

WRITING THE LIFE OF THE TEXT: THE CASE OF W. B. YEATS

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1. Instability and intention

“Many times man lives and dies/Between his two eternities” (1966a: 637), writes Yeats, and the same is true of most texts that writers write. Using authors’ and publishers’ archives (in the broadest and the most minute senses) textual biography can trace those multitudinous textual lives, afterlives and new lives in real incarnations. Those latter categories are whole subjects in themselves, and for other occasions: my examples here are confined to the lives of certain texts during the lifetime of W. B. Yeats, whose life has recently been written, definitively and over two volumes, by Roy Foster.¹

My point of departure is Yeats’s well-known textual restlessness, which I have thought about a good deal as an editor.² He endlessly revised his work, and I was once inclined to see this as others (such as Curtis Bradford, Thomas Parkinson or Jon Stallworthy) had seen it, as evidence of a Darwinian process of aesthetic self-criticism, within the narrow focus of the work —the word, the line, the poem.

At the core of such textual instability is authorial intention itself: in Yeats’s case the destabilising dream of finality, perfectionism, a collected works, an *oeuvre* (which he openly wanted from 1895 onwards), “something intended, complete” (Yeats 1961: 509). Focusing upon the apparent achievement of perfection within the confines of a single poem or set of textual changes, we can readily come to agree

with Yeats that “a poem comes right with a click like a closing box” (1964: 22);³ or with Carol Shields’s answer to the question “How does a poet know when a poem is ended?” —“Because it lies flat, taut, nothing can be added or subtracted” (1994: 71).⁴

If we do, we can lose sight of two forces which intersect at every point to make up the textual continuum. At any particular textual level, Yeats’s perfectionism was exercised within the imperfect medium which print and publication provide, and —as often as not— against prevailing external circumstances. Though a number of Yeats’s poems continue without major post-publication revision —“The Cloths of Heaven” and “No Second Troy” come to mind (1966a: 176, 256-7)— the blunt fact is that most of them must have ‘clicked’ not once but several times, on successive occasions, as they were revised and reworked. They are creatures of changing circumstances. Making was unmaking and remaking. Whereas Auden and Eliot saw with Valéry that, in the end, a poem is “never finished; it is only abandoned”, Yeats was much less interested in a conception of poetry as pure process than was his French *symboliste* counterpart.⁵ He had to believe in final intention in order to write, and if new textual perfection proved provisional, its meanings included an intended disavowal of a previous perfection. By contrast, James Joyce was not a post-publication rewriter (he was wholly given over to the writing of *Finnegans Wake* when some thought he should have been correcting *Ulysses*). By contrast, again, and in the other direction, George Moore exemplifies the terrible fluidity of prose we all know about when we hit a word-processor. While both he and Yeats used proof states as new drafts, Yeats’s foreconceits as a writer were firm in their rejection, through refinement, of older ones.

In fact, Yeats’s dream of finished form *itself* led to the ‘stitching and unstitching’, but the field in which it operated is that of bibliographical opportunity. Yeats was a professional in a print culture. Roy Foster’s two volumes offer in considerable detail the conditions of authorship and patronage in which Yeats laboured. There is, too, the world of the Irish newspapers, a mirror of fissiparous opinion where the writer saw himself, and was seen in his writing’s earliest contexts. The necessity of his getting a reputation elsewhere aroused the hostility of Irish reviewers, and he had an uncanny ability to answer them. New writing is a dialogue.

Before he went to Macmillan in 1916, Yeats had as many as four publishers at a time: the mean, “illtempered” T. Fisher Unwin (who made small, dependable money for him),⁶ the peevish Elkin Mathews who sold *The Wind Among the Reeds* to an audience fit though very few, Ernest Oldmeadow, a con-man who ended his days as a wine merchant and as editor of *The Tablet*, A. H. Bullen who had problems with cash-flow and drink-flow —not to mention Leonard Smithers, the charming pornographer whose *Savoy* magazine cash allowed Yeats to leave home

and consummate his affair with Olivia Shakespeare in 1896. There was also John Lane in New York. Yeats had too many publishers because none who believed in him made money from him. Their deferrals led him to insist on short term contracts and new textual occasions, to a finality sought yet deferred, to provisionality.

Textual instability and textual ‘improvement’ therefore, look rather differently as matters of bibliographical occasion and opportunism. The textual field has about it all the contingency that is implied in Yeats’s remark to Florence Farr in 1914: “when one begins to write one’s books are a sufficient history”.⁷ Introducing a bibliography appended to *The Works of Max Beerbohm* John Lane remarked, “It is impossible for one to compile a bibliography of a great man’s works without making it in some sense a biography —and indeed in the minds of not a few people I have found a delusion that the one is identical with the other” (1896: 163). One has only to glance through Stuart Mason’s *Bibliography of Oscar Wilde* in order to see the truth of Lane’s drollery: indeed —how appropriate that the remark is Lane’s since it was Lane who refused to pay Yeats a penny on royalties due to him for sales of *The Wind Among the Reeds* in the United States.

