Dove or Swan’ as a test, there are no entries for Merlin or Parzival, no Froissart, no Mithra or Odysseus, no Athena or Achilles. When it comes to sources and critics mentioned in the apparatus: Anaximander yes, Diogenes of Apollonia, no; Gregory of Tours, yes, Proclus, no; Eugénie Strong, yes, Élie Faure, no; *Phaedo*, yes, *Phaedrus*, no; Mussolini, yes, Margherita Sarfatti, no; Richard Ellmann, yes, Donald Reiman, no. Literary works are generally listed both under their title with the author in brackets and as sub-headings with the authors, which shows consideration for the user. Most of the technical or semi-technical terms used in *A Vision* have entries, and terms are sometimes double-entered, and so ‘Dreaming Back’ will be found both under its own heading and under ‘After-Life States’, but ‘Will’, ‘Mask’ and ‘Faculties’ are referred back to

⁵⁴ It is at Phase 4, diametrically opposite, that the soul can gain the ‘Wisdom of Desire’ (30) or ‘the wisdom of instinct’ (38). However, in *Wisdom of Two*, Harper cites this passage without the last two words (*WOT* 343), which may indicate a revised reading, placing Chiron also at Phase 18. Harper also notes that Robartes and Thomas of Dorlowicz, one of the controls, were placed at Phase 18 (*WOT* 231).

'Four Faculties', just as 'Passionate Body' and 'Principles' are referred back to 'Four Principles'. 'Dionertes' will be found under 'communicators' but does not have its own heading, whereas 'Thomas of Dorlowicz' does; the term 'Tinctures' is listed but '*antithetical*' and '*primary*' are not.

IV

In many respects this is the critical edition that despite its title *CVA* was not, having taken on the textual editing that *CVA* chose not to address by using a photolithographic facsimile of the original edition. Yet in comparison with most of Yeats's works the textual editing is of a very particular kind, since it takes a single edition not only as its copy text but as its only text with the aim of retaining the temporal integrity of that text as faithfully as possible, an historical or 'first-presentation edition' (*CW13* xlvii). It is quite understandable why George Mills Harper and Walter Kelly Hood chose to leave the text almost *exactly* as it had been and to leave further emendation for the footnotes, though such a course would not be an option within the framework of the Collected Works.⁵⁵ As it is, the changes to the text here are often little more than the correction of typographical errors, since errors of substance are largely kept to the notes or reserved for *AVB*, along with the major visual change of complete repagination. This leads to an unfortunate squeezing of Edmund Dulac's engraving of 'The Great Wheel' into half a page, and the lay-out is rather mean in general, but following the series practice.

The rationale behind some of the typographical changes or non-changes is slightly difficult to see at times, but readers will appreciate that there is a spectrum of cases and any such continuum creates quandaries, and the majority of the amendments, listed in a clear table at the end of the volume (*CW13* 353-64), are unexceptionable. Though the editors note that

⁵⁵ Despite being a photographic facsimile: line numbers were added to the text, the publisher's prefatory list of other volumes was cut, the original's pasted Union Bond brown-paper illustration appears printed directly onto the page in *CVA*, while the separate, unnumbered pages for the portrait of Giraldus and the Great Wheel (on brown paper) as well as the diagram of the double cones (on quality white paper), all rectos, were placed on the preceding verso. In the last case the use of red ink was ignored. *CW13* uses shading to indicate the different paper and uses red ink for the cones, while the work is repaginated throughout.

they cannot and do not follow ‘the principle of final and expressed authorial intentions’ of the other works in the Collected Works series (*CW13* xlvii), the aim should arguably be (and despite all the fallacies involved) the text that Yeats would have wanted on the day after publication, eliminating the minor blemishes that he would have burnt with embarrassment to notice, if he had. Yet it is understandable that the ‘howlers’ ‘Homenorum’ and ‘Hominorum’ are left, since they caused enough comment, even though they are corrected in the Yeatses’ own copies, as is well shown in the collated tables at the end (*CW13* 340–52). Otherwise most of Mead’s quibbles have been addressed, such as ‘Hommel’ for ‘Homell’ and ‘Hommell’ (*CW13* 122, 124), ‘Furtwängler’ for ‘Furtwingler’ (152), ‘Ammonius Saccas’ for ‘Ammonius Sacca’ (157), ‘Herodotus’ for ‘Heroditus’ (197) and ‘Sibyl’ for ‘Sibyll’ (176),⁵⁶ but why not his other ones, such as ‘simulacra’ for ‘simulacrae’ (183) and ‘Archons’ for ‘Arcons’ (199ff)?⁵⁷ And if the editors must change ‘Dostoieffsky’ to ‘Dostoyevsky’ (43 et. al.) or ‘Tolstoi’ to ‘Tolstoy’ (173) for the sake of ‘standard Anglicization’ (356 et al.) then why is the French form ‘Diotime’ kept for the Priestess ‘Diotima’ (204, 207)? What about the errant apostrophe in ‘Powys Mather’s *Arabian Nights*’ (lvi)? Most perplexingly, why is the non-existent ‘Birkett’ (106) not corrected to ‘Burnet’, with the change (and confusion with Burkitt) explained in a note, rather than leaving the mistake and explaining *that* in the note, especially since again this is corrected in one of the Yeatses’ copies (348)? These minor details are errata or corrections to a printed text as much as, if not more than, ‘revisions made toward a later printing’ (xlvi) which the editors say that they will reserve for *AVB*. In the phrase “Loss” effects Phase 17’ (20), just because ‘effects’ is corrected to ‘affects’ in *AVB* does not make this a revision rather than a correction (there is no note). When Yeats writes of Phase 22 that ‘the desire for a form has ceased’ (79), it is noted that a draft gives ‘the desire for reform’ (261), so it is evidently not a revision but a mistake in transmission. Again leaving the mistake in the text seems the wrong way round for an edited text.

Possibly even more slippery and falling in this gap between correcting a finished artefact and preparing for its revision are words within the Tables,

⁵⁶ Though ‘Sibyl’ on p. 204 has somehow slipped through the net.

⁵⁷ It can be argued that ‘Arcon’ is a Yeatsian coinage, but it is based on the Gnostic term in the same way that terms such as ‘Tincture’ and ‘coven’ are taken from existing words.

where the mistakes are also harder for the reader to recognise. In the ‘Table of the Four Faculties’, the False *Creative Mind* of Phase 12 is given as ‘Enforced law’ (*CW13* 28) rather than the correct ‘Enforced lure’, which appears with the summary of the phase it affects, Phase 18 (66); there is a footnote to explain the mistake (241), but it only refers to the automatic script and *AVB*, not the later occurrence in this same volume. The *Body of Fate* of Phase 22 appears as ‘Temptation versus strength’ (29) and, when it affects itself, it is changed to ‘The Breaking of Strength’ (75); the first instance is corrected to ‘through strength’ by George in one of their copies, registered in the list of changes (341), and this was subsequently adopted in *AVB* in both places, but there is no note to explain any of this to the reader. The True *Creative Mind* of Phase 20 reads ‘Domination through emotional constriction’ (29) rather than ‘construction’, as it appears affecting Phase 10 (47), and this was a mistake that persisted into *AVB*; again this is not noted.

A Vision may not be Mead’s ‘scheme of lunar astrology’, but the Yeatses presented many of the details with an assumption of a basic knowledge of astrology—more so even than *AVB*, where a more general readership was perhaps envisaged. In *AVA* it is assumed that the reader knows the sequence of the Zodiac, diagrams are labelled with astrological symbols that are not explained, and the text refers allusively to a person’s phasal bias being ‘thwarted by his horoscope’ (*CW13* 71), ‘some eccentricity (not of phase but horoscope)’ (88) or affected ‘because of the character of his horoscope’ (89). Each volume of *Yeats’s Vision Papers* includes a list of the signs of the Zodiac and planets, and the first three also the four elements; in the case of *A Vision* the planets are actually not necessary, but a simple list of the Zodiac symbols would enable the reader to relate, for instance, the text of the explanation of ‘The Gyres and Lunar Months of the Great Year’ with its accompanying diagram (114–15) and the symbols of the elements would illuminate Dulac’s woodcut of ‘The Great Wheel’ (lviii).

As noted above, the appendices at the end of this edition, listing the changes and corrections that the Yeatses made to their four copies of *AVA*, are full and interesting. One has only to look at the scribbled and proof-marked original pages to appreciate the editors’ care in describing the deletions and amendments. However, it is difficult to imagine what the unversed reader will make of the implications of ‘upper left corner triangle is changed from pointing up, \triangle , to pointing down; the symbol \odot at the top

left just beyond the inner circle is marked \wp , and the ☽ opposite it is marked ☾; the triangle at the lower right is marked “reverse” and redrawn to point up’ (*CW13* 341), certainly not any sense of the interchange of Fire and Water and of the tropical signs of Cancer and Capricorn. In fact it is fairly likely that the unexplained will be ignored or passed over, effectively further downgrading the diagrams and visual element of the work.

The references to individuals’ horoscopes in the treatment of the Phases also underlines that Yeats does not intend the Phase to offer anything like a complete description of personality, and that there are other elements to consider, whatever we might call them. For him the horoscope was literal, and the drafts include considerations of the effect of the planets after the Full Moon (*YVP4* 124), on Landor and Shelley, both of Phase 17 (*YVP4* 37), and on AE (*YVP4* 232). The references within *AV* are more fugitive (see above) but they deserve comment. Whether the neglect springs from a deliberate decision to minimise the element of astrology, simple discomfort and unfamiliarity, or conversely an over-familiarity that forgets how strange these elements can seem, the readers have a right to expect help on this matter. It is true also that it was an even bigger weakness of *CVA* and the editors have certainly improved upon that, for instance, with a long entry on the precession of the equinoxes (*CW13* 273). Like WBY, however, they are surprisingly cavalier about the length of time it takes for a single cycle or Great Year, giving a month of 2,160 years (implying a year of 25,920), but also stating that ‘2,160 years is called an *Age*. Twelve Ages, or about twenty-five thousand years, comprise one Great Year’ (273)—rather radical rounding down. A few pages later it is described again and this time given as ‘about 26,800 years’ (276).⁵⁸

That ‘8’ may be a misprint, however, but this volume generally has a high standard of typographical accuracy. I noticed very few errors and then only with proper names—Nicolaes Tulp given as ‘Nicholaes’ (*CW13* 261), Élie Faure as ‘Faure’ (299), and the Sepher Yetzirah as ‘Yetzivah’ (321).⁵⁹ Unfortunately one of the volume’s triumphs, the printing of the cones of history in the correct black and red ink is marred by two of them, with

⁵⁸ Yeats’s *Encyclopædia Britannica* (YL 629) would have given him 25,730 years (XXII: 274), and Alfred Jeremias’s article on the ‘Ages of the World (Babylonian)’ in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* (YL 855), which Yeats used for this section, gives ‘12x2200’ (I: 185) or some 26,400.

⁵⁹ I would question the transcription of ’Ωριγένης as ‘Oregenes’ (300), but it appears to have some currency.

'WILL' appearing as 'WELL' and the label for the gyre '(12-13-14) 1380' printed in black when it should be in red and '(16-17-18) 1550' in red when it should be in black.⁶⁰ However, the triumph of persuading the publishers of the importance of using red ink (the first time since *AVI* itself and *AVB*'s first editions in Britain and America) far overshadows any minor blemish, which will be corrected in subsequent printings. Elsewhere, 'Powys Mathers' for 'MacGregor Mathers' (249) is evidently a confusion from the translator of *The Arabian Nights* mentioned in the Dedication to *Vestigia* (lvi),⁶¹ and the expansion of 'PF' as 'Passionate Fate' twice on page 241 instead of 'Persona' or 'Personality of Fate' probably harks back to the characteristics of 'a passionate pf' which leads to repeated incarnations in the same family (*YVP2* 355, 357; see *WOT* 331) as much as to the 'Passionate Body'.

A small diagram or clarification of the different lengths of era sketched out in 'Stray Thoughts' at the beginning of 'Dove or Swan' (*CW13* 150) would be helpful, not least to explain how 'the 15th Phase of each millennium... is Phase 8 or Phase 22 of the entire era' and how that 'era itself is but half of a greater era and its Phase 15 comes also at a period of war or trouble', besides explaining the mythical significance of 'Aphrodite rises from a stormy sea... Helen could not be Helen but for beleaguered Troy' which it does (291). However, it may be a misunderstanding of exactly this point that leads the editors to comment that the 'full flowering of Byzantine culture and apex of its power . . . is located . . . at the midpoint of the two-thousand-year cycle' (267)—which would indicate a date after 1000 AD, whereas Yeats, left to himself, 'would make Phase 15 coincide with Justinian's reign' (160) in the sixth century, at the middle of the subsidiary cycle of a single millennium.⁶²

The central phase causes problems again in the wake of the Renaissance, when Yeats sees the forms that have been 'perfected by separation' during the gyre of Phase 15 'begin to jostle and fall into confusion' once 'Phase 15 [is] past' (*CW13* 168). The editors repeat the note from

⁶⁰ The text of *AVI* does not explicitly refer to the colours, unlike *AVB* 256.

⁶¹ The quotation about Odin's self-sacrifice also omits 'my' from 'a sacrifice to my (highest) Self' (249).

⁶² The editors give no date, so the comment is ambiguous. The 'apex of [Byzantium's] power', certainly its greatest extent, comes under Justinian after the conquests of Belisarius and Narses (534-554 CE) and before the advances of 'the Arabian host' (*CW13* 101) in the 630s.

CVA that “the Fifteenth Phase of the Moon” lacks historical comment because, as WBY explains in the manuscript and working typescript, it “is supernatural” (312; cf. *CVA* Notes 60)—this immediately following a whole page of printed text that explains how the ‘period from 1450 to 1550 is allotted to the gyre of Phase 15’ (167) and expatiates on the Italian Renaissance, a remarkable but far from supernatural century. Despite the fact that it can have no *human* representatives to embody its *Zeitgeist*, it very much exists as an epoch or gyre: ‘Because the 15th Phase can never find direct human expression, being a supernatural incarnation, it impressed upon work and thought an element of strain and artifice, a desire to combine elements which may be incompatible, or which suggest by their combination something supernatural’ such as Botticelli’s *Mystic Nativity* (167–68). Elsewhere the comments, though minimal, are succinctly helpful and try to tease out some of the implications, noting, for instance that at 1050 ‘the spiritual or religious life is near phase 15 and lunar south in the two-thousand-year cycle, but secular history is at the same time near phases 28 and 1, the location of lunar north’ (305), though even here the implications would be worth spelling out a little more clearly. On a minor note, it is clear from the diagram of the cones that 1050 is a key date, and the editors should have had the confidence to change ‘The period from 1005 to 1180 is attributed in the diagram to the first two gyres of our millennium’ (164), even though it is a mistake that persisted into all versions of *AVB*.

Although a minimal level of interpretative help is sorely needed in dealing with *A Vision*, it is understandable that the editors do not choose to give much, since the material is often so ‘packed’ or ‘crammed’, as AE noted, that offering brief, useful comment is very difficult. The editors’ notes made me look at Yeats’s densely gnomic comments on ‘Blake and the Great Wheel’ (*CW13* 112–13) with renewed interest, at first in disagreement because they equated ‘the supreme beauty of Helen and the horrors of the war that the Greek forces waged on Troy’ with ‘*antithetical* and *primary*, respectively’ (273) which is wrong and, if anything, the war is as *antithetical* as the beauty. However teasing out the actual meaning would certainly require far more length than is possible, and just to unpack this single paragraph would need explanations of ‘true to phase’ and ‘out of phase’, of Blake’s ‘Mental Traveller’, of ‘Helen could not be Helen but for beleaguered Troy’ (150) mentioned above, of ‘Chosen’ (*VP* 535), of concepts that are linked to the *Critical Moments* and the point where the Sphere takes the place of the cone

(*CW13* 140) through harmony, and in particular sexual harmony, rather than conflict. It is the absence of these last comments that is particularly to be regretted, since the concepts are missing from *AVB*, so will not be dealt with there, and this might have been an opportunity to sketch some of these links. Even with the *Vision Papers* to flesh them out, these are tantalising fragments like submerged mountains, which are difficult to integrate or explain, in part because they were superseded, but which are part of what makes *AVA* independently interesting and which the editors are in a better position than anyone to attempt to explain. The same is true of the 'Thirteenth Cycle, which is a Sphere and not a cone' (138), which seems to be a significantly different entity from the Thirteenth Cone of *AVB*, or why '13th, 14th and 15th cycles are described as Spheres' and what they are if they 'are certainly emanations from the Soul of the World, the Intellectual Principle and the One respectively' (143).

The editors state that 'All students of *A Vision* will continue to rely heavily on the important edition *CVA*, with its extensive introduction and notes' (*CW13* xl ix) but this is unlikely to be the case and really should not be so either. The introduction, largely the work of George Mills Harper, remains one of the most succinct and cogent pieces on the genesis of *AVA* and *A Vision* in general, and contains material that is not readily available elsewhere, such as the basic programme of the Yeatses' automatic script, so students would be well advised to consult it. Otherwise, however, the notes here supersede their predecessors and, although scholars and students have long used the pagination of *AVA* and its facsimile in *CVA*, there is every reason to suppose that in future scholarly references will be to *CW13* in the same way that they are increasingly to the other volumes in the Collected Works series. *CVA* will remain in libraries to give students a sense of the original printing, if one of the original 600 copies is not available, but it is itself already a rare and prohibitively expensive book. It is to be hoped that paperback versions of the Collected Works *A Visions* will soon become available, as the old Macmillan and Scribner paperbacks were, to enable serious students to buy copies for themselves. *A Vision* in both versions has been out of print for a number of years now: this volume makes *AVA* available, albeit probably too expensive for most students, and, until the Collected Works edition of *AVB* is published, the only version on offer is a facsimile from Kessinger reprints. It is to be hoped that Simon & Schuster/Scribner (and maybe Macmillan/Palgrave too) will recognise the

usefulness of more affordable editions and find commercial reason in issuing paperback editions.

In this first volume, however, the editors have not only made the text available again, they have done a lot more in providing a really solid framework with which to approach a work that often appears intimidating and difficult to broach. The editors are never going to please all of their readers, and it is perhaps inevitable that one of the few specialists in *A Vision* is going to view the work rather differently from the many students and potential readers of this work. My criticisms here are spelt out in detail while the broad approval is given in generalised sentences, and that may create an unfair impression. It is the task of the specialist reviewer to point out those few lapses that could be improved in the next printing but, from my own point of view, a single red cone would outweigh scores of minor question marks and there are only a few. This helpful edition makes *A Vision* accessible to readers, students and scholars of Yeats and opens up his thought. In many ways the companion volume of *AVB* will be even more important, since there has never been the equivalent of *CVA* with critical apparatus and index. We should really wait for that volume to form a better judgment of the work as a whole.

In the end we study the twists and convolutions of the Yeatses' construction with wonder and bewilderment, fascination and frustration. Those of us who keep finding more interest in it, do so partly because of the densely allusive prose which, though less elegant than *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* or other essays, is more richly knotted and original. We also remind ourselves that even in the mind's 'wildest speculations it follows an image of truth', or that it can reveal new approaches not just to the poetry and mind of 'one of the most curious minds' of recent times, but has the intrinsic interest of symbolic thought.

Yeats and the New Physics

Matthew M. DeForrest

When we consider the influences upon W. B. Yeats's *A Vision*, we normally think of the humanistic inspirations: the literary, metaphysical, and philosophical sources that are regularly cited in analyses of his poetry. As Mary Colum points our in her ever-engaging autobiography *The Life and the Dream*, however, Yeats did not limit his interests and inspiration exclusively to the humanities:

...I found myself at a dinner party once beside Einstein As I had never heard Einstein's name until my hostess, Mrs. Untermeyer, mentioned it in the invitation, I was puzzled for topics of conversation, and proceeded to ask him pleasantly what he had invented. He countered, "Do you know enough mathematics to understand if I told you?" As I had retained in my memory some notions of the binomial theorem, a little trigonometry, with a smattering physics, and had so informed my hostess, she warmly declared to Einstein that I could, and we both pressed him to explain his invention, or theory, or whatever it was. He did actually tell us something about it, and we understood the *unds*, the *seins*, the *habens* and a few nouns—there weren't many adjectives in Einstein's discourse—and as he went on he threw back his head and laughed, and said "*Mein schönen damen!... Ach, meine schönen damen!*" However, on my next visit to Dublin, when Yeats started talking about the theory of relativity, which he thought was in some way related to his book, *A Vision*, I put a brake on his eloquence by telling him that Einstein had explained it all to me at a dinner party.¹

¹ Mary Colum, *Life and the Dream* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company Ltd., 1947), 247-48.

While there is no doubt that the most appealing part of Colum's passage is the moment when she brings the great man and her sometime mentor's explanation to a grinding halt by referencing the ultimate primary source, we also have a hint at a surprising source of inspiration for Yeats's codification of *A Vision*: the then cutting edge theories of the New Physics.

Perhaps we should not be so surprised that Yeats reached for contemporary scientific theories to try and understand what was being revealed to him through George Yeats's mediumship—a system he characterized as 'a form of science for the study of human nature, as we see it in others' (*CL InteLex* 4744, 25 June 1925; *L* 709). Yeats had worked with the Society of Psychical Research to establish scientific evidence for supernatural events. Likewise, he had been asked to leave the esoteric section of Madame Helena Blavatsky's Theosophical Society for taking an experimental approach to confirm the teachings of that group.² Such scientific explorations of occult phenomena were part of the spirit of the age, as is evidenced not only by Yeats's work but by the work of many others who anticipated a scientifically based confirmation of their beliefs, including Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of several works on spiritualism who was famously duped by faked pictures of dancing faeries.³

Although not yet well known enough to be recognized by Colum in post-World War I New York, Einstein had already begun the ascent to fame that would make his name so much a household word that it along with terms from the New Physics—the series of discoveries which begin roughly with Einstein's Theories of Relativity and continue through the initial development of Quantum Theory—would appear in the opening lines of 'As Time Goes By'.⁴ Given the astonishing revelations made by Einstein and those who followed, it is unsurprising that discoveries such as the General and Special

² George Mills Harper, *Yeats's Golden Dawn* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 7-8.

³ Conan Doyle's spiritualist works were familiar enough to Yeats for him to have alluded to his works in *The Words Upon the Windowpane*, although it should be noted that the sceptical John Corbet's identification of 'wild book by Conan Doyle' (*CPI* 598) indicates that Yeats may have, like many at the time, considered Conan Doyle too accepting of all phenomena to be a credible witness.

⁴ Hupfeld, Herman, 'As Time Goes By', published in 1931 by Warner Brothers Music Corp., 1931). The Lyrics are cited as found on the website <http://www.reel-classics.com/Movies/Casablanca/astimegoesby-lyrics.htm>.

Theories of Relativity became familiar to the general public. Indeed, the basics of fourth dimensional theory—the idea that time follows length, breadth, and depth—had begun to penetrate the public's consciousness at least as early as 1898, the year H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* was published—a book which Yeats is reported to have respected.⁵

By 1925, the year when *A Vision* was published, Einstein had won the Nobel Prize in Physics.⁶ His work on Relativity had also had almost a decade to impact popular culture and be part of the arguments in several of the books that Yeats read and, at times, annotated. Indeed, Yeats owned a copy of Einstein's 1922 *The Meaning of Relativity*, which collected four of Einstein's 1921 Princeton lectures, although Edward O'Shea's *A Descriptive Catalog of W.B. Yeats' Library* does not record evidence of Yeats's marking it. Nor does Yeats appear to have marked J. W. Dunne's *An Experiment with Time*, which examines the possibility that humans' perceptual faculties extend into the fourth dimension and regularly refers to the New Physics. Yeats's comments in a 4 December 1931 letter to L.A.G. Strong, however, reveal that he was wrestling with its content:

I did not mean my allusion to 'right and left' as a criticism of Dunne. I was merely suggesting an extension of his experiment. By 'before and after' I meant past and future, and these Dunne had investigated with his experiments, and by 'right and left' I meant the relationship in space, not in time, which I am most anxious that he or somebody else should investigate. I won't go into the question now of the infinite observer, for I should have to look up Dunne again. I may perhaps write to you later about it. It happens to touch on a very difficult problem, one I have been a good bit bothered by. If I could know all the past and all the future and see it as a single instant I would still be conditioned, limited, by the form of that past and the form of that future, I would not be infinite. Perhaps you will tell me I misunder-

⁵ H.G. was surprised and gratified by the success of the story, but even in later years would be gently astonished that people held it in such high regard. His peers at the time, including Jerome K. Jerome, Yeats, George Wyndham, and even Rudyard Kipling were quick, however, to recognize its quality: see Simon Wells's 'An Introduction to *The Time Machine*' in H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (New York: Ace Books, 2001), xii. Yeatss' opinion of Wells varied somewhat, given his recently collected (1934) 'Should H. G. Wells afflict you': see *Ex* 377.

⁶ In 1922, the year before Yeats's own Nobel Prize for Literature.

stood Dunne, for I am nothing of a mathematician (*L* 787-88).

The publication date for Dunne's work—1929—excludes it from consideration as a source for Yeats's preliminary exploration of the New Physics—although it is early enough to have been a possible influence on his revisions of *A Vision*.

The *Descriptive Catalog*, however, lists several likely sources for his initial attempts 'to understand a little modern research into this matter.' (*CVA* 175) The foremost of these is Lyndon Bolton's *An Introduction to the Theory of Relativity*, published in 1921. This work, a significantly expanded *Scientific American* Eugene Higgins Prize winning essay, is written for the educated layman rather than a physicist. Bolton spells out in his opening remarks just how much education is required of his readers to understand his explanation:

To expect a non-mathematical treatment of Relativity is as reasonable as to expect a non-mathematical treatment of the Integral Calculus. At the same time, a very small amount of mathematical knowledge indeed is required for a general grasp of the subject. The mathematical knowledge assumed in this book is exiguously small. Einstein says that his book presumes a standard of education corresponding to that of a university matriculation examination. The present book, the writer thinks, requires less, nothing in fact beyond simple equations and Euclid I, 47 (the Theorem of Pythagoras). Wherever a proof is given it is written out in great detail, and this may at first sight give the impression of overmuch mathematics. This extreme detail may be unnecessary, but the writer felt that it was better to be on the safe side.⁷

Despite this relatively low level of mathematics, Yeats clearly felt his own limited mathematical skills hindered his understanding of the material and states as much both in the above quoted letter to Strong and in a passage from the 1925 edition of *A Vision* under the heading 'The Cones: Higher Dimensions':

ONE of the notes upon which I have based this book says that all existence within a cone has a larger number of dimensions than are known to us, and another identifies *Creative Mind*, *Will*, and *Mask* with our three dimensions, but Body of Fate with the unknown fourth, time externally perceived.

⁷ Lyndon Bolton, *An Introduction to the Theory of Relativity* (London: Methuen, 1921), pp. viii-ix.

When I saw this I tried to understand a little modern research into this matter but found I lacked the necessary training. I have therefore ignored it hitherto in writing this book (*CVA* 175).

Doubtless this is due to the fact that Bolton's work, while using only basic mathematics, stays within a purely mathematical realm. As such, it is aimed at a reader trying to come to grips with Einstein's work—not someone who is in search of images for his poetry and plays. While Bolton repeatedly assures his readers that, while dealing with four or more dimensions is easy,

All attempts to form a picture of a figure in a continuum of four or more dimensions are in the writer's opinion futile. The mathematician is in no difficulty, for he is able to express by means of his formulae all properties relevant to his purposes without the necessity of forming a picture; a picture would not help him materially. But this resource is not open to those without mathematical training.⁸

Despite Bolton's warnings against the pursuit of images and his own admission of inadequacy, Yeats immediately launches into a discussion of dimensional theory as it applies to his system:

The difference between a higher and a lower dimension explains, however, the continual breaking up of cones and wheels into smaller cones and wheels without changing the main movement better than Swedenborg's vortex, his gyre made up of many gyres. Every dimension is at right angles to all dimensions below it in a scale. If the Great Wheel, say, be a rotating plane, and the movement of any constituent cone a rotation at right angles to that plane the second movement cannot affect the first in any way. In the same way the rotation of the sphere will be a movement at right angles to a circumference which includes all movements known to us. We can only imagine a perpetual turning in and out of that sphere, hence the sentence quoted by Aherne about the great eggs which turn inside out without breaking their shell.

It seems that ancient men except the Persian and the Jew who looked to an upward progression, held Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return, but if religion and mathematics are right, and time is an illusion, it makes no difference except in the moral effect (*CVA* 175-76).

⁸ Lyndon Bolton, 92-93.

Although Yeats read and considered Bolton's work, turning down the corners of pages 28, 146, and 160 (O'Shea 39), the absence of any recorded annotations on these pages or cross references to them in the card index Yeats kept for ordering his thoughts makes it impossible to assert with any certainty the full impact Bolton's work had on the creation of *A Vision*. That Bolton had an impact, however, is certain, as is evidenced by a misquoted passage in the typescript of *A Vision* from the above mentioned page 160 of *An Introduction to the Theory of Relativity* (CW13 268). It is, however, possible to make some guesses as to the nature and type of some of this impact. The most tantalizing possibility comes out of the above quotation regarding dimensional arrangement as it applies to Yeats's system: 'Every dimension is at right angles to all dimensions below it in a scale' (CVA 175). Yeats associates this arrangement with the relationship of different sets of gyres to one another, as is seen in the continuation of this passage and in his description of how the gyres of the mundane world (the gyres of the Faculties) and those of afterlife (the gyres of the Principles) are arranged in the 1937 edition of *A Vision*:

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. In the period between lives, the *Spirit* and the *Celestial Body* prevail, whereas *Husk* and *Passionate Body* prevail during life. Once again, solar day, lunar night. If, however, we were to consider both wheels or cones as moving at the same speed and to place, for purposes of comparison, the *Principles* in a double cone, drawn and numbered like that of the *Faculties*, a line drawn between Phase 1 and Phase 15 on the first would be at right angles to a line drawn between the same phases upon the other (AVB 188).

This superimposition matters: it has to do with what is being produced. The first set of gyres, the *Faculties*, is a graphical representation of three-dimensional space. With the superimposition of the gyres of the *Principles*, a model of four-dimensional space is created.

The problem with attempting to create a graphical image of four-dimensional space, of course, is that it is physically impossible for us to do so accurately. Every dimension is naturally limited by itself and beings native to that dimension can only imagine or mathematically

predict the description of higher dimensional objects. This is the fundamental reason Bolton labels the use of such graphical images as 'futile.' It is a problem that forms the core story of Edwin A. Abbot's *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, in which a two dimensional being tries to explain to his fellow Flatlanders what it is like to exist in three dimensions.

Despite these challenges, individuals have continued to try and approximate such an image in order to explain, illustrate, and clarify the nature of four-dimensional space. Such images are collectively known as either tesseracts or hypercubes. The former is a term that would have been available to Yeats, as it was coined in Charles Howard Hinton's *A New Era of Thought*, first published in 1888. Indeed, the term, as has been pointed out by Duszenko⁹ and others, was used by Joyce in his notoriously difficult work *Finnegans Wake*¹⁰ and appears in a slightly different form in Salvador Dalí's 1954 painting Crucifixion.¹¹

Yeats's probable introduction to 'tesseract,' based on its presence in his library, is W. Whately Smith's *A Theory of the Mechanism of Survival: The Fourth Dimension and its Applications* (YL item 1952). In this 1920 work, Smith explores the implications that four-dimensional theory has for a theoretical explanation for psychic powers and consciousness. In an appendix, he discusses how a four dimensional space is formed:

Any figure in a space of a given dimensionality generates a corresponding figure in the next higher space, by moving in a direction at right angles to any direction that can be drawn within itself.* Or, in general, space of any dimensionality generates by such movement the next higher space.

Thus, the lowest sort of space is space of zero dimensions, *i.e.*, a mathematical point. If it moves a distance of one inch, it traces out a Line one inch long—that is to say a one space 'figure.' If this moves at right angles to itself

⁹ Andrzej Duszenko, 'The Theory of Relativity in *Finnegans Wake*', in *The Joyce of Science: New Physics in Finnegans Wake*. 26 July 2007: <<http://duszenko.northern.edu/joyce/relativ.html>>

¹⁰ James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939), 100.

¹¹ Salvador Dalí, *Crucifixion (Corpus Hypercubus)*, 1954. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

for a distance of one inch, it traces out a two space figure, viz., a square of side one inch. If this again moves a distance of one inch in a direction at right angles to every direction that can be drawn within it, that is, in a direction perpendicular to itself, it traces out a cube of side one inch, *i.e.*, a three space figure or ‘solid.’

We must, therefore, conclude, from analogy, that if the cube were itself to move, a distance of one inch, in a direction at right angles to every direction that can be drawn in our space—in the unknown direction, that is, of the fourth dimension—it would generate a ‘higher solid’ of side one inch. The higher solid thus generated is called a ‘Tesseract’ and its properties are quite well known.

*NOTE—The figures thus produced are not necessarily the strict analogues of the figures which generate them. For instance, a circle, moving in a direction perpendicular to itself, would generate a cylinder; whereas the three-dimensional analogue of a circle is a sphere.¹²

In Smith’s description, we find perhaps the origin of Yeats’s above-mentioned connections between the rotation of the gyres and the Phaseless Sphere of the Thirteenth Cone—a description, as shall be discussed more below, that Yeats maintained in his 1937 edition of *A Vision* (AVB 193). When considering the image of the tesseract on Yeats’s system, however, we must recall that Yeats’s initial circle—the line created by the paired movement of the individual Faculties, is sweeping out a three dimensional shape of a gyre rather than the two dimensional shape of a circle. As such, it forms a cone (or, rather, a set of paired cones) rather than a circle. In fact, in a deleted passage of *A Vision [A]*, he specifies that ‘we may consider the full gyre itself half a rotating four dimensional sphere’ (CW13 268).

The four-dimensional movement of the gyres is the basis for Yeats’s explanation of the image of an egg turning inside out without breaking its shell, quoted in *A Vision* (1925) above and in the beginning of ‘Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends’ (AVB 33). Because the line drawn by the Faculties does not form a circle, which

¹² W. Whately Smith, *A Theory of the Mechanism of Survival: The Fourth Dimension and its Applications* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner 1920), 187–88. An animation of this sequence may be found at <http://www.cut-the-knot.org/ctk/Tesseract.shtml>.

would transform into a sphere and then into its four-dimensional equivalent, we have to consider how a cone in motion progresses into a four dimensional object which is related to an egg shaped object¹³ that can expand and contract within itself. In so doing, it is possible for the ‘inside’ of such an object to become its ‘outside’ without breaking the ‘shell’ of its outer surface, much as the inhabitants of Flatland cannot see within themselves but a three dimensional being can easily see inside of them.