For the moment, however, I’ll put biography and bibliography at opposite ends of a spectrum. My perspective is that of the books themselves, and of the texts they contain. Yeats thought in terms of books: the arrangement and order of poems and their look on the page were part of his creative process. That obsession with *oeuvre* achieved only sporadic and partial fulfilment. Even when textual success seemed total as in *The Collected Works in Verse and Prose* (1908), financial disaster soon stirred his desire to rewrite, reshape, relaunch, and to incorporate therein new writing. When Joseph Hone had written his first biographical study of Yeats in 1916, Yeats commiserated in a letter he wrote on 2 January of the same year:

Your difficulties have come from my house being still unfinished, there are so many rooms and corridors that I am still building upon foundations laid long ago. (1955: 605)

The posthumous scholarly editions of New Bibliographers, however, produced precisely those New Critical readings which had evidently been their editorial premiss. “As [Yeats] revised he almost always improved” (1966b: xvi) said Russell Alspach, editor of the two great *Variorum Editions* of the *Poems* (1957) and *Plays* (1966) which indifferently gather all variant states against a final text. Devoted readers from Yeats’s lifetime would have reacted in horror at such a conclusion. Devoted readers in later times could hardly imagine any other state of affairs than that towards which Allt and Alspach seemed inexorably to lead them. Starting work on the *Variorum* edition of *The Secret Rose* in the early 1970s I unflinchingly

suggested (to Jon Stallworthy, then at Oxford University Press) a collation against the earliest collected texts to show textual decay, a procedure close to unthinkable in the era of Bowersite editorial practice. Collation against final texts had quite simply been established as most appropriate to this author's work.

The *Variorum* editions all represent textual change in strict chronology. The histories that might be construed from them could be baffling indeed. Textual variance is *atomised* as it is *itemised*: the exigencies of collational presentation focus on the variant line, phrase, word, or punctuation. This precise record can suggest authorial vacillation —indecision and reversal— precisely and only because some *later* reprints of earlier texts have been collated as though they were wholly *new* texts when individual poems have not in fact been revised.

The history of Yeats's books establishes textual authority. Elkin Mathews reprinted *The Wind Among the Reeds* until 1916, ten years after his contract had expired. Yeats, having produced new versions of the poems for A. H. Bullen's *Collected Works in Verse and Prose* (1908) and *Poems: Second Series* (1910) was furious at Mathews' deviousness in finding new ways to publish old texts, just as he had been by George Russell's or Arthur Griffith's habits of reprinting in Irish periodicals inaccurate texts of early poems which they loved and set from memory, long after Yeats had suppressed them.

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2. The wider field of the lived life

Roy Foster has shown us how Yeats made his life “the history of his own times” (to use Eliot's words), and how essential it is to locate the poet as artist and as craftsman within this outer field. But the poet changes, his intentions change. The life of the man who is also the poet gets in the way, indeed, changes of intention might be seen as the expression of the life *in* the text. While prose stories led to the great liberating moment of Smithers' *Savoy*, the affair with Olivia Shakespear greatly complicated and further postponed *The Wind Among the Reeds*, changing its implicit narrative, and complicating its poem order (Harwood 1989: 59-82). Fortunately Yeats had finished the last poem to be written for that collection — “Aedh wishes for the Cloths of Heaven” (the lover's most abject oblation), and had sent his book to be printed before the greatest catastrophe of his emotional life, when Maud Gonne told him (in December 1898) of her long relationship with Lucien Millevoeye and of their children. The revelation rocked his sustaining illusion to the core. It took Yeats eighteen months to rewind his lyric armature (Toomey 1997: 1-40). There are dozens of such examples. Mabel Beardsley's refusal to die on cue —I put it plainly, but Yeats had books to publish—bumped the Dying Lady poems from *Responsibilities* (1916) to *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919). “The New

Faces" (1912) projected the death of Lady Gregory. She urged him not to publish it "just now" —at 60 she was embarking on an affair with John Quinn and was in no mood for dying. The poem got caught up in the writing of "A Prayer for My Daughter" and re-emerged on its own in the midst of a further dispute with Lady Gregory over another poem, "Reprisals". Yeats tried to create a context for it in a revised reprint of *Responsibilities* in c. 1920-21 before slipping it in *Seven Poems and a Fragment* (1922). He did not display it openly until *The Tower* (1928), when Lady Gregory was very old. Author-annotated copies of Yeats's books show how he accommodated such biographical accidents in new bibliographical contexts.⁸

Confronted with such evidences, no one seriously engaged with a reviser's writing can divorce the work from the life, the author-function from the author, textuality from contingency. "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" (Yeats 1966a: 446). A textual biography explores both a life and a metalife, a continuum of self-reconstructions. All lives are like that, but a revising author's *oeuvre* is at every level a "strange perpetual weaving and unweaving" of self (Pater 1980: 188) complete and yet uncompleted, growing as it is revised, erased as it is renewed. In Yeats's case, constant republication leaves a unique record of the process.