Despite the ease of describing how a tesseract is theoretically constructed, it cannot, of course, be constructed in three-dimensional space any more than one of the inhabitants of Flatland can construct a cube. It can, however, be approximated—especially if we keep in mind what we are looking at. If, for example, we consider a diagram of a cube, it appears to us like a three dimensional object. It is, of course, a two dimensional object, being limited to the surface of the page. It is, in reality, the shadow of a cube—the way a cube made up of tinker toys as opposed to solid surfaces would cast its shadow—much as the viewers in Plato’s parable of the cave would view the reality of a vase only as its shadow projected upon the wall. Our depictions of tesseracts, therefore, are the equivalent of their shadows projected onto our view of space. In this arrangement, the tesseract appears as a cube within a cube with the inner points of the larger cube connected by diagonals to the outer corners of the interior cube.¹⁴

This structure bears an uncanny resemblance to both the verbal description of Yeats’s system as a series of gyres within gyres, but also to the physical structure of the image formed by the superimposition of the gyre of the *Principles* upon the gyre of the *Faculties*, as described in the above quoted passage (*AVB* 188).

This is not the only way of constructing a tesseract, as it is

¹³ The object in question, to remain consistent with the cone-shape of the gyres, should have larger and smaller ends. Readers may be able to get a sense of the motion involved by watching the animation of a tesseract in rotational motion (titled ‘A 3D projection of an 8-cell performing a simple rotation...’ and/or ‘A 3D projection of an 8-cell performing a double rotation...’), available at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tesseract>.

¹⁴ An image of this version of the tesseract may be found at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Hypercube.svg>.

explained later in Smith's 'Appendix':

'A tesseract, which is the four-dimensional analogue of the cube, is bounded by Eight cubes. It has Twenty-four plane square faces, Thirty-two linear edges, and Sixteen corner points.'

This may at first sight seem difficult to grasp.

In reality however, it is quite simple.

We have only to remember that the tesseract is generated by the movement of a cube, in a direction at right angles to every direction that can be drawn in the cube and that whenever a figure of a given dimensionality moves thus it generates a figure of the next higher dimensionality.

Thus every point in the cube will trace out a line, every line a surface, and every surface a solid, and, since the distance moved is equal to the length of the side of the cube, these surfaces will be squares and the solids will be cubes.¹⁵

This structure is also inherent within the Yeats's system, as it remains consistent with the idea of gyres within gyres.

Yeats is clearly trying to imagine, both graphically and rhetorically, four-dimensional space. The *Faculties*, which are bound within time, exist in the first three dimensions. This limit is implicit within the description of the Body of Fate: 'the series of events forced upon him from without' (AVB 83). This forcing of events upon an individual implies a being bound within a linear progression of time rather than those like the Daimon, the entity controlling these events and shaping them out of 'the memory of the events of his past incarnations' (AVB 83), which are not so bound.

This is further reinforced in the description of the *Principles*. Through the Husk and the Passionate Body, which are dominant in life, we are able to observe the Daimons involved in individual lives. When so perceived, these Daimons become 'subject to time and space, cause and effect' (AVB 189): this binding of these two *Principles* to three-dimensional space can also be seen in the depiction of the cones on p. 201. The half of the hourglass figure where the Husk and Passionate Body dominate is the half where the

¹⁵ W. Whately Smith, *A Theory etc.*, 191-92. In this image, each line of the initial cube is shared by three cubes, as may be seen at: www.cut-the-knot.org/Tesseract.shtml.

Faculties resolve themselves.

The most clear cut example of the idea of Time as a dimension which can be moved through arbitrarily comes in the stages of the afterlife that require individuals to review events in different sequences—something that would be only possible to beings who are not subject to the limitations of three dimensional space. These states, all of which take place after the Faculties disappear. In these states, whether the *Return*, *Dreaming Back*, or *Phantasmagoria*, the individuals undergoing purgation are directed and overseen by the Teaching Spirits of the Thirteenth Cone—beings above time and space, as is seen in Yeats's description of them and their realm:

The ultimate reality, because neither one nor many, concord nor discord, is symbolized as a phaseless sphere, but as all things fall into a series of antinomies in human experience it becomes, the moment it is thought of, what I shall presently describe as the thirteenth cone. All things are present as an eternal instant to our Daimon (or *Ghostly Self* as it is called when it inhabits the sphere), but that instant is of necessity unintelligible to all bound to the antinomies (*AVB* 193).

These beings—the Daimons and Teaching Spirits—are outside of time and beyond the divisions inherent in the mundane world—the realm of time and space and the balanced antinomies.

Our understanding of Yeats's poems and plays will only be complete when we take these difficult and, at times, all but impenetrable theories into account. As mentioned above, *Purgatory* has as its main action the ability of its two characters to view events in a past relative to the present of the play as the Old Man observes his mother attempting to purge herself of her attachments to life.¹⁶ When he considered these states, Yeats was not thinking in exclusively metaphysical terms. He believed that these states were part of a broader reality that included science and the rational as well as the irrational. In doing so, he maintained a stance that was consistent with *A Vision*—a world that balanced opposites. Here, the rationally and objectively scientific outlook is set in tension against the irrational and subjective world of the supernatural. Yet within the parameters of his

¹⁶ It is, however, possible to read the play as his attempt to understand his own past and purge his associations with it. Once more, we have gyres within gyres.

system, these two outlooks were different views of the same thing and the coming recognition of the mathematical and scientific (as each turn of the gyre understood it) was consistent with past ages, as is hinted at in his speculation on what civilization preceded Homeric Greece:

...when in my ignorance I try to imagine what older civilization that annunciation rejected I can but see bird and woman blotting out some corner of the Babylonian mathematical starlight.ⁱ

ⁱ Toynbee considers Greece the heir of Crete, and that Greek religion inherits from the Minoan monotheistic mother goddess its more mythical conceptions (*A Study in History*, vol. i, 92). ‘Mathematical Starlight’, Babylonian astrology, is, however, present in the friendships and antipathies of the Olympic gods (*AVB* 268).

Another source of Yeats’s inspiration regarding the New Physics, based on the type and amount of marginalia and his comments to Olivia Shakespear in letters dated 15 and 22 April 1926, is Alfred North Whitehead’s *Science and the Modern World*.¹⁷ Like Dunn, Whitehead is too late to have had an impact on *A Vision* (1925). Whitehead’s work did, however, have an impact on Yeats’s thinking as he revised his system for republication in 1937. Surprisingly, given Yeats’s interests in examining history for parallels with his Historical Gyres and with placing people into their proper phase, the inspiration he received does not come primarily from the first half of the book, which reviews the history of science and mathematics and the men and women who advanced these fields. Instead, Yeats focuses on the sections that examine Relativity and Quantum Theory.

A number of the marginal comments and strokes in Yeats’s copy of *Science and the Modern World*, recorded by O’Shea in his *Descriptive Catalog*, make direct reference to the system of *A Vision*. The foremost amongst these is the idea of Unity of Being. In Yeats’s system, Unity of Being refers to the balance between and integration of the portions of any being, represented by the *Faculties* and/or *Principles*. Yeats found parallels between these and the portion of

¹⁷ Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926, YL item 2258. I thank Wayne Chapman for providing me with photocopies of several pages of Yeats’s copy of *Science and the Modern World* with the marginalia I discuss here.

Quantum Theory that require, in Whitehead's words, that 'you must take the life of the *whole body* during any portion of [examined time]' (emphasis Yeats's). In the margin next to this passage, Yeats wrote, 'Unity of Being'.¹⁸

The rules of Quantum Mechanics also provided Yeats with a rationale for the parallel but separate movements of the *Faculties* and *Principles*, which move on pairs of gyres set at right angles to one another (*AVB* 188). Although the two sets are active at different times—the *Faculties* from birth to death and the *Principles* from death to birth—they are symbolically present simultaneously within his system. This is not, however, necessarily a difficulty within a relativistic system, according to Whitehead, who states: 'Now, in discussing the theory of relativity, we saw that the relative motion of two [objects] means simple that their organic patterns are utilising diverse space-time systems' [emphasis Yeats's].¹⁹ Thus, a person—the object here in question—can exist in multiple space-time moments, allowing for such purgatorial states as the *Dreaming Back* and the *Phantasmagoria*, which require that a person review their pasts before advancing on towards either their next life or into the Thirteenth Cone.

One of the more interesting marginalia in Yeats's copy of *Science and the Modern World* is found at the top of page 191, where a series of single gyres, forming two connected hourglasses, is set above 3 dots placed at the widest point of the hourglasses. It is reasonably safe to assume that this is associated with the sentence which runs from the bottom of the prior page and underneath the diagram: 'If it is considered as one thing, its orbit is to me diagrammatically exhibited by a series of detached dots.'²⁰

The 'it' in question here refers to a theory of discontinuous existence—the idea that things could pop in and out of particular types of existence at the atomic and sub-atomic level as things moved between states of energy and matter. This theory is now regularly demonstrated in various particle accelerators. Yeats did not need

¹⁸ Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 170.

¹⁹ The annotations to this page (185) are not recorded by O'Shea except by implication, via the initial description: 'Very heavily marked and annotated throughout.'

²⁰ *Science and the Modern World* (YL item 2258), 191.

such proofs, however. He found parallels with that idea in his own system, which indicated that things cyclically shift between states of formlessness to form and back again as they move through the phases of the Great Wheel. This can clearly be seen in the track taken by the single cone above, representing a shift from, for the sake of simplicity,²¹ Phase One (above the first dot) through Phase 15 (where the two cones meet) back to Phase One then again through Phase 15 and returning to Phase 1.

This is not a simple abstraction in Yeats's system. Single gyres connected at their points are used by Yeats in his discussion of the shifting between the *Faculties* and *Principles*. In particular, it is used to track the path of the *Husk*—the actual physical body—as it moves through life (the first gyre) then disappears at the point where the two cones meet, only to reappear at the beginning of the next incarnation, where the Cones meet at their base, above the dot marking the cyclical reappearance of the quanta described in Whitehead.

All of this, of course, begs the obvious question: Why should we care? After all, if Yeats refers to this material only obliquely in *A Vision*—to the point of cutting the quotation from Bolton from *A Vision* (1925), why should we consider his commentary on Whitehead, Bolton, and others? The first reason has already been mentioned: The New Physics was part of the popular culture and was something Yeats would not have been willing or able to ignore. Nor, given his comments to Olivia Shakespear, was he interested in doing so. Rather, he revelled in the parallels:

The work of Whitehead's I have read is 'Science in the Modern World' and I have ordered his 'Concept of Nature' & another book of his. He thinks that nothing exists but 'organisms,' or minds—the 'cones' of my book—& that there is no such thing as an object 'localized in space,' except the minds, & that which we call phisical objects of all kinds are 'aspects' or 'vistas' of other 'organisms'—in my book the 'Body of Fate' of one being is but the 'Creative Mind' of another. What we call an object is a limit of perception. We create each others universe, & are influenced by even the most remote 'organisms.' It is as though we stood in the midst of space & saw upon all

²¹ Strictly speaking, Phase One, being the most plastic of all phases, is least likely to adequately represent the blip into reality of a physical body. Even so, it is traditional to attribute Phase One to the right hand side of any diagram in *A Vision*.

sides—above, below, right and left—the rays of stars—but that we suppose, through a limit placed upon our perceptions, that some stars were at our elbow, or even between our hands. He also uses the ‘Quantum Theory’ when speaking of minute organisms—molecules—in a way that suggests ‘antithetical’ & ‘primary,’ or rather if he applies it to the organisms we can compare with ourselves it would become that theory. I partly delight in him because of something autocratic in his mind. His packed logic, his way of saying just enough & no more, his difficult scornful lucidity seem to me the intellectual equivalent of my own imaginative richness of suggestion—certainly I am nothing if I have not these. (He is all ‘Spirit’ whereas I am all ‘Passionate Body.’). He is the opposite of Bertrand Russell who fills me with fury, by his plebeian loquacity (*CL InteLex* 4863, 22 April [1926]; cf. *L* 713-14).

There is also an indication in the letters of what Yeats was looking for in the material. On 4 March 1926, Yeats asked Olivia Shakespear ‘to read the part of my book called “The Gates of Pluto”—it is overloaded with detail & not as bold as I thought as it should have been but does I think reconcile spiritual fact with credible philosophy’ (*CL InteLex* 4843; cf. *L* 711-12). In his next letter to her, dated 15 April [1926], he writes:

. . . I stay in bed for breakfast & read Modern philosophy. I have found a very difficult but profound person Whitehead who seems to have reached my own conclusions about ultimate things. He has written down the game of chess & I like some Italian Prince have made the pages & the court ladies have it out on the lawn. Not that he would recognize his abstract triumph in my gay rabble (*CL InteLex* 4858; cf. *L* 712).

If, therefore, modern philosophers must wrestle with science, Yeats believes that he must wrestle with the New Physics if his system is to have any significance for the modern world. The virtue of the New Physics was that it more accurately described the universe than the old Newtonian models, albeit a precision that is only necessary at the extremes of reality.²² Parallels between his system and the New Physics would lend *gravitas* to his revised system similar to that given with the parallels he drew between *A Vision* and older, established philosophical models.

²² NASA needs only Newtonian physics to send a man to the moon or put a satellite in orbit, but for a brief nod to four-dimensional theory because it is necessary to include a time component when deciding on launch times and targets.

Finally, Yeats's view of the eternal figures significantly in many of his works—most notably ‘Sailing to Byzantium’.²⁴ Likewise, his understanding of the cyclical nature of time becomes more complex once we realize that, as happens in *Purgatory*, time becomes something people are able to travel through. If pursuing the contemporary scientific conversation that addressed the same material he was considering led him to a greater understanding of the meaning of eternity, Yeats was intent on examining it—just as he was intent on determined to examine metaphysical and artistic sources of inspiration. With a clear acknowledgement of this more rationalist standpoint, we can perhaps move beyond the characterization of Yeats as ‘Californian’ and ‘embarrassing’²⁴ and begin to appreciate not only the significant work that went into crafting *A Vision* but the thought and genius required to synthesize such a significant body of work into a unique philosophical system.

²³ Matthew DeForrest, *Yeats and the Stylistic Arrangements of Experience* (San Francisco, London and Bethesda: International Scholars Publications, 1999), 89.

²⁴ W. H. Auden, quoted from *The Permanence of Yeats* 344 in Graham Hough, *The Mystery Religion of W. B. Yeats* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984), 6.

REVIEWS

‘A Law Indifferent to Blame or Praise’:

W. B. Yeats, *The Tower (1928): Manuscript Materials*, ed. Richard J. Finneran, with Jared Curtis and Ann Saddlemeyer (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), liv + 670 pp.

Wayne K. Chapman

Sadly, the blush is off the rose. This book has taken so long in the making that delay itself seems much of the reason it is hard to celebrate the work as the brilliant, anticipated conclusion of ‘the projected editions of poetic manuscripts in the Cornell Yeats’ that one had hoped it would be. In acknowledging sympathy for Richard Finneran and his family in the multiple tragedies of the last years of his prolific career as an editor, I must also confess that unbiased reviewing is not made easier because of the role I played, at one point, to help spur completion of the volume. Finneran cites the joyful moment, in 1977, when the ‘long journey’ began with a gathering of scholars in the home of William M. Murphy (xii). While a doctoral candidate in the mid-1980s, I wrote to introduce myself to Finneran, who was extremely helpful and interested in a discovery I had made concerning ‘The New Faces’, a poem composed in 1912 but not published until 1922 (in the Cuala Press booklet *Seven Poems and a Fragment*, although considered for interpolation in *Responsibilities* 1917) and introduced to its canonical place in *The Tower* (Macmillan, 1928; see *YA 6* [1988]: 108–33). The assignment of *The Tower* in the Cornell manuscript series belonged to Finneran, and I gave him all the assistance I could muster at the time. Relations between us were cordial for a long time after that, and so, when my second volume for the *Cornell Yeats* went to press, Stephen Parrish, the general editor who also functioned as series major-domo, suggested that I attempt to persuade Finneran to take me on as co-editor. I did eventually offer to take over the volume a short time before co-ordinating editor Jared

Curtis began receiving draft material for *The Tower* edition in July 2003. Having lost grant support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Atlantic Philanthropies, the series could soldier on, Finneran reasoned, to the end of the poetry series with *The Tower*, if need be, drawing funds from his professorship at the University of Tennessee. Politely declining my offer, he delivered 'a solid foundation for the book,' approving in January 2005 'preliminary copy' prepared by Curtis and Saddlemeyer, who 'are grateful for the groundwork he laid so well' (xii).

This edition of poetic manuscripts is the second I have reviewed under similarly wretched circumstances. The first one was the late Thomas Parkinson's relatively slender edition of the manuscripts of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (see *YA* 12 [1996]: 259–62), a volume finished by Anne Brannen, with help from Stephen Parrish, as I recall, and approval by Richard Finneran. (In fact, Finneran has been the only designated 'Series Editor' to exercise oversight according to the organization advertised on the masthead. Hence, Yeats's poetry received priority whereas his prose dropped from the prospectus, and volume editors for the plays were made to compromise principles to cut costs for the press.)

Inconsistencies and minor omissions in Parkinson's edition were noted in my review, since which I have found that two entire folios of a bound manuscript notebook (NLI 30,361, ff. 30v and 31v) are not accounted for in the book, or half the first-draft version of 'Solomon and the Witch.' Parkinson and Brannen take it from line 18 with the loose leaves of NLI 13,588(4), 1v. When I noted the omission to Finneran in an e-mail, he responded as anyone might: 'Poor Tom.' He put the blame on cataloguing, for it is true that the instruments we use to find manuscripts are notoriously imprecise, sometimes wrong. Who has not grumbled about this problem? Nevertheless, at the National Library of Ireland, major portions of the W. B. Yeats conspectus were originally the work of scholars who got to the library about the same time the manuscripts did: Parkinson almost fifty years ago and Finneran, with hand-picked associates, prior to Michael Yeats's transference of more than a thousand additional items in 1985.

In the latter case, a scratch inventory was produced in a short interval—the so-called 'MBY List'—and items bestowed to the library were maintained in that order, with '30,001' assigned to MBY 1 as a shelf number, '30,361' to MBY 361, and so forth. Hence, Parkinson took it for granted that an entry referred to as 'Maroon Notebook' containing revisions

for *The Player Queen* and drafts of Calvary scenes, *A Vision* notes, and a letter to Lady Gregory would not be something he needed to investigate. Turning the notebook upside down and sideways to inscribe the first seventeen lines of ‘Solomon and the Witch’ on two, until then, blank pages in the midst of the revisions, Yeats befuddled such assumptions. (Also, an horary stands at one end of the notebook—no notes for *A Vision*, as reported in the MBY List; and the supposed draft correspondence is actually the essay ‘A People’s Theatre: A Letter to Lady Gregory,’ first published in *The Irish Statesman* in December 1919.)

Finneran committed the same error by failing to consult the folders in which are filed the unfinished play that Yeats based on material ‘associated by legend, story and tradition with the neighborhood of Thoor Ballylee or Ballylee Castle,’ to quote Yeats’s note to part II of the title poem of *The Tower* (100)—a note omitted in the Cornell volume (along with Yeats’s notes, generally, for some reason)—but amplified by Finneran in his mis-named *The Tower: A Facsimile Edition* (New York: Scribners, 2004). The cost to the Cornell series is that the oldest extant fragment of ‘The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid’ is missing there, for the poem demonstrably traces its origin from the conceits of dreaming and letter-writing in the play. The fragment (folio 1a) is accordingly filed with the manuscripts of a prose scenario labelled by Mrs. Yeats ‘MS of “A Play Begun and Never Finished”’. Like Yeats’s daunting schema of ‘The Geometrical Foundation of the Wheel,’ to which the poem relates in *AV*, the ‘complicated mathematical imagery’ is for the Caliph but a ‘crabbed thing not to be understood’. My account of the play and its making from 1918 to 1923, when the writing of the poem and a telegram from Stockholm terminally distracted Yeats from finishing his fifth Noh adaptation, is found in *Y* 17 (2007): 95–179. Both a transcription and photographic reproduction of folio 1a are presented there, as well as a collation of imagery against that of the fair copy (NLI 30,540) displayed in *The Tower* manuscripts edition, making it unnecessary to repeat the exhibit and commentary here. My guess is that the reason Yeats’s manuscript notes, NLI 13,589(1), were excluded from the company of appendices I–III, although acknowledged in the Census of Manuscripts, is that this ‘prose commentary’ does not agree with the ‘Preliminary Arrangements’ of *The Tower* poems in Appendix III (668–69) but with some unknown conception of the book, going a little beyond notes in the Facsimile Edition (105–10), excluding commentary on ‘The Dying Swan’

by Sturge Moore and discussing, instead, the Byzantine setting of 'Prelude to the Old Age of Queen Maeve,' 'Songs from a Play,' and 'From "Oedipus at Colonus".'

Fatigue can be a consequence of delay and vice versa, whether mortality is to blame or not. *The Tower* manuscripts, including a few rejected poems, deserved more unrelieved attention from its principal editor than it received until late. Withholding *The Tower* poems from Cornell to save them for the prototype of an ambitious 'Hypermedia Yeats' proved a vain distraction from both the project of thirty years and the Macmillan/Scribner critical edition of the Yeats *oeuvre*, beginning with Finneran's divisively received volume one, *The Poems* (1983), and followed by numerous others edited, co-edited, or coordinated by him with the publisher until his death on 17 November 2005. See, for example, Warwick Gould's 'Yeats Digitally Remastered,' a review of *The W. B. Yeats Collection*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1998) in *YA* 14: 334-49. There is something to be said for Herculean tasks performed by mortals, but there is also 'a law indifferent to blame or praise,' Yeats observed, in which overweening may exact a toll. Once, after laying out a problem concerning an alleged 'misdescription' by Roy Foster (on Yeats as opposed to the heroine of *The Countess Cathleen*), Finneran, who was finishing work his wife started for *The Collected Works*, vol. 3: *The Irish Dramatic Movement* (2003), complained to me: 'Every time I try to edit something I end up saying "doesn't anyone get anything right?", but then I recall my own mistakes. . . .' (his ellipsis). I liked him a great deal for saying that, in spite of reservations in other respects. He never shirked hard work, and I knew he was working desperately hard at the time. (My appraisal of the effort was published in *Irish Studies Review* 12.3 (2004), 360-61).

I was disappointed by the short introduction of the Cornell *Tower* volume, though, in part because of its shortness and because, comparatively speaking, it shows greater interest in issues of small consequence pertaining to the marked proofs of the *Edition de Luxe* than in much more consequential handwritten drafts and revisions prior to 1928, or even prior to the 1933 *Collected Poems*—as in the case of stanza 2 of part 'II' of 'Two Songs from a Play,' which appeared first in the play *The Resurrection in Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends* (1931) before joining *The Tower* poem in *Collected Poems*. So much credence is placed on proof copies NLI 30,241, NLI 30,262,

and NLI 30,007 that they are unnecessarily given abbreviations EdL(1), EdL(2), and EdL(3) in the Census. When he mistakenly believed that I was to follow my edition of '*The Dreaming of the Bones*' and '*Calvary*: *Manuscript Materials*' (2003), with an edition of the manuscripts of *The Resurrection*, Finneran wrote to me about whether two holograph pages (157 and 230) from the White Vellum Notebook, or indeed 'only those in 13,589 and *Later Poems*' should go into his volume as my supposed 'edition w[ould] obviously be published first.' I advised him by all means to use the songs as they appear in the play manuscripts because I thought it fitting and because *The Tower* had priority over *The Resurrection* unless Serena Guinness had made more progress than generally reported. As *The Resurrection* is still a pending volume in the series, I am pleased to see that my advice was followed, including all matter related to the 'unfolding and folding of the curtain' (see pp. 286-313) graphically set, and commendably, by Jared Curtis. The only quibble I have there is a general one, which has to do with the renumbering of folios. For instance, NLI 13,589(7), 1r and 2r have been dubbed NLI 13,589(7)(a), 27r and 28r in an effort to coordinate different states of the poem (a versus b) and to reflect the fact that Yeats numbered two of these folios '27' and '28' in relation to some unspecified arrangement of texts.

As I vouch for the vetting and coordination process between volumes, let it be said, too, that *The Tower* (1928): *Manuscript Materials* was especially made to fit with two other volumes in the poetic manuscripts side of the Cornell series, both edited by David R. Clark: *The Winding Stair* (1929): *Manuscript Materials* (1995) and *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems: Manuscript Materials* (1999). The reason for this is that the manuscripts imprecisely catalogued as NLI 13,589—'drafts, revisions etc. of poems published in *The Tower*, with some rejected poems' in thirty-two folders—are not at all sorted as a discrete body but complexly related by date. In the Census, NLI 13,589(25) a-e is only a partial inventory as such:

Materials for 'A Man Young and Old,' all on paper type A: (a) ink drafts of 'First Love,' (b) 'Human Dignity,' (c) 'The Mermaid,' and (d) 'The Empty Cup.' In the same folder is (e) four-page pencil and ink draft of 'From "Oedipus at Colonus"'(added to "A Man Young and Old" no later than EdL[2], probably included in EdL[1], but the proofs of this material have not survived).

Also included in NLI 13,589(25), at 19r, is the one-page prose subject of 'Blood and the Moon,' part I, as reproduced and transcribed by Clark in *The*

Winding Stair (1929). This goes without mention in *The Tower* (1928) because it has been the systematic practice of the poetry side of the Cornell Yeats to ignore details except as they apply to the poems of the subject collection. Most of the materials in the White Vellum Notebook, already mentioned, post-date *The Tower* poems, but we are not told that the new stanza for ‘Two Songs from a Play’ falls between the draft of a song for *The Resurrection* and that of ‘Crazy Jane on God’ dated 8 July 1931. NLI 13,589(29) relates to ‘First Confession’ and ‘Her Triumph,’ III and IV, respectively in ‘A Woman Young and Old’; and NLI 13,589(31) is supposed to contain, as misleadingly phrased in both catalogue and Census, ‘various versions of love poems (rejected) also ‘Wisdom’ and first drafts of Oedipus choruses,’ when in fact the ‘love poems’ were not rejected but constitute one poem in parts that eventually became two poems, ‘Chosen’ and ‘Parting,’ in ‘A Woman Young and Old.’ Thank goodness for Clark’s *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems: Manuscript Materials* to help make sense of the whole. *The Tower* volume seems generally a good fit with those companions and profits by them as precursors.

However, Finneran’s introduction—the longer part I of which is acknowledged to be a recasting of the introduction to his so-called *Facsimile Edition* (see editor’s footnote on p. xxxix), itself the retread of an earlier essay in the *South Atlantic Review* 63.1 (Winter 1998), 35–55—makes little account of Yeats’s complicated maneuverings of poems between the 1925 and 1937 editions of *A Vision*, when all but one of his poems featured in *AV* appeared in *The Tower*. The exception is ‘The Phases of the Moon,’ which originated from *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919). He had also quoted the first stanza of ‘Towards Break of Day,’ a poem from the collection *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921) that did not carry forward into *AVB* just as ‘The Fool by the Roadside’ had failed to do as the epigraph to ‘The Gates of Pluto’ when Book IV of *AV* was deleted. (See my ‘Guardians of the Tower and Stream: Yeats’s Unfinished Fifth Play for Dancers, 1918–1923’ in *YA* 17, 124–30, on placement of ‘The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid’ in *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems, AVA, and The Tower*.) Finneran finds it ‘important to note . . . that Macmillan had not included ‘The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid’ on their list of long poems; indeed, on the *Edition de Luxe* proofs it is treated as an integral part of *The Tower*, not even beginning on a new page’ (xxxv). Yet when the poem appeared in the ‘Narrative and Dramatic’ section of *Collected Poems*, he takes that to be significant evi-

dence that Yeats was no longer ‘wrapped up in the world of automatic writing and of spiritual visitations’ (xxxvi) as if the *Collected Poems* arrangement were the very last word, presumably because EdL(1), (2), and (3) range in Macmillan stamped dates from ‘18 SEP 1931’ to ‘7 OCT 1932.’

When so much might have been said about the quandary of manuscript materials for ‘A Man Young and Old’ because of their relation to Clark’s work, the extent of Finneran’s remarks about the sequence is as follows:

It is interesting to note that what Yeats did with ‘Two Songs from a Play’ for the *Collected Poems* is the precise opposite of what he did with ‘A Man Young and Old’ for the *Edition de Luxe* proofs. There, the addition of the Sophoclean ode provides a mythic analogue for the very human persona of the sequence; here, the mythic figures themselves provide an analogue for all individuals (xxxiv).

True, but the observation says nothing about why Yeats promoted ‘From “Oedipus at Colonus”’ into the sequence after *The Tower*’s first publication. In *Collected Poems* the poetic arrangement amounts to a complex medley of voices that balance out, in number and sense, its female complement in *The Winding Stair*. The ten songs of ‘A Man Young and Old’ in *The Tower* version of 1928 were the aggregate of poems first published in April 1926 and May 1927 in *The London Mercury* and then assembled into two numbered units in *October Blast* (1927). The units were called ‘The Young Countryman’ (numbered I-IV) and ‘The Old Countryman’ (I-VI), assigning a rough identity to speakers in the order maintained in *The Tower*. But in having made a single sequence of the two, Yeats gave the ensemble a title paired with a single, universalized speaker, a ‘Man’ young and old. The first four poems (‘First Love,’ ‘Human Dignity,’ ‘The Mermaid,’ and ‘The Death of the Hare’) are a young man’s story. The pivotal fifth poem (‘The Empty Cup’) is an old man’s reflection on ‘one’s youth as [a] cup that a mad man dying of thirst left half tasted,’ as Yeats observed in a letter to Olivia Shakespear (CL InteLex 4972). However, the pivotal poem of the sequence was not the central poem, nor could there be a numerically central one until the sequence was altered slightly in *Collected Poems*. Whereas in *The Winding Stair* (1929) an eleven-poem arrangement had been devised for ‘A Woman Young and Old,’ concluding with the choral translation ‘From “The Antigone”’, Yeats made an ingenious decision to transpose two external poems that had followed the male sequence in 1928: ‘The Three Monuments’ and ‘From “Oedipus at Colonus”’. Hence the latter became poem XI of ‘A Man Young and Old,’ complementing ‘From “The

Antigone" and making a middle lyric of 'His Memories' (VI), a poem since associated with a carnal union between Yeats (Paris) and Maud Gonne (Helen of Troy) in 1907. This remembered moment of rapture by the old male speaker of the poem has its complement (or Blakean 'contrary') in the plight of love in 'Chosen' ('A Woman Young and Old,' VI). Living the moment and accepting her fate as chosen, the female speaker offers a contrasting view to that of the embittered 'young man old' in the contrary sequence.

So one must conclude that a thin introduction, written originally for different purposes (but for the four pages of part II), is a weakness of *The Tower (1928): Manuscript Materials*. I have no reservations about the book's quite exemplary Chronology of Manuscripts (xli-xlvii-ii) and its two summary tables (xlviii-l). I regret not being acknowledged for the transcriptions I contributed and for the omission of photographic materials Richard Finneran inquired of me in September 1985 and again in January 2004 (see blank space on p. 272 facing 'CW' and 'WSU' transcripts) when he felt pressure keenly to provide the press with images he assumed I owned from a microfilm or 'some kind of copy . . . from which to produce the photographs.' He was right that I possessed microfilm copies (but only for certain plays) as well as photocopies made by Anne Yeats on her photocopy machine. Evidently, Richard Finneran had still a surprisingly long way to go then. The balance of archival queries, cross-checking, and arrangements for copies after January 2005 are credited to Jared Curtis and Ann Saddlemeyer, with the help of the series assistant editor, Declan Kiely. There are plenty of instances of indulgences in the reproduction of marked proof copies and typescripts that are transcribed on facing pages (e.g., in 'Owen Aherne and his Dancers') to confirm trends seen in earlier volumes of poetry. But this goes without saying, as well as graphic textual designs that optimize the amount of wasteful white space (see pp. 266-77 and 306-07). The number of pages in which duplicate holographs occur might have been reduced as the practice has been ingeniously avoided by volume editors outside the poetry series. While errors exist in the transcriptions, I find the latter to be generally quite good. I might have argued for placement of NLI 13,583, 1r and 2v, in an appendix as an unfinished poem rather than placed as an antecedent draft of 'The Road at My Door' in the poem 'Meditations

in Time of Civil War' (154-55). But, all things considered, I congratulate the volume's three editors for doing a good job under extremely unfortunate circumstances. In my judgment, the book is less than one could hope for but about what one might expect as the fulfillment of a commitment made long ago. It is the last of its kind. With only two volumes remaining on the plays, soon the great project will be finished.

Denis Donoghue, *On Eloquence* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2008), 199 + vii pp.

Sandra Clark

This short and beautiful book savours of a past age. It appears to originate from a discontent with the emphases current in the teaching of literature in universities, in particular with the ideological approaches which privilege the didactic over the aesthetic, and accordingly result in an indifference to eloquence, defined at one point (though there are many definitions) as ‘saying the right, beautiful thing, regardless of consequences’. It consists of seven essays, all very personal in tone, opening windows into Donoghue’s own reading practices and his well-stocked mind, with many passages illustrating the ways he likes to teach literature and the kind of close readings he employs to do this. He is eager from the start to distinguish eloquence from its ambitious relations, rhetoric and grandiloquence: the former is essentially persuasive, aimed at saying the right thing ‘at the right time to the right person or people’, the latter a more delicate matter of choosing the right words in the right order.

But how can one make such a choice? Donoghue allows that eloquence can be hard to achieve, a sign of freedom like hang-gliding (his own comparison), which can easily be mismanaged (though the result of this is not fatal). His own Church Latin education and the influence of various mentors helped him to recognise eloquence and understand something of what goes into its creation. These factors also bear on his concern with the resources of the English language, its ability to manage phrases and idioms from foreign languages; although Donoghue quotes frequently from non-English sources—Virgil, Dante, Flaubert—it is essentially eloquence achieved in English that is his focus. This is not to deny the wide range and diversity of texts covered in his meditations, and one of the pleasures of this book is the discovery (or for many, rediscovery) of those lines and phrases,

eloquent moments, which, as Donoghue says, break free of their contexts: 'She should have died hereafter', '... the seal's wide spindrift gaze toward paradise', 'The troubled midnight and the noon's repose', 'In the mountains, there you feel free', 'Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young', 'And sweet, reluctant, amorous delay', 'J'ai tout lu, se disait-elle', 'I coulda bin a contender', 'Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown', 'agnosco veteris vestigia flammae'. But it not only for these evocative snippets that one can savour this book; there also more sustained pieces of close-reading, of Melville's 'Bartleby, the Scrivener', for instance, of Ophelia's soliloquy about Hamlet's madness, of two passages from *To the Lighthouse* that make one return to the original with new eyes. Donoghue is a subtle and patient reader, with an acute ear for echoes and allusions, and his readings refresh the unfashionable idea that pleasure of a literary work is its real reason for existing.

On Eloquence is the work of someone who has spent a lifetime reading and thinking about words. He is sometimes impatient with the dissatisfaction with words as a tool expressed by some writers, Eliot for example; but some of his most interesting and suggestive discussions are of effects achieved as it were against the odds, of 'local acts of violence' in language, of 'the wrenching of language from the propriety of its normal reference', of eloquent endings 'achieved ... in zeal for a last-minute recovery' as at the end of *The Waves* or in King Lear's last address to Cordelia, or in the 'blind mouths' passage in 'Lycidas', where eloquence takes a form 'available somewhat desperately and nailbitingly at the outer limit of a language'. This book is short, rich, and inspiring; Donoghue writes beautifully, and although he separates eloquence from persuasion his writing makes its own case for eloquence.

Nicholas Grene, *Yeats's Poetic Codes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 247 pp.

Joseph M. Hassett

This lively book explores what Grene calls Yeats's 'poetic codes', which he defines as 'the codes of practice developed to create the poems and situate them in relation to the poet, the reader and their implied worlds'. Such an inquiry implicitly evokes Mallarmé's reminder that 'It is not with ideas that one makes poems, but with words'. Indeed, Grene would append 'and numbers' to Mallarmé's dictum. Dates are one of the primary coding devices he elucidates.

The six Yeats poems that include dates in their titles—'September 1913', 'On Those That Hated *The Playboy of the Western World*, 1907', 'Easter 1916', 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', 'Coole Park, 1929', and 'Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931'—are good examples of how dates function as codes. 'September 1913' and 'Easter 1916' are a particularly instructive pair. When the former was published in the 1914 Cuala edition of *Responsibilities*, anchoring its mood in the specific time of September 1913 consigned the heroic age to the past. By the time 'Easter 1916' was published—which did not occur until October, 1920—the dating of the latter poem not only 'announced a changed order of time, the start of a new epoch', but re-wrote the meaning of 'September 1913'. The dearth of heroes in 1913 tuned out not to be the end of an era after all, but merely a fallow period awaiting the rebirth of heroism in 1916. As Grene notes, when the two poems appear together in *Collected Poems*, the prior poem 'reads as though it is waiting for "Easter 1916" to be written and complete its meaning'.

The significance of a date in a Yeatsian title is less clear, if no less interesting a subject, in the one poem whose title consists entirely of a date,

'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', a poem composed in April 1921 with the title 'Thoughts upon the Present State of the World'. In that context, it made sense for the fourth section of the poem to refer to the pre-World War I era as a time when '[w]e [...] seven years ago | Talked of honour and of truth [...]''. This 'look-back' to 1914 was eliminated in favour of an implicit allusion to 1912 when, in *The Tower*, Yeats re-titled the poem 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' and added an apparent—but false—composition date of 1919 at the end of the published poem. The reasons for this change are unclear. Grene suggests that Yeats was trying to invoke the millennial change of 2000—so significant for his cyclic theory of history—but it is not clear that Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen invokes 2000. Indeed, Grene suggests that it heralds something just shy of twenty-twenty, a date without particular historical significance. Another possible explanation for the choice of 1919 is suggested by the fact that Yeats's daughter was born in 1919. Prior to her birth, he had anticipated that his child would be the avatar of the new cycle of history, and quizzed the spirits that he believed animated his wife's automatic writing as to why the avatar was expected so far in advance of the year 2000 (*YVP* 1, 467). Thus Yeats may have seen 1919 as the incipience of the new cycle of history. Or perhaps he just liked the sound.

The sound of the words is a forceful reminder that poems are made of words, a point illustrated by Grene's discussion of Yeats's use of birds. Birds, whether individually identified, such as herrings, sparrows, linnets, rooks, hawks, swallows, or swans, or merely named generically, 'provide linguistic binding through the ease with which they are rhymed.' Grene points out that, in seventeen out of the seventy instances of 'bird', and in eleven out of the fifty-eight mentions of 'birds', they yield rhyme words, bird being rhymed with heard six times, and birds with words eight times.

The use of place names also illustrates the prominence of words in the construction of the poems. Grene begins his discussion of place names with the interesting case of 'the drear Heart Lake' of 'The Host of the Air', as it appeared in *The Bookman* in 1893 under the title 'The Stolen Bride'. When the poem was collected in *The Wind Among the Reeds*, the name of the lake had changed from Heart to Hart. Grene shows that both such lakes actually exist in close proximity in County Sligo. Thus, while Yeats often uses place names to situate his poems in a particular locale, the 'Yeats country' of the poetry is nonetheless 'a country made up by the poet', even though it

can be—and is—visited by literary pilgrims.

Grene's discussion of the use of 'this' and 'that' and 'here' and 'there' illustrates both the strengths and limitations of analyzing the poems in terms of so-called codes. These particular markers can 'pinpoint micro moments in the mental or emotional life of the writer', but can equally be road signs pointing to 'delusively spatial poetic spaces'. Moreover, even when they function as helpful guideposts, they frequently show less than the whole picture. For example, Grene's careful contextual reading of the opening line of 'Sailing to Byzantium'—'That is no country for old men'—discerningly points to 'a general sense of contrasts between old and young', rather than attempting to identify the 'literal geography' of the country referred to in the poem. However, the book's general approach of eschewing context for text—its preference for the 'work of the poems' as opposed to the poet's work—precludes reference to the specific signs in the revealing early drafts of the poem that the ageing poet was attempting to come to grips with old age, and thus sought escape from sensual music to the spiritual realm of Byzantium.

Grene's remaining chapters are interesting both for their explicit content and for the way in which they implicitly raise the question of what it is that constitutes a 'poetic code'. Introducing this question, Grene cites an early suggestion by Richard Ellmann that 'we could try to codify the laws that govern the complexities of Yeats's poetry', and later explains that '[t]his book has been written out of a conviction that Yeats's poetic codes, his stylistic practices [...], his manipulations of tense and mood, are meaningful in themselves.' Yet it remains unclear what makes Yeats's use of particular moods and tenses a 'poetic code', rather than simply a use of a particular mood or tense.

The same question of what constitutes a code lurks throughout the discussion of Yeats's uses of the word 'dream' and the contrasting terms 'bitter' and 'sweet'. The range of meaning attributed to these Yeatsian favourites is itself a very interesting subject, but the meanings are so varied—and so frequently antithetical—that it is difficult to discern a code or a law governing their use.

Perhaps the effort to find a code—and inferentially a code-giver—behind the unruly antics of the poetic imagination reflects the underlying tension between the view that the words themselves are writing the poetry and the belief that the poet stands above the words controlling their deploy-

ment according to his own laws or codes. *Yeats's Poetic Codes* is an informative discussion of the way in which Yeats used words. Its effort to structure the discussion in terms of the concept of 'poetic codes' is a bonus that provides a provocative conceptual framework. Ellmann's goal of identifying the laws governing the complexities of Yeats's poetry is not yet achieved, but it is well and fruitfully begun.

W. B. Yeats, *The King of the Great Clock Tower and A Full Moon in March, Manuscript Materials*, ed. Richard Allen Cave (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), 448 pp.

Nicholas Grene

Richard Cave has a tangled story to tell in presenting the manuscript materials for these two interlocked plays, and he tells it with exemplary clarity and scrupulous precision. From 1927, Yeats's working relationship with Ninette de Valois and the Abbey School of Ballet that she led had made possible new productions of his dance plays: *The Only Jealousy of Emer* (recast as *Fighting the Waves*), *The Dreaming of the Bones* and *At the Hawk's Well*. When de Valois gave notice in 1934 that she would have to give up her Abbey connection to concentrate on her work in England, the first (prose) version of *The King of the Great Clock Tower* was planned to provide her with a vehicle for a farewell performance. De Valois had always made it a stipulation of her theatre work with Yeats that she would dance but not speak on stage. This, then, was made a key feature of the plot. The woman who appeared mysteriously a year before the action at the court of the King of the Great Clock Tower and was made his Queen has never told her name or place of origin. She sits silent on her cube throne, refusing to respond to the King's demands that she divulge her origins, refusing to speak to intercede for the Stroller who is about to be decapitated for his insolence to her, only rising finally to dance, as the Stroller prophesied she would, to greet the song sung by the severed head which she finally kisses. The play was conceived as early as November 1933, but the bulk of the composition appears to have come in the spring of 1934. The first extant draft, from quite late in this process, shows Yeats writing in alternative stage directions for the Peacock or 'an ordinary theatre' such as the Abbey, where in fact the play was premiered with great success, directed by Lennox Robinson, in July 1934.

For much of the time when the play had already gone into rehearsal, Yeats was in Rapallo where he showed the script to Pound. According to Yeats's own account in the Preface to the 1934 Cuala published text of the play, Pound's one-word response was 'putrid'. In fact, as Cave shows from an entry in Yeats's notebook/journal kept at the time, it was the much more tellingly damning judgement, 'Nobody language' (xlvi). Yeats was stung by this into trying to re-write the play making the nameless, placeless King of the Great Clock Tower an O'Rourke of Breffny and tying in the story to O'Rourke's ancestor who was married to Dervorgilla, legendary cause of the Norman invasion. He soon abandoned this effort, clearly seeing that, whatever about the individuation of the dialogue, the play depended for its effect on its abstract unlocated strangeness. However, associated with this phase of re-writing in the Rapallo notebook from this time in June 1934, are early versions of lyrics that provided the germ for his next re-conception of the play as *A Full Moon in March*.

Originally thought of as a reduced Noh-style version of the *King of the great Clock Tower*, *A Full Moon in March* was written, quite quickly by Yeats's standards, in the autumn of 1934. Once again, it was designed with a particular performer in mind, in this case the actress Margot Ruddock. But where de Valois would not speak on stage, Ruddock apparently could not dance—ironically, in that she is identified for most Yeats readers with his beautiful lyric 'Sweet Dancer'. So the King was cut from the action and the original triangle of King/Queen/Stroller was transformed into a face-off between a newly haughty, unmarried Queen and the Swineherd who, in all his matted hair and rags, offers to join the *Turandot*-style life or death singing contest for her hand. Ruddock was to play this strong speaking part in a mask, so that, at the climax of the dance before the severed head, a dancer could take over the role: Yeats seems to have hoped to continue to involve de Valois as well. Intriguingly, there was a possibility that *A Full Moon in March* might have been produced by the London-based Group Theatre that had staged Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes* in a spring 1935 season with plays by Eliot and Auden. This plan foundered in part because others involved did not share Yeats's besotted admiration for Ruddock's acting.

What is most striking in following the compositional sequence, spelled out so carefully by Cave in this edition, is the relationship between lyric and drama, prose and verse in Yeats's creativity. The occasion for *King of the Great Clock Tower* might have been theatrical, and the Cuala edition, as

Cave shows, contains detailed revisions based on Yeats's experience of the Abbey production. But one of Yeats's avowed motives in writing the play was to break his block in writing poetry which had extended for over a year since the death of Lady Gregory in 1932. This was a recurrent strategy, as he explained in a letter of 1921, when he was beginning to write the sequence eventually to become 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen'. 'I begin to find a difficulty in finding themes. I had this about twelve years ago & it passed over. I may have to start another Noh play & get caught up into it, if these poems turn out badly' (*CL InteLex* 3900). The concentration on writing choral lyrics for his plays for dancers was a way of re-gaining confidence as a lyric poet. But it worked the other way as well. The lyrics for the Attendants in *A Full Moon in March*, the opening song, 'Every loutish lad in love', and 'He had famished in a wilderness' that divides the acted from the danced section, preceded the drafting of the play. And by the time Yeats came to write *A Full Moon in March* near the end of 1934, he was in full flow, composing the 'Supernatural Songs' in which he pursued the same theme of the relationship between embodied time-driven sexual desire and some timeless transcendent version of it that animated the world.

It was this too that prompted the final stage in this story of intertextual generation, the re-writing of *King of the Great Clock Tower* in verse. Yeats was unhappy with 'Saddle and ride, I heard a man say', the original song for the severed head in the staged version of *King of the Great Clock Tower*, though he considered it good enough to be retained as an independent lyric in the 1935 collection *A Full Moon in March*. But the collection of images from his own earlier work that it represented, a sort of circus animals' reunion, perhaps did not seem right for the climactic song of the play, and he composed instead the more directly relevant 'Clip and lip and long for more' with its clanging final refrain, 'A moment more and it tolls midnight'. This led on then to the versifying of the prose dialogue of the play itself, with the assurance of the poet who, over the winter of 1934-35, was writing prolifically in poetry once again. It was Yeats's habitual practice, of course, to sketch his subject, his 'theme' as he called it, in prose before attempting to turn it into verse. We can see this strategy illustrated again throughout these manuscripts, so that the verse *King of the Great Clock Tower* may be considered as the logical final outcome of its prose predecessor, with *A Full Moon in March* a by-product of the revivifying poetic movement of the period around 1934-35.

As so often with the diaspora of Yeats manuscript materials, Cave has had to re-assemble his texts from their scattered archival homes: the Burns Library of Boston College, the British Library in London, the National Library in Dublin, Southern Illinois University Library, the libraries of the University of Chicago and the University of Texas at Austin. One can only admire the patience with which he has examined the evidence represented by these (often all but illegible) holograph drafts, corrected typescripts and proofs. He supplies a very full introduction setting out the chronological sequence, in so far as it can be established, and the implications of the detailed metamorphoses that the play texts underwent. The facsimile reproductions of manuscripts allow a reader to marvel at the skill and exactitude of the transcriptions on facing pages. The footnotes to the transcriptions not only provide added information and cross-referencing but minutely illuminating commentary. Throughout the edition, with its appendices including Arthur Duff's score for the lyrics in the original production of *King of the Great Clock Tower*, Cave shows his subtle understanding of the complex interaction of word and image, action, song and dance in the conception of these plays, what Yeats was to call with his inimitable spelling the 'complete asthetism' of the stage (*CL3* 674).

Helen Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), ix-xix + 428 pp.

Denis Donoghue

This book is so good—and so commanding—that perhaps the best way to review it is to dispute some points of principle and particle that have struck me while reading it: that way, readers will have a sense of some of the issues entailed. Besides, no book by Helen Vendler is a bowl of strawberries and cream.

I begin with the title, which strikes me as inapposite:

We dreamed that a great painter had been born
To cold Clare rock and Galway rock and thorn,
To that stern colour and that delicate line
That are our secret discipline
Wherein the gazing heart doubles her might (*VP* 326).

These lines from ‘In Memory of Major Robert Gregory’ are specific about the discipline they invoke. They also involve an almost philosophic distinction, clarified in both versions of *A Vision*, between the gaze and the glance: these are technical terms, as Yeats uses them. Donald Davie has paraphrased the lines well enough:

We attend to natural landscape, not for the sake of delighting in it, nor for what it may tell us of supernatural purpose or design, but so that the imperious personality, seeing itself there reflected, may become the more conscious of its power—‘the gazing heart doubles her might’.¹

Professor Vendler’s book has nothing to do with that discipline or its secrecy; she has other concerns.

¹ Donald Davie, *Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 174.

Three words together indicate the parameters of Professor Vendler's work in criticism: lyric, style, and form. The lyric poem is the centre of her concern: not the novel or the play. She has written on Shakespeare's sonnets, the poetries of George Herbert, Keats, Stevens, Yeats, and modern poetry since Whitman, always with emphasis on the lyric. But her sense of lyric has changed somewhat over the past few years. In *Soul Says: On Recent Poetry* (1995) she wrote:

The virtues of lyric—extreme compression, the appearance of spontaneity, an intense and expressive rhythm, a binding of sense by sound, a structure which enacts the experience represented, an abstraction from the heterogeneity of life, a dynamic play of semiotic and rhythmic 'destiny'—all are summoned to give a voice to the 'soul'—the self when it is alone with itself, when its socially constructed characteristics (race, class, color, gender, sexuality) are felt to be in abeyance. The biological characteristics ('black like me') are of course present, but in the lyric they can be reconstructed in opposition to their socially constructed form, occasioning one of lyric's most joyous self-proclaimings: 'I am I, am I; All creation shivers | With that sweet cry' (Yeats).²

But she did not explain how that abeyance is achieved, how the quasi-Yeatsian separation of soul from self could be effected, such that soul could clap its hands and sing, or why Yeats's sweet cry—a cry of need, by my reading, as much as of élan—could be glossed so single-mindedly as 'most joyous self-proclaiming'. In *Poets Thinking* (2004) and in *Invisible Listeners* (2005) there is no sign of the separation of soul from self, or of the abeyance of extraneous forces. The essential motive of lyric is now 'to incorporate all of reality into a single speaking voice . . . Lyric must express social content through a *single* voice encompassing response universally':³

Although in the usual lyric the speaker is alone, this solitude does not mean that he is without a social ambience. It means only that his current social conditions are presented as they are reflected on in solitude, embodied not in 'live' interaction with other persons but in lexical and intellectual reference.⁴

² Helen Vendler, *Soul Says: On Recent Poetry* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 6–7.

³ Helen Vendler, *Poets Thinking: Pope, Whitman, Dickinson, Yeats* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 130 n. 12.

⁴ Helen Vendler, *Invisible Listeners: Lyric Intimacy in Herbert, Whitman, and Ashberry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 5.

I don't think 'reflected on in solitude' is the same as the earlier 'soul'. I don't know either what degree of autonomy is claimed for the act of 'reflecting on'.

Professor Vendler thinks of lyric without misgiving, she does not seem to feel any qualms about it. But I recall a daunting sentence in Davie's *Czeslaw Milosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric*:

I have suggested, going for support to the writings of Milosz, that no concerned and ambitious poet of the present-day, aware of the enormities of twentieth-century history, can for long remain content with the privileged irresponsibility allowed to, or imposed on, the *lyric* poet [Davie's emphasis].⁵

In the same context, Davie quoted from one of John Butler Yeats's letters to his son William in 1906:

It is *quite possible to be lyrical and not poetical*—to be a poet it is first of all necessary to be a man. The high vitality and vivid experience, the impulses, doings and sufferings of a Tolstoi, a Shakespeare or a Dante—all are needed.⁶

It may be that Helen Vendler is using the word 'lyric' in a narrow sense that does not open itself to such questionings as Davie and JBY insist on, but a note to that effect might have been helpful.

Style, in Helen Vendler's usage, refers to a writer's typical expressive gesture, a pattern of speech to which he or she aspires or which comes 'naturally'. One of the epigraphs to *Our Secret Discipline* is taken from Yeats's journal for April 1909:

The element which in men of action corresponds to style in literature is the moral element. Books live almost entirely because of their style, and the men of action whose influence inspires movements after they are dead are those whose hold upon abstract law and high emotion lifts them above immediate circumstance.⁷

A writer's style is the pattern in his work to be discerned on a higher plane than that of the details. Yeats gives a beautiful account of it in 'Poetry and Tradition':

⁵ Donald Davie, *Czeslaw Milosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 29.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁷ W. B. Yeats, *Memoirs*, ed. by Denis Donoghue (London: Macmillan, 1972), 211.

In life courtesy and self-possession, and in the arts style, are the sensible impressions of the free mind, for both arise out of a deliberate shaping of all things, and from never being swept away, whatever the emotion, into confusion or dullness. The Japanese have numbered with heroic things courtesy at all times whatsoever, and though a writer, who has to withdraw so much of his thought out of his life that he may learn his craft, may find many his betters in daily courtesy, he should never be without style, which is but high breeding in words and in argument. He is indeed the creator of the standards of manners in their subtlety, for he alone can know the ancient records and be like some mystic courtier who has stolen the keys from the girdle of Time, and can wander where it please him amid the splendours of ancient Courts (*E&I* 253).

Vendler has clarified, as instances of the source of a particular style, Herbert's yearning to make the invisible God a visible, loving presence, friend to friend. In Yeats: 'As he surveys the data of life retrospectively in "Among School Children" and "The Circus Animals' Desertion", Yeats shows us the clearest proof that for him it was indispensable not only to think in images but to arrange chains of images in such a way as to make them become the structural, and revelatory, principle of much of his poetry'.⁸ I am not sure what a writer's 'thinking in images' entails. T. E. Hulme held that 'thought is prior to language and consists in the simultaneous presentation to the mind of two images. Language is only a more or less feeble way of doing this'.⁹ To which William Empson replied that 'a dog could not find its way home across a field if it had nothing in its head, at a moment of choice, except "a simultaneous presentment of two images"'.¹⁰ It is not clear what is supposed to go on between the two images: making a chain of them evidently requires sentences. Vendler often speaks of the words between the images as mere connectives, falling into invisibility. In *Poets Thinking* she reads 'The Circus Animals' Desertion' slowly and makes much of the 'shattering cascade of ten images' at the end. She has had second thoughts about her terminology: in revising the commentary for *Our Secret Discipline* she has changed 'images' to 'concrete nouns' (277) not the same things, I would have thought. I doubt that the cascading words are images; they are generic emblems, denoting not things but sorts of things. Even 'that raving slut | Who keeps the till' is an emblem, a sort of person,

⁸ Vendler, *Poets Thinking*, 118.

⁹ T. E. Hulme, 'Notes on Language and Style', in *Further Speculations*, ed. by Sam Hynes (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), 77-100 (p. 84).

¹⁰ William Empson, *Argufying: Essays on Literature and Culture*, ed. by John Haffenden (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1987), 115.

not someone you are likely to see behind a counter in Sligo but someone to be thought of generically as a slave of the mercenary class. Pound's 'Green arsenic smeared on an egg-white cloth, | Crushed strawberries!' is an image; so is William Carlos Williams's 'On the glass tray | a glass pitcher, the tumbler | turned down, by which | a key is lying—And the | immaculate white bed'; so is Antony's insult to Cleopatra, 'I found you as a morsel cold upon | Dead Caesar's trencher;' and so is Yeats's 'A shape with lion body and the head of a man'. The end of 'The Circus Animals' Desertion' is quite different. The only images that Yeats claims as 'masterful' in that poem are singular ones—Oisin, the Countess Cathleen, Cuchulain, the Fool, and the Blind Man—that 'grew in pure mind'. However, this little dispute would need to involve theories of imagery—not just Hulme, Pound, Aldington, H.D., and Flint—which Vendler has not shown much interest in.

Nor does she show much interest in poetic diction, grammar, and syntax. Diction: you would not learn from *Our Secret Discipline* why Yeats uses the word 'All' so repetitively ('all, all are in my thoughts to-night being dead') or how his use of it differs from Milton's in *Paradise Lost* or how he justifies his emphatic 'that'. Syntax: as in Donald Davie's *Articulate Energy* (1955). Grammar: as Francis Berry examined it in *Poet's Grammar* (1958). Although Vendler writes of 'Byzantium' at length and most perceptively, she doesn't bother with the quandary of grammar in lines 13-14 that troubles David Lloyd in *Anomalous States* (1993) or the standard reading of the last stanza of 'Among School Children' that Paul de Man questioned in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (1984). In 'Byzantium' Lloyd was puzzled by 'A mouth that has no moisture and no breath | Breathless mouths may summon'. What is the subject of that sentence? Or is the traffic two-way? Vendler's commentaries on *ottava rima* do not pause over these problems.

A poet's most important relations, she maintains, are to the genres available to him, the forms already there. Other matters can be left aside: someone will attend to them. The pressure exerted by Pound on Yeats's style is not germane. What Yeats learned by reading the English neo-Platonists, Donne, Nietzsche, Berkeley, Swedenborg, and much besides—and the possible effect such reading had on his style—is not work for this book.

Form, as Vendler writes of it, is what R. P. Blackmur called 'executive form', meaning the genres and technical values by which poetry is distinguished from prose or conversation: not only epic, narrative, ode, sonnet,

ballad, and so forth but the details of stanza, *rime riche*, *ottava rima*, *terza rima*, blank verse, rhyme, trimeters, tetrameters, all the means by which ‘theoretic form’ is administered. ‘A poem is an experience in time activated by its forms, from the phonetic to the structural’ (5). Vendler also notes that forms ‘can be ‘contradicted’ by the poet’s using them against their natural grain’ (239–240). Yeats often did something mainly because he had not done it before. ‘We respect in him his insouciant way of thinking, “I haven’t yet done *this*”—and then, even on his deathbed, doing it’ (370).

Vendler shows, most convincingly, that Yeats submitted himself to the traditions of English poetry, its forms and metres. In ‘Literature and the Living Voice’ and other essays he went out of his way to distinguish Irish culture from English, but in his poetic mind he listened to the rhythms of English poetry and would not be deterred from them. When he wrote ‘In Memory of Major Robert Gregory’, he listened to Cowley’s ‘On the Death of Mr. William Hervey’, and imitated its octave-stanza form, as again in ‘A Prayer for My Daughter’ and ‘Colonus’ Praise’. In the Gregory poem he resorted to an earlier English expression of grief to impel his own.

In *Our Secret Discipline* Vendler scolds the scholars of Yeats for neglecting Yeats’s labour in these formal respects; in effect, for not doing what she has now done. She speaks of ‘their usual indifference to form in Yeats’. ‘We understand, too, that form for Yeats has ideological resonance: that some forms say “stability and order”, or “aristocracy” or “Romance”, while others say “complexity of thought” or “folk-material” or “essence of something”’ (78). She would like to be able to correlate each form with an ideological commitment, but sometimes the effort is a strain. ‘What else did the trimeter alternately rhymed quatrain mean to Yeats, in addition to its link, in his mind, to gallant, revolutionary nationalist men, and nationalistic Platonic Forms such as the fisherman?’ (195).

On the whole, Vendler is justified in scolding her colleagues. But they could reply, perhaps shamefacedly, that they have many pressing matters to deal with. Yeats involved his poems in far more external lore than, say, Stevens or Eliot did: Sligo, Dublin, the Hermetic Society, London, reading Blake, Chaucer and Spenser, Olivia Shakespear, the Golden Dawn, Maud Gonne, the Abbey Theatre, Nietzsche, Synge’s commotion, the Hugh Lane fracas, the Easter Rising, Iseult Gonne, marriage to George, the Automatic Writing, the Troubles, the Civil War, the Free State, Shakespeare, Swedenborg, Berkeley, Kevin O’Higgins, censorship, General O’Duffy,

Fascism, Mussolini, Gentile, the impending War; not to speak, as he often did, of more immediately personal and emotive matters. Vendler would say, I imagine, that these are motifs for the biographer, they should not concern the literary critic. In a strict sense, she is right. It is an immense relief to hear her say in *Our Secret Discipline*:

Here, as I comment on a poem, I aim to follow the poet's creative thinking as it motivates the evolution of the poem. Nor do I want to argue with the poems; poems are hypothetical sites of speculation, not position papers. They do not exist on the same plane as actual life; they are not votes, they are not uttered from a podium or a pulpit, they are not essays. They are products of reverie (xiv).

This is written with Vendler's characteristic verve: at last, I am delighted to say, a major critic of Yeats has been bold enough to tell her colleagues to mind their proper business. But then I wonder whether 'speculation' doesn't undermine the serious claim we regularly make for poetry: it seems to make the poet light, if not light-headed, as if he were merely engaged in making enclosures of hypotheses. I remain edified by Davie's argument with Milosz's 'No More', while recognizing that Davie and Vendler are critics of different persuasions. I recoil, too, from Vendler's scolding by remembering, without putting a strain on my imperfect memory, scholars who have read Yeats in the ways that Vendler has recommended and practiced: I think of Roman Jakobson's essay on 'The Sorrow of Love' in *Language in Literature* (1987), Leo Spitzer's essay on 'Leda and the Swan' in *Essays on English and American Literature* (1962), Frank Kermode's chapter on 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory' in *Romantic Image* (1957) and Paul de Man's elaborate study (again in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*) of Yeats's early style and changes of style. Such writings could only be ignored—and Vendler ignores them—if you insisted on a very narrow definition of lyric, style, and form. Indeed, Vendler is strikingly inattentive even to her masters. Writing about the two poems of Byzantium, she assumes that what Empson says of them in *Using Biography* (1984) need not come into the reckoning. Or what he says of 'Who Goes with Fergus?' in *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930). She might also have pondered Edmund Wilson's remark, in *The Triple Thinkers* (1938, 1948):

The old iambic pentameters have no longer any relation whatever to the tempo and

language of our lives. Yeats was the last who could write them, and he only because he inhabited, in Ireland and in imagination, a grandiose anachronistic world.¹¹

In fact, Vendler's commentaries on the major poems, in *Poets Thinking* and *Our Secret Discipline* alike, include the same kind of material, and similar kinds of interpretation, that other critics have produced. She does just as much paraphrasing as any critic who has never heard that in the best circles it is forbidden. When she comments on 'Among School Children', she provides the standard information about Senator Yeats, the Montessori school in Waterford, Maud Gonne then and now, Leda and Zeus, Plato and the egg. She gives the gist of the poem, without embarrassment and very usefully indeed, and offers a better account of the 'Presences' than any I have seen elsewhere. Then—but only then—she moves on to an analysis of the poem as an ode using the *ottava rima* stanza. She holds that Yeats associated this stanza with aristocratic culture and the patronage of the arts which it enabled in Urbino, Ferrara, and Florence, instances of which he saw in his trip to Italy with Lady Gregory and her son Robert in 1907. Strange that it took him twenty years to make the association in poems worthy of it.

The scolded critics might also ask pardon by noting that literary criticism, as practiced in *Our Secret Discipline*, is arduous work, often a hard slog among stanza forms, end-rhymes, pentameters and tetrameters. Vendler concedes this. 'It may sometimes be wearying, for critic and reader alike, to subject a single poetic form, in all its variety, to description and analysis, but it is the only way to see what the poet-as-poet spent his days doing, and to explain the ventures of his aesthetic within the single form' (111). It is indeed. Not everyone wants to write sentences such as these, even if they could, about 'He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven':

Here, as elsewhere in *The Wind Among the Reeds*, Yeats has departed from his earlier iambic habit in order to explore dactylic and anapestic feet; this poem emphasizes a dactylic rhythm ('blue and the dim and the dark cloths') in its first, counterfactual, unit (lines 1-5), but an anapestic and iambic one in its second, narrative part (lines 6-8). The yearning intensity of the counterfactual is borne by the ictus of the dactyl 'Had I the'; the proud humility of the narrative is translated by the poem's progress into the gentleness of a partially anapestic meter: 'I have spread', etc (92-93).

Incidentally, I read 'Had I...' as an iamb, like the other feet in that line.

¹¹ Edmund Wilson, *The Triple Thinkers: Twelve Essays on Literary Subjects* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 26-27.

Vendler acknowledges that her criticism in *Our Secret Discipline* and *Poets Thinking* is often dry work. She has quoted, in self-defence, a passage from the second of Wordsworth's 'Essays upon Epitaphs':

Minute criticism is in its nature irksome; and, as commonly practiced in books and conversation, is both irksome and injurious. Yet every mind must occasionally be exercised in this discipline, else it cannot learn the art of bringing words rigorously to the test of thoughts; and these again to a comparison with things, their archetypes; contemplated first in themselves, and secondly in relation to each other; in all which processes the mind must be skilful, otherwise it will be perpetually imposed upon.¹²

Not that a defence of *Our Secret Discipline* is necessary.

A question arises: will Vendler's commentaries on the poems in terms of their genres rather than their themes and local provocations change the standard sense of Yeats's style? By the standard sense I mean the understanding that he spent nearly twenty years trying to find his voice—however we further define that project; that he found it in *In the Seven Woods* (1904) and developed it majestically in the long travail of *The Green Helmet*, *Responsibilities*, *The Wild Swans at Coole*, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, *The Tower*, and *The Winding Stair* (1933); that from *Words for Music Perhaps* (1932) to his last poems he permitted himself many improprieties and put his achieved lyric style at risk in raucous ballads and marching songs, such that he had some trouble steadyng his style for the glories of 'The Statues', 'The Black Tower', and 'Cuchulain Comforted'. Readers of *Our Secret Discipline* will ask themselves whether or not this fairly common view of Yeats's lyric style can stand. They may find it confirmed by Vendler's analyses and immensely enriched by their detail. Or they may be persuaded that Yeats's fidelity to the genres he practiced qualifies the trajectory of the common view; that he was faithful to them even in the act of contradicting them. Does the wild old wicked man remain loyal to the genres, even when he seems to veer from the stylistic trajectory the scholars have assigned to him? *Our Secret Discipline* has presented readers with a most original set of issues.

The book contains detailed commentaries on—by my count—about fifty-five poems, arranged not chronologically or thematically but in group-

¹² Wordsworth's *Literary Criticism*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 148. Quoted in part in Vendler, *Poets Thinking*, 122, n. 3.

ings of genres. The conduct of stanzas is Vendler's main concern. Some of the commentaries are long because they include whatever background information Vendler deems necessary. Hard poems are paraphrased before the minute, syllabic work of analysis begins. The implied readers are, I suppose, graduate students and professors. Vendler assumes that they will have the difference between hypotaxis and parataxis at their finger-tips and that anaphora does not need to be explained. Whether or not undergraduates, even at Harvard, can cope with these technical terms is a cultural question. Meanwhile it remains to be said that Professor Vendler has written a magnificent—and edifyingly patient—book. Especially superb are the commentaries on 'The Black Tower', 'Meru', 'In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz', 'The Man and the Echo', 'A Prayer for My Daughter', and 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul'. My favorite chapter is the one on *ottava rima*, where Vendler achieves a style answerable to the noble stanzas she addresses.

Ronald Schuchard, *The Last Minstrels: Yeats and the Revival of the Bardic Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xxvi + 446 pp.

Matthew Campbell

Even for Yeatsians, mention of W. B. Yeats and Florence Farr's long experimentation with the chanting of verse to the accompaniment of Arnold Dolmetsch's psaltery can evoke exasperation, if not mockery. Here is George Moore, relaying some gossip about rehearsals for an 1899 production of *The Countess Cathleen*:

[Edward Martyn] had come to tell me that Yeats had that morning turned up to rehearsal, and was now explaining his method of speaking verse to the actors, while the lady in the green cloak [Farr] gave illustration of it on a psaltery. At such news as this a man cries Great God! and pales. For sure I paled, and besought Edward not to rack my nerves with a description of the instrument or the lady's execution upon it (quoted Schuchard, 39n).

This is Moore in full begruder's mode—even if Ronald Schuchard tells us that it was a fiction made up for *Hail and Farewell*, since Dolmetsch didn't invent the psaltery until 1901. The picture of Yeats instructing puzzled if not resistant actors in the correct manner of reciting his verse while Farr sounded the psaltery 'in all the chromatic intervals within the range of the speaking voice' (54) is repeated throughout this fascinating book. The whole project has long been considered at worst an embarrassment and at best a scheme to reinvigorate verse-drama which spectacularly failed to catch on.

Schuchard doesn't deny us the humour of those evenings when the chanting performances didn't work. But future readers of Yeats can no longer dismiss them as amateur theatricals: Farr and Mrs Patrick Campbell, both key figures in the performance history of these experiments, were Shavian and Shakespearean stars of the London stage, and without the acting talents of Molly Allgood and Frank and Willie Fay, many Irish

theatrical successes, and not just those of Yeats, would never have happened. The loss of the Fays from the Abbey Theatre, partially over the matter of chanting verse dramas, seems to have been the only serious artistic casualty of Yeats's ideas about performance. Indeed, other types of casualty might in Yeats's own self-mythology have followed from the chanting. Schuchard refreshes the actual verbal performance of the most momentous events in Irish theatrical historiography, the 1902 performance of *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, with Maud Gonne in the title role. The play is described taking on the strange mystical intensity of Gonne's chanted performance, matching the political intensity which has attracted and repulsed critics of all hues. Schuchard's account offers ammunition for either sceptics or revisionists: Gonne said she recited the final speeches 'to an air she heard in a dream'; Arthur Griffith was among those in the profoundly-moved audience who stood up to sing 'A Nation Once Again' at the final curtain.

This book isn't quite literary history or biography, although it offers much in those fields, particularly in the voluminous scholarship of its wonderfully rich footnotes. Rather it is a literary biography of an aesthetic idea and those artists who functioned as characters in the story of that idea. It is based around Yeats's attempt to bring together what he called 'the living voice' with printed verse and music in verse-performance. Schuchard adds in the first stirrings of the early music movement and the history of early-twentieth-century national theatres, in England as well as Ireland. He describes the unexpected influence that such folk material could have on a poetic modernism wrenching from the visual preoccupations of imagism to the aural problems of the cadences of *vers libre* by Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot after the example of the success of the chanting in Yeats's Noh plays. Above all, this book is a history of performers and their performances and lectures, usually carried out in drawing rooms or small theatres—though at one point Yeats lectured to six hundred people at Carnegie Hall. In a bravura chapter in the centre of the book, Schuchard reconstructs the lectures which were to find print in the 'Literature and the Living Voice' essay from newspaper reports of Yeats's lecture tours in Scotland, England and Ireland in 1906 and 1907. He pictures a series of rapt audiences in mercantile provincial towns ('Dundee, the practical and commercial'; 'busy, practical Leeds') carried away by Yeats's vision of the 'spiritual democracy' of individual and community in a place like the West of Ireland, where the

tradition persists of performing the folk arts of poetry and song.

So, given the efforts of so many, and particularly the messianic zeal of the pre-eminent poet of the day, why didn't the chanting catch on? Even given Yeats's avowedly elitist poetics, this was supposedly a movement demonstrating spiritual democracy, and as such ultimately of the 'folk'. However briefly, Pound and Eliot were impressed. Before Schuchard, the critic's answer would have been fairly easy, and it goes along these lines, as provided by Yeats himself:

An English musical paper said the other day, in commenting on something I had written, 'Owing to musical necessities, vowels must be lengthened in singing to an extent which in speech would be ludicrous if not impossible'. I have but one art, that of speech, and my feeling for music dissociated from speech is very slight, and listening as I do to the words with the better part of my attention, there is no modern song sung in the modern way that is not to my taste 'ludicrous' and 'impossible'. I hear with older ears than the musician and the songs of country people and of sailors delight me.¹

That last sentence is so Parnassian, we might suspect a joke, and Schuchard suggests that the poet rather played up his famous tin ear—Yeats, 'cultivated his tone-deafness as part of his public aspect, willingly providing many astonished friends with the many tone-deaf anecdotes (that he could not recognise the tune of 'God Save the Queen') recorded in memoirs' (86).

Yeats said, beautifully, that the microphone was 'a little oblong of paper like a visiting card' (342)—that is, a relic which conveys a just-missed human presence. But leaving aside the scripts and recordings of the radio broadcasts he made some thirty years after his first acquaintance with the psaltery, such annotated examples of the chanted performances that have come down to us do suggest that sound is frequently encouraged not to seem an echo to the sense. Take what we might call one of the main characters in this story, Aleel's song, 'Impetuous heart' in *The Countess Cathleen*. The little lyric was to be performed by Florence Farr across the world, and to be moved around the play in all of its numerous performances and revisions. On March 24, 1902, seven years after it had been added to the 1895 version, Yeats chanted it to Dolmetsch, who 'set' it to a musical accompaniment which mainly amounted to sounding droned chords throughout the spoken performance. But that performance was also 'set' in print, with each

¹ 'Literature and the Living Voice', collected in 'The Irish Dramatic Movement' (*Ex* 219).

syllable marked. As Yeats says, ‘The marks of long and short over the syllables are not marks of scansion, but show the syllables one makes the voice hurry or linger over’ (E&I 17). The speaking score looks like this:

/ / x x / / / / /
 Impetuous heart be still, be still,
 / / x . x / / / x . x /
 Your sorrowful love may never be told,
 / x . / / x / x /
 Cover it up with a lonely tune.
 / x x / / / x x /
 He who could bend all things to his will
 / x / x / / x / x x /
 Has covered the door of the infinite fold
 / x / / x x / x / /
 With the pale stars and the wandering moon.²

What these stress marks establish is a speaking performance which doesn’t seem to follow sense. Neither does it seem to bear out Yeats’s later retrospective statement on his practice: ‘I tried to make the language of poetry coincide with that of normal passionate speech.’ It certainly challenges the rules of conventional scansion. ‘Bé still, bé still’ or ‘bénd áll thíngs’ or ‘wán-deríng moón’ or most difficult of all, ‘hás covér’d the doór’ just don’t sound like English if pronounced as required here. The long stress overrules the short vowels demanded by reading simply for sense.

This isn’t quite the notation of a quantitative scansion either: the addition of music would mean that the vowels would be far removed from normal ‘speech’ yet never quite ‘song’. Schuchard is very good on the significance of Yeats’s reading in Coventry Patmore’s ‘Essay on English Metrical Law’ (266-67), but he doesn’t quite follow this up into a consideration of the great fascination of early-twentieth century British and American philology with the vexed question of the prosody of English poetry. This found its apogee in George Saintsbury’s great *History of English Prosody* (1906-10), the publication of which is concurrent with the first experiments with Yeats’s chanting. For those who wrote under the influence of this philology, the matter of a quantitative versus a syllabic prosody was a debate nearly lost to the reader of modern poetry by the shift to *vers libre* a decade or so later: the work of Yeats’s elders and contemporaries.

² E&I, 17: see Schuchard, 58-60. The poem ended up at the end of Scene iv of *The Countess Cathleen*, but was not extracted for editions of the *Poems*.

raries, Robert Bridges, Thomas Hardy, Edward Thomas and Wilfrid Owen show its consistent influence.

Schuchard does, though, alert us to the views of one late contributor to this critical debate, the Irish poet and critic Thomas MacDonagh, commemorated in 'Easter 1916' but known to Yeats through his work on the quantitative verse of Thomas Campion. In his Campion dissertation, MacDonagh had praised the 'wandering' quality of Yeats in poems like 'Impetuous Heart' because he thought it derived from Irish traditional music. (Yeats was consistently delighted to be told his rhythms had a basis in folksong, an influence the Anglophone and non-music-reading poet felt he had absorbed telepathically from the spirits of the Irish bards (315).) MacDonagh calls what Yeats is doing, 'chant-verse, overflowing both song-verse and speech-verse' (Schuchard, 85). The older poet was very pleased with this construction when he read it in 1913, but MacDonagh's violent death was to mean that the prosodic work Yeats wanted him to do on 'chant-verse' was not to materialise. The fate of MacDonagh is one of the many poignant sub-plots of this biography of an idea, but Pound, for one, was to invoke MacDonagh's later work on Irish verse in English as an influence on the development of *vers libre* to rank with that of Yeats.

It is maybe an actor and not a poet who suggested the main artistic reason why this chant-verse failed, and Schuchard's story becomes that of one of the last hurrahs of verse drama (before Eliot) on English-speaking stages. According to Frank Fay, Yeats told him 'that I [Fay] cared for nothing but beautiful speech and he cared for nothing but beautiful words'. Fay and Yeats's artistic differences were to result in the actor and director leaving the Abbey in 1907. Yeats didn't want him back in 1910: 'I had sooner not have him teaching them to sing the verse & getting cross when I object'. What might work for Synge's singing prose speech, would not work for Yeats's chant-verse. But the Yeats / Fay distinction between 'beautiful speech' (which might paradoxically be sung) and 'beautiful words' (separated from their cadence by the accents placed on them by the artificial chant) places us right at the limits of the challenges to realism mounted by Yeats and Farr in their experiments in concert hall and theatre.

That challenge of verse drama, not just to dramatic realism but also to the spoken performance of lyric poetry, is put most strongly in the 'Speaking to the Psaltery' essay of 1902, rescued by Schuchard as one of Yeats's central critical statements. The key passage goes thus:

All art is, indeed, a monotony in external things for the sake of an interior variety, a sacrifice of gross effects to subtle effects, an asceticism of the imagination. But this new art, new in modern life, I mean, will have to train its hearers as well as its speakers, for it takes time to surrender gladly the gross effects one is accustomed to, and one may well find mere monotony at first where one soon learns to find a variety as incalculable as in the outline of faces or in the expression of eyes. Modern acting and recitation have taught us to fix our attention on the gross effects till we have come to think gesture, and the intonation that copies the accidental surface of life, more important than the rhythm; and yet we understand theoretically that it is precisely this rhythm that separates good writing from bad, that is the glimmer, the fragrance, the spirit of all intense literature (*E&I* 18).

Monotony is set against variety and both terms switch their expected positioning in the hierarchy of taste. One of the wonderful things about this passage is the way that Yeats continually refers sound to space, thus monotony goes from the external to the interior, eventually superceding the varieties of theatrical facial expression. When 'rhythm' comes in, it is used to tell against 'surface', but it in turn takes on a sensual image-cadence which moves from glimmer to fragrance to spirit. The intensity is in the monotone and the monotone is never gross.

This is not very helpful as writing about prosody, but it might be more appropriate as a beautifully opaque instruction about performance. Yeats appended notes by Florence Farr to versions of 'Speaking to the Psaltery' in his collected essays, quite rightly according her joint authorship in this project. And while we have recordings of Yeats's voice, Farr's performance is the opaque element lost to us. Schuchard does much to recreate her performances through his immense reading in letters, biographies, newspapers and indeed the ever-shifting, ever-revised printed texts. Most readers of modern verse have been relayed a memory of something faintly ludicrous, indeed many of the witnesses recorded here did find the performances so. But readers might be asked to follow Farr's story through this book. Schuchard is quite clear on her influence: when she left England to work as a teacher in Ceylon in 1912, the loss of her voice from the chanted poems, 'spelled the end of the new art' (296). Farr's death in 1917 was followed by the surrender of her voice and her music into print: 'because now that she is dead', Yeats wrote, 'it is part of an attempt, which seemed to me important, to recover an art once common and now lost' (334). *The Last Minstrels* recovers that art again for us.

Fiorenzo Fantaccini, *W. B. Yeats e la cultura italiana* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2008), 359 pp.¹

K. P. S. Jochum

There is no end of studies charting the various influences on the work and thought of W. B. Yeats, or the importance which English and Irish writers, but also those from non-English speaking countries, had for him. Leaving aside the more exotic areas of Indian theosophy and Japanese theatre and concentrating on continental European countries, one will find an extensive literature on the traces of French symbolist poetry, German and Italian literature and philosophy, and even Scandinavian drama in Yeats's writing. The reverse process, the impact he had on European literature and culture, has not been studied as extensively. There are two main reasons for this neglect: The impact is less pronounced, and there are not many scholars capable of, or interested in, undertaking such an investigation.²

For this reason, *W. B. Yeats e la cultura italiana* by Fiorenzo Fantaccini, an Italian academic based in Florence, is a welcome addition to Yeats scholarship. Both in thoroughness and comprehensiveness his book advances considerably on the few previous and much shorter attempts (some by Fantaccini himself) to account for the Italian Yeats reception.

Fantaccini proposes to deal with both sides of this literary traffic. In the first of the book's three parts, he considers Yeats's knowledge and use of five Italian poets and writers: Dante, Castiglione, Vico, Croce, and Gentile. To this he adds a discussion of another representative of Italian culture, Mario Manlio Rossi, about whose relationship with Yeats very little has been writ-

¹ The book is available both as book-on-demand and as an internet resource (free access) through the publisher's website at: <http://www.fupress.com/index.asp>

² One of the few studies is *The Reception of W. B. Yeats in Europe* (London: Continuum, 2006), a collection of essays, edited by the present reviewer, to which Fantaccini has contributed an earlier version of parts of his book.

ten, and to whom Fantaccini pays considerable attention. The second part discusses Yeats's influence on four Italian poets and their Yeats translations, Eugenio Montale, Lucio Piccolo, Sergio Solmi, and Giovanni Giudici. These translations or, in the case of Piccolo, appropriations, have not had the critical attention which they deserve. The third part is an extensive research report, covering one hundred and one years of Italian Yeats reception, ranging from the strictly academic to the popular and ending in 2005.

There are several aspects of Italian culture, which are deliberately excluded from Fantaccini's account, partly because they have been dealt with by others. Italian art was of great interest to Yeats, but this area has been a well-researched subject since Giorgio Melchiori's ground-breaking *The Whole Mystery of Art* (1960). The reflection of the classical tradition in Yeats's work has been described extensively by Brian Arkins and Peter Liebregts.³ Yeats's view of Italian politics, however, remains a somewhat uncharted terrain and would merit a separate study.

According to Fantaccini, Yeats's use of Dante was governed by his search for unity in a fragmented modern world. His famous concepts of Unity of Being and Unity of Culture are directly related to his reading of medieval and Renaissance Italian literature, of which Dante is the 'figura centrale' (20). Fantaccini notes, however, that other modernist writers, such as Pound, Eliot, and Joyce, had a more direct access to Dante than Yeats, who had to rely on translations. By comparison, Yeats's approach was somewhat 'naïve' (21). At its centre stands the idea that 'the poet has need of a guide and of a vision' (22). Much of the Dante chapter is concerned with tracing Dantean echoes and images in Yeats's works from the early narrative prose to the late poems. Special attention is given to *A Vision* and 'Ego Dominus Tuus'.

Fantaccini begins his chapter on Castiglione by pointing out that the beginning of Yeats's interest in the Italian Renaissance coincides to some extent with the creation of an Irish national theatre in the early years of the 20th century and with formulating the ideas underlying the enterprise. The new theatre should pave the way for a new Irish society, whose 'model [is] Renaissance society' (34). Significantly, this was also the time when Yeats began to read Castiglione's *The Courtier* (in translation) and made his first

³ Brian Arkins, *Builders of My Soul: Greek and Roman Themes in Yeats* (Gerrards Cross: Smythe, 1990); Peter Th. M. G. Liebregts, *Centaurs in the Twilight: W. B. Yeats's Use of the Classical Tradition* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993).

visit to Italy (in April-May 1907). Castiglione's influence is discernible in such poems as 'To a Wealthy Man', 'The People', and 'For Anne Gregory'. In Yeats's eyes, Castiglione's aristocratic world had its counterpart in Lady Gregory's Coole Park. The Italian Renaissance provided him with the idea of the union of artist and aristocrat; from Castiglione in particular Yeats derived the cherished notions of recklessness and nonchalance ('sprezzatura'). Reading him 'appears to have constituted a crucial moment in the process of refinement of [Yeats's] style and formal choices' (44).

As is well known, Yeats discovered Vico not directly, but in Croce's interpretation and was influenced by it. He owned Croce's *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico* (English translation of 1913); he underlined several passages, which are quoted by Fantaccini. Regrettably, he quotes the Italian originals, not the translation; it would have been instructive to see the exact phrases, which caught Yeats's attention. Yeats adopted Vico's concept of Man the Creator ('uomo creatore'), who 'made up the whole', as he expresses it in 'The Tower'. Yeats also marked Croce's definition 'of the spirit as development or, to use the terminology peculiar to Vico, as process or unfolding' (46). Various poems, 'Vacillation', 'Remorse for Intemperate Speech,' and others, as well as *A Vision* are linked by Fantaccini to Viconian concepts as transmitted by Croce and annotated by Yeats. Fantaccini pays due attention to Vico's cyclical theory and its reverberations in Yeats's philosophy; finally, he discusses the opposition which Yeats set up between Vico and another of his literary ancestors, Jonathan Swift.

Croce's importance was not only that of an interpreter of Vico; Yeats also read several other of his books, because he was attracted by Italian idealist philosophy. Croce's books in his library show extensive marks of perusal. 'Many are the similarities' between Croce's and Yeats's 'system', Fantaccini asserts on the evidence of relevant passages in *A Vision* (57), which he explains in detail. Yeats's annotations are valuable glosses on some poems ('The Tower', 'Sailing to Byzantium', and 'Death'); moreover, they confirm that reading Croce helped him to clarify his view of Berkeley.

While Croce provided support for Yeats's philosophical speculations, Gentile inspired educational ideas. These were both practical and in a general sense political. Yeats's remarks suggest that he admired Gentile's success in remodelling a national educational system; evidently he hoped that something similar could be achieved in Ireland. Predictably, much of the chapter on Gentile is devoted to his importance for an understanding

of 'Among School Children'. Fantaccini is aware of the superb treatment of this relationship by Donald T. Torchiana, but he advances on it by presenting a more systematic analysis of Gentile's ideas and by citing those passages which Yeats underlined, again in the Italian original and not in the English translation, of *The Reform of Education* (1922).⁴

The most original chapter in the first part of Fantaccini's book is that on Mario Manlio Rossi, whose relationship to Yeats he is the first to discuss comprehensively. He makes good use of the Yeats-Rossi correspondence, preserved in the Archivio Rossi of the Biblioteca Municipale in Reggio Emilia. All of Yeats's letters are now available in *CL InteLex*. With one exception, all of Rossi's letters are in *LTWBY*; the exception being a letter of 28 June 1934, in which Rossi answers a previous request by Yeats to give his opinion of J. W. Dunne's *An Experiment with Time* (94). Fantaccini also quotes at length from a letter written by Rossi to Austin Clarke on 2 October 1968, recording his first impression of Yeats and Lady Gregory, and later visits to Coole Park in the 1950s and 1960s, when he saw the ruins of everything Yeats and Lady Gregory had stood for (74-75, 90-91). To conclude the chapter Fantaccini prints most of a long letter from Elizabeth Corbet Yeats ('Lolly') to Rossi, written a few days after her brother's death (95-96).

The biographical connections between Yeats and Rossi are, however, less important than the philosophical discussions conducted by both, especially since Yeats was first attracted to the Italian by a common interest in Berkeley. Rossi, a professional philosopher from a different cultural background, gives a first-hand account of a poet struggling with philosophical problems. In a little-known article published in an obscure periodical and quoted at length by Fantaccini, Rossi explains that Yeats 'offered poems—and asked for philosophical theories, for an explanation. He wanted to know how a philosopher sees the world, how his philosophical problems might be shaped into logical problems' (77).⁵ The philosophical problems discussed in the exchange of letters are mainly those of time and circularity or recurrence, themes which are present in Yeats's poetry from the very beginning. Rossi's work on Berkeley and Swift was in part responsible for

⁴ See "Among School Children" and the Education of the Irish Spirit', in A. Norman Jeffares and K. G. W. Cross (eds), *In Excited Reverie* (London: Macmillan, 1965), 123-50.

⁵ Rossi's 'Yeats – and Philosophy' was published in *Cronos*, 1: 3 (1947), 19-24.

strengthening Yeats's interest in the sages of the Irish eighteenth century. There are, however, in these letters no references to political issues such as Italian fascism or Yeats's preoccupation with Irish fascist ideas; there is a nice irony in the fact that, as Fantaccini notes, Rossi was denied an academic position in Italy because he refused to join the Fascist party.

According to Fantaccini, Italian translations of Yeats's texts began to appear in 1905. Preference was given to the plays, while the poetry had to wait until 1933. Fantaccini's bibliography contains more than 270 items (including reprints), among them several of book length. The last entry is a massive bilingual edition of the entire poetry, translated by Ariodante Marianni and running to 1600 pages. It includes a preface by Piero Boitani of 100 pages and more than 600 pages of notes and bibliography by Anthony L. Johnson.⁶ Fantaccini reviews this edition in the third part of his book; the second part is dedicated to four eminent poet-translators, who were influenced by Yeats and strengthened their reputation in twentieth-century Italian literature by the very fact that they turned their attention to the Irish poet. Inevitably, therefore, this chapter is mainly (but not exclusively) relevant to an understanding of these writers.

Eugenio Montale met Yeats twice and experienced 'a certain discomfort, a barely concealed distrust', when confronted with a man 'incapable of being completely at ease' (114). He did not write much about him; nevertheless, he assigned Yeats 'un posto altissimo' in modern English poetry. In particular, he admired Yeats's formal mastery and his musicality; he did not appreciate Yeats's 'misteriosofia' and thought that it was mere 'dawdling' ('gingillato', 115). Although he considered Yeats untranslatable, he produced Italian versions of 'The Indian to His Love', 'When You Are Old', 'After Long Silence', and 'Sailing to Byzantium'. They are reprinted by Fantaccini face-to-face with the English originals. Carefully and extensively comparing original and translation, Fantaccini notes that Montale rewrites and adapts rather than producing literal versions. In fact, the translations are shown to be full of the idiosyncrasies of Montale's poetic style. Fantaccini concludes that Yeats (and Eliot, whom he also translated) helped Montale to 'adopt the lesson of Anglo-American modernism' and to 'inaugurate a new era' of Italian poetry (123-24).

Lucio Piccolo's interest in Yeats was of a completely different nature. He wrote to Yeats, asking for clarification of esoteric and occultist matters (the

⁶ W. B. Yeats: *L'opera poetica* (Milano: Mondadori, 2005).

letters are apparently lost). Yeats responded in three letters (1919-24), of which one is printed; the other two are summarized by Fantaccini.⁷ Piccolo's poetry shows explicit traces of Yeatsian symbols, such as tower, winding stair, gyre, and rose and their esoteric connotations. Fantaccini argues that, as in the case of Montale, reading Yeats enabled Piccolo to align himself with European modernism of the 1920s and 1930s.

Fantaccini begins his chapter on Sergio Solmi by rescuing him from critics who considered him second-rate, and continues to describe his thoughts on poetic translation. Solmi translated only two of Yeats's poems, 'The Scholars' and 'The Rose of the World' which, Fantaccini affirms, meant much to him. The translations are placed next to the originals and scrutinized minutely, especially with respect to their phonic patterns. Fantaccini concludes that they are superior to all other Italian translations and establish Solmi as one of the major Italian poets of his time.

Giovanni Giudici has always considered translation the proper business of a poet; it is 'perhaps above everything, a conscious creative act, capable of perfection' (145). But when commissioned by the publisher Rizzoli to translate *The Tower*, he found himself unable to comply and handed the job over to Ariodante Marianni. Eventually he produced four translations, 'Among School Children', 'Sailing to Byzantium', 'The Road at My Door', and 'Politics'; all analyzed by Fantaccini with customary thoroughness, emphasizing Giudici's adherence to formal properties. He judges the third translation to be the best, since here Giudici finds an Italian vocabulary that matches Yeats's casualness, thus preserving the 'strangeness' of the original without losing 'legibility' and 'clarity' (153).

The survey of Italian translations and criticism in part 3 is arranged chronologically and subdivided into four chapters (1905-46, 1947-69, 1970-89, 1990-2005). The material is keyed to the entries in the following primary and secondary bibliography of almost 100 pages. A key figure in the early years was the novelist, essayist, and travel writer Carlo Linati. He met Yeats in London in 1913; subsequently, he translated several plays and wrote about Yeats (superficially, according to Fantaccini). Linati also translated works by Synge, Lady Gregory, Joyce, and O'Casey and was an important force in the dissemination of English-language literature in Italy. A famous name among the early Italian Yeats critics is that of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa; he sees in Yeats a national, not a nationalist poet,

⁷ CL InteLex prints and summarizes the same letters.

who also drew on Elizabethan lyrical poetry. Yeats's Italian reputation as a dramatist was further enhanced by his participation in the Fourth Conference of the Fondazione Alessandro Volta in October 1934, where he spoke on 'The Irish National Theatre', one of the very few occasions when he lectured on the European continent.

Yeats's poetry did not fare well in the early Italian reception. It was only in 1933 that Francesco Gargaro published Italian versions of eight early poems. In 1935 he ventured as far as *Responsibilities*. The later poetry had to wait until 1938/39, when Leone Traverso, a respected professor of German, published versions of, among others, 'Sailing to Byzantium' and parts of 'Blood and the Moon'. In 1949 Traverso collected 26 translations into book form, simply entitled *Poesie*; it is the first substantial bilingual selection. Fantaccini, following earlier Italian readers, bestows high praise on the translations.

Since then, the number of translations and critical studies has increased enormously. A rough count yielded as many as 19 book-length studies on Yeats. Thanks to the labours of Giorgio Manganelli, Roberto Sanesi, Giorgio Melchiori, Anthony L. Johnson (who teaches at the University of Pisa), and many others, almost every aspect of Yeats's works has been presented to an Italian readership: poetry, plays, narrative prose, the autobiography, even *A Vision*. Nevertheless, more could be done. Fantaccini notes that the majority of Yeats's essays has not been translated; he also hopes for an Italian edition of selected letters.

Fantaccini's meticulous and evenhanded survey is without doubt useful, but it tends to overwhelm the reader who, confronted with a chronological parade of so many names and titles, might wish for a different, more instructive approach. It would have been a good idea to separate translations from criticism, but then many translations, especially those in book form, contain noteworthy critical material. A more thematically oriented survey of criticism might have been a viable option.

At one point Fantaccini seems to detect a slowing-down of the relentless grind of the Italian Yeats industry, but this turns out to be wishful thinking. Shortly before the publication of his book yet another selection of poems and a new collection of critical essays appeared. Under the title *I cigni selvatici a Coole*, Alessandro Gentili presented a bilingual cross-section of more than 30 poems.⁸ Giuseppe Massari edited *Di specchio in specchio: Studi*

⁸ Bagno a Ripoli (Firenze): Passigli, 2008.

su W. B. Yeats; the title translates as ‘From mirror after mirror’ and is a quotation from ‘Before the World Was Made’.⁹ One of its seven essays detects traces of Japanese haiku in Yeats’s poetry; another seeks to place Yeats and Sylvia Plath between modernism and postmodernism; a third compares the political poetry of Oscar Wilde and Yeats. Fiorenzo Fantaccini might well wish to keep the internet version of his bibliography open-ended. But for the time being, he has produced in all its parts a very useful standard work.

⁹ Roma: NUA, 2007.

Margaret Mills Harper, *Wisdom of Two: The Spiritual and Literary Collaboration of George and W. B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), XV + 398 pp.

Denis Donoghue

In *Becoming George: The Life of Mrs. W. B. Yeats* (2002) Ann Saddlemeyer presented that life in its major capacities: wife, mother of two, medium, scribe, editor of her husband's later writings, and a personage in her own achieved right. Margaret Mills Harper (MMH) approaches much the same biographical and literary material with a different concentration of purpose. Her focus is on *A Vision* of 1925 and, to a less extent, the revised version of 1937. She prefers 1925 to 1937, 'the artful occultist of 1925' to 'the aged mythographer of 1937,' and brings to bear on that preference the prestige of her father, George Mills Harper (GMH), and indeed of the entire Harper family in its engagement with Yeats's occult writings (340). It is not surprising that she writes of Yeats:

Ironically, of all the poses, voices, and masks that dominate his work—WBY the lover, the nationalist, the dramatist, the last Romantic, the modernist, the political actor of socialist or fascist leanings, the young dreamer or the wild and wicked old man—the most consistently important to him are the very personae that critics have tended to make the most marginal and capricious: WBY the theosophist, the hermeticist, the Rosicrucian adept, the spiritualist, the occult metahistorian, the seeker after Celtic or Indian mysteries (29–30).

'Marginal and capricious' is unkind to the books and essays by Helen Vendler, Northrop Frye, Neil Mann, Matthew Gibson, Colin McDowell and other scholars in which 1937 has been taken with due seriousness. Perhaps we should settle for the quiet claim that WBY made for 1937 in a promissory letter of 9 March 1934, which MMH quotes, to his publisher Harold Macmillan:

¹ The title comes from a notebook entry by George Yeats: 'Wisdom of Two' (YVP 3.146).

I want it to be taken as a part of my work as a whole, not an eccentricity. I have put many years of work into it (74).

MMH has also edited 1925, with Catherine E. Paul, as vol. XIII of the current *Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* and will complete the fourteenth volume with an edition of 1937, again with Professor Paul.

GMH died on January 29, 2006. His daughter MMH has in many scholarly respects taken up the work he left incomplete, but she has also stepped out on her own. I did not know GMH well enough to find in his conversation or books any special ideological fervour. His investigation of Yeats's occult pages and notebooks was so arduous that it left little time, I assume, for ideological questions. MMH has taken these up with verve, beginning with an inscription that seems innocuous but apparently isn't. The inscription in George Yeats's personal copy of 1925, with her bookplate, reads: 'To Dobbs in memory of all tribulations when we were making this book | W. B. Yeats.' MMH has studied this 'making' as 'a unique collaboration.' She also interprets the inscription as 'moving toward the ambiguities of authorship that a scholar of my generation tends to see, formed as I am by an interpretative environment changed by poststructuralism as well as technologies and media that emphasize collaborative and anonymous creation' (15). As if that were not sufficiently portentous, she continues:

GY's work needs to be put in intellectual contexts that will illuminate its complexities, such as textual theory that regards authority in terms of 'a social nexus, not a personal possession', in Jerome McGann's words; feminist or poststructuralist analysis that would point to its quality of what Gayatri Spivak has called the 'inaccessible blankness circumscribed by an interpretable text'; revised histories of individual authorship and copyright; rhetorical implications of anonymity and collaboration; attention to the sexual dynamics of its deep structures; and the location of the whole experiment in a time and place in which conjuncions among technology, spirituality, and the structures of perception are defining characteristics (15-16).

I fear those big names and long words. But I have known several other names and words, just as long and large, that have been brought forward with the same intimidating aim. I have seen them rise, shine, evaporate, and fall. Where are the Phenomenologies, the Structuralisms, the Deconstructions of yesteryear? I turn to the prefatory matter of MMH's book and find, to my relief, a straightforward legal claim: © Margaret Mills Harper. No ambiguity of authorship or copyright there. The same claim

is made 'by Catherine E. Paul and Margaret Mills Harper' in vol. XIII of the *Collected Works*. I wonder does it mean anything that in vol. XIII Paul's name precedes Harper's and that in vol. XIV Harper's will precede Paul's?

It is true that George Yeats's part in 1925 and 1937 has been (before Saddlemeyer, that is) meagerly acknowledged. Most reviewers have merely reported the circumstances of the Automatic Writing and treated George Yeats as a medium without asking what her mediumship entailed. The trouble is that the English language does not provide a satisfactory phrase to describe the entailment. MMH does not propose that future editions of 1925 and 1937 should assign them to 'GY and WBY' or to 'WBY and GY.' But it is hard to see what would satisfy her: talk of joint authorship or of collaboration doesn't seem enough to her. 'You are part author,' Yeats wrote to George Yeats in a letter of September 29, 1937, quoted by Saddlemeyer and also by MMH (15), but that apparently doesn't resolve the issue to MMH's satisfaction. As the book proceeds, she keeps raising the bar of demand. In its final pages she quotes a cancelled passage from 'Robartes & Ahearne discuss philosophy' (YVP 2. 485-86). Robartes says:

I think his quotations very appropriate...Some of the authorities he gives & others I know but there is one authority he quotes without acknowledgment (341).

MMH takes this 'one' to be George Yeats and comments:

This authority has given WBY more than the exposition that this passage introduces, but all that is left to indicate the complete wisdom, of which 'little hints & half statements' remain and of whose entirety WBY himself seems ignorant, is 'the doctrine of the Antithetical self'. That antithetical self, robed in swathes of ambiguity, not the least of which is the system that purports to explain it, is of course a symbolic parallel for GY and the 'incredible experience' that she embodied. She brought the unimaginable whole, images, diagrams, voices, dreams, desires, daily life, children, emotional intensity, conceptual challenges, that could only inadequately be described with the phases, tinctures, cones, spheres, Faculties and Principles, after-death experiences, Great Year, daimons, and other ideas that crowd the thousands of pages of documents, unpublished and published, that came from the occult work (342).

I don't understand 'of course' or why Yeats is thought to have quoted George Yeats without acknowledgment. I have supposed that he regularly acknowledged her part in the whole project and urged her to accept a public tribute.

I have referred to the beginning and the end of MMH's book. Between these poles, she deals at large with the motifs one would have expected her

to concentrate on, and some few that one would not have thought of: collaboration, the theory and practice of mediumship, *Nemo Sciat*—George Yeats's motto in the Golden Dawn—spiritualism, George Yeats becoming Interpreter, Swedenborg, automatism, authorship, masks, sex, reincarnation, gyres, daimons, folklore, magic, the Frustrators, script, and typewriter. MMH's explications of these are tough-minded and continuously rigorous. I only wish she did not regard her arguments as addressed mostly to sullen readers. She is unnecessarily querulous. She also explicates, using a post-modernist and feminist terminology, *Calvary*, *Purgatory*, *The Dreaming of the Bones*, *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, and—most helpfully—*Michael Robartes and the Dancer*.

The only large question she skims—perhaps because she has wearied of it—is the political bearing of 1937. She remarks that by 1937, ‘in the new section of ‘The Great Year’, correspondences with the historical systems of Gerald Heard, Adams, Petrie, Spengler, Vico, Marx, Sorel, and Croce dot the page (*AVB* 261–62), although the book’s enthusiasms for 1920s Italian fascism have been modified to sound like weary confusion: ‘Perhaps I am too old. Surely something would have come when I meditated under the direction of the Cabalists. What discords will drive Europe to that artificial unity—only dry or drying sticks can be tied into a bundle—which is the decadence of every civilization?’ (*AVB* 301–02) (339) She adverts, ‘of course’ to the ‘gauntlet’ that Conor Cruise O’Brien’s threw down in 1965, ‘[Yeats’s] greatest poetry was written near the end of his life when his ideas were at their most sinister’, and she says rather cryptically that it ‘can still seem to lie where he threw it down’ (339–40). That is hard on Elizabeth Cullingford, Paul Scott Stanfield, Michael North and other scholars who have evidently taken it up. MMH adverts, but only adverts, to Stephen Spender’s review of 1937 in which he touches on the Fascist affiliation:

Later on, Mr. Yeats’s ‘instructors’ dropped their secondary role of giving him metaphors and supplied him with what one can only call an Encyclopedia of knowledge, life, death, the universe, history, etc.—an *Encyclopedia Fascista*, edited by Spengler, would perhaps be the best account of it, had not Spengler written his own.²

² Stephen Spender: review of *A Vision* (1937), *The Criterion*, vol. XVII, No. 68, April 1938, 536.

But she has not quoted Spender's last paragraph, which seems to me so far-reaching that I wish the grammar of the last sentence were more perspicuous: it evidently lacks punctuation:

Spengler, Stefan George, D'Annunzio, Yeats: is it really so impossible to guess at the 'instructors' who speak behind these mystic veils? It is interesting, too, to speculate whether Fascism may not work out through writers such as these a mystery which fills its present yawning void of any myth, religion, law, or even legal constitution, which are not improvised.³

Improvisation strikes me as the only motif that MMH has not examined in its bearing on 1925 and 1937: a surprising omission, since it is itself a kind of automatic writing.

³ Ibid., 537.

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Note: A number of these titles will be reviewed in *YA 19*.

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Warwick Gould is Professor of English Literature at the University of London and founding Director of its Institute of English Studies. He has edited *Yeats Annual* since 1983, is co-editor of *The Secret Rose, Stories by W. B. Yeats: A Variorum Edition*, *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats II, 1896-1900* and *Mythologies*, and co-author of *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*.

The cover design by Heidi Carlson includes an inset of Thomas Sturge Moore's original gold-on-green design for *The Tower* (1928), based on a photograph Yeats had sent him of Thoor Ballylee, Galway. Copy in Private Collection, London.

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