3. Collected selves and the sense of *oeuvre*

Investigating that textual continuum at every textual level is a fairly big undertaking. Every collection from *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems* onwards provided Yeats with bibliographical opportunities to fashion a textual self, to be received. Marginalia in John Butler Yeats's copy of *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems* now in the Fisher Library in the University of Toronto show, as Michael Sidnell has observed, the "critical burden the poet bore" (1998: 266), even of mockery and sarcasm. Yeats absorbed criticism, and used it to shape his works: one lesson for me of working on *Letters* Vol II was that he never forgot certain critiques (for both praise and blame), and even absorbed their terms (such as "Antaeus-like") into his later poems.⁹ By *Poems* 1895, he "chose to preserve" a retrospective assemblage of volume-units, including some, such as CROSSWAYS and THE ROSE, which had never seen separate publication but were grouped as if they had. That book is his myth of his own origins. By 1899, Yeats had begun to experiment with various arrangements of his work to reflect that growing sense of the pastness of his discarded selves, putting "The Wanderings of Oisín" at the back of the book, pushing the latest piece of rewritten work, *The Countess Cathleen* to the front —and to the forefront of reviewers' attention. *The Poetical Works of William B. Yeats* (New York 1906-7) offered him the chance to present a new chronologically arranged order of self under a new America-friendly formulation

of his name for a new (American) audience. In *The Collected Works in Verse and Prose* in 8 vols (1908), he hierarchically arranged his works by genre, as well as reassigning poems within the dated volume-units. It justified his present self as dramatist, as a “strange continuator” (Hardy 1925: 300) of his earlier selves.

4. Rewriting for the bibliographical occasion

Each ‘moment of the collected works’ (to use a handy French concept) presented to an author obsessed with *oeuvre* not merely moments for some sort of objective self-rearrangement. Self-appraisal is arresting: it is self-arraignment, and it frequently enough provided Yeats with a glimpse of the way forward. “The Lamentation of the Old Pensioner” is the most familiar example of Yeats’s habit of rewriting poems.¹⁰ First published in *The Scots Observer* in 1890 in two stanzas, “The Old Pensioner” was, as Yeats noted, “little more than the translation into verse of the very words of an old Wicklow peasant” (Yeats 1966a: 799).¹¹

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I had a chair at every hearth,
 When no one turned to see,
 With “look at that old fellow there,
 And who may he be?”
 And therefore do I wander on,
 And the fret lies on me.

The road-side trees keep murmuring.
 Ah, wherefore murmur ye,
 As in the old days long gone by,
 Green oak and poplar tree?
 The well-known faces are all gone
 And the fret lies on me. (1966a: 131-132 and vv.)¹²

The “very words” of the old Wicklow peasant were fully reported by and are found in Yeats’s “An Irish Visionary” (first published 1891, and included in *The Celtic Twilight*, 1893).

A winter or two ago he [i.e., X—] spent much of the night walking up and down upon the mountain talking to an old peasant who, dumb to most men, poured out his cares for him. Both were unhappy: X— because he had then first decided that art and poetry were not for him, and the old peasant because his life was ebbing out with no achievement remaining and no hope left him. [...] The peasant was wandering in his mind with prolonged sorrow. Once he burst out with, “God possesses the heavens—God possesses the heavens— but He covets the world”; and once he lamented that his old neighbours were gone, and that all had forgotten him:

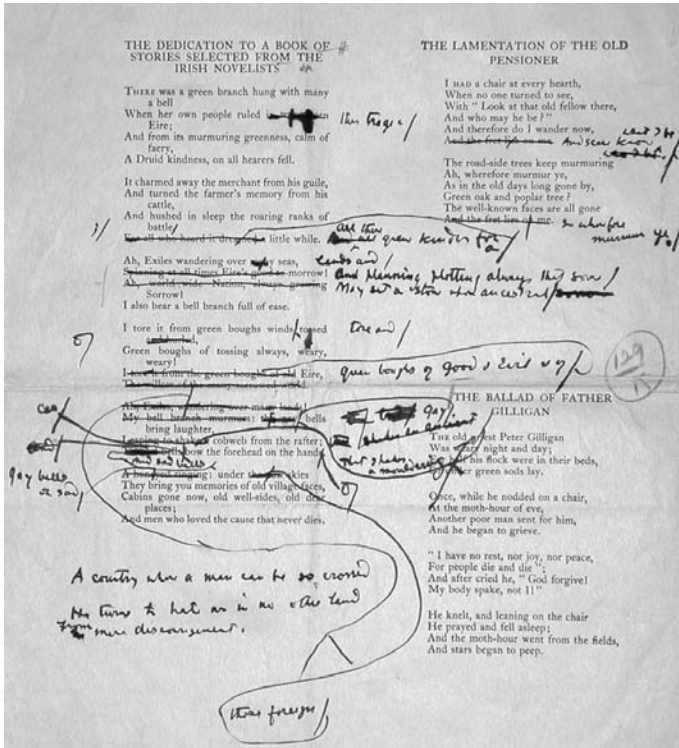
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they used to draw a chair to the fire for him in every cabin, and now they said, "Who is that old fellow there?" "The fret [Irish for doom] is over me", he repeated, and then went on to talk once more of God and heaven. More than once also he said, waving his arm towards the mountain, "Only myself knows what happened under the thorn-tree forty years ago;" and as he said it the tears upon his face glistened in the moonlight. (Yeats 1893: 23-25; 1959: 13-14)¹³

George Russell left an independent account of the episode (not published until 1993):

The first character which emerges clearly from the obscurity of boyhood is that of an old vagrant. My meeting with him was an adventure which began for me the unveiling of humanity. It was my first vision of the wonder and agony of the soul. I was walking with my friend John Hughes on a mountain road one evening when I saw an old man coming towards us[.] He was hugging his body as if there were none other in the world but himself that would hold it with familiar hands and he was talking to himself, and his grief seemed so great that he must speak it even if it were only to two boys passing he met in the twilight. That old man was the remains of a magnificent human being I would think over seventy years of age. He stepped before me and began to speak. I remember every word[:] "Over those hills I wandered forty years ago. Nobody but myself knows what happened under the thorn tree forty years ago. The fret is on me. The fret is on me. God speaking out of his darkness says I have and I have not. I possess the heavens. I do not possess the world. Abroad if you meet an Irishman he will give you the bit and the sup. But if you come back to your own country after being away forty years it is not the potato and bit of salt you get[,] but only "who's that ould fella?" The fret is on me. The fret is on me![""] I found this was his first day of returning to his country after forty years of absence and nobody remembered him. He had been in the Army, was in the Crimean War but saw no fighting. He lay in some place I think he called it Scutari in [a] fever covered with lice. You[,] he said to Hughes are amused[;] but you[,] he said to me[,] are watching me. You are thinking about me. And indeed I was thinking about him for life, for when the deeps of another's being are first revealed to us something from that deep enters our own being and goes on with it for evermore. The appearance and voice and tone impressed themselves on [me] with unforgettable poignancy. It was sorrow shaped by its intensity to be like a work of art. I did not write the song[,] but Yeats to whom I told the story made out of it his first version of the Old Pensioner. Meeting with that old man had other effects on me. His image, his thought flying from earth to heaven, as all profound sorrows do, the first beautiful speech I heard spoken in life, not merely found in literature, the thought of that unforgotten love under the thorn tree, what beauty might have heard that beautiful voice making poetry in her heart[;] all entered into consciousness, and I began to watch those about me to see if life had other voices so poignant, speaking with unconscious natural beauty of the adventures of the spirit wandering through time. (in Kuch 1993: 199)

The poem survived with fairly minor changes until Yeats began to work upon *Early Poems and Stories* (1925), a volume in the new *Collected Edition* of the 1920s. There he tinkered with it on the galleys,¹⁴ alongside another vigorously altered poem, "The Dedication to a Book of Stories selected from the Irish Novelists".¹⁵ I reproduce these to show how Yeats used proof as a new stage of composition.



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PLATE 1

On a subsequent set of proofs he added a new second stanza. The new version of the poem thus reads:

Although I shelter from the rain
Under a broken tree,
My chair was nearest to the fire
In every company,

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That talked of love or politics
Ere time transfigured me.

Though lads are making pikes again
For some conspiracy,
And crazy rascals rage their fill
At human tyranny;
My contemplations are of time
That has transfigured me.

There's not a woman turns her face
Upon a broken tree,
And yet the beauties that I loved
Are in my memory;
I spit into the face of Time
That has transfigured me. (Yeats 1925: 128; 1966a: 131-132vv)

This was the first time in Yeats's career that both "The Lamentation of the Old Pensioner" and "A Visionary" had appeared in one volume, and its reading proof he seeks to reappportion material between the two works. Out went the "green oak and poplar tree", and in came the "broken tree", the thorn from the pensioner's words in the prose account. Thorn trees in Yeats usually show immemorial age and its weathering, often to the point of beggary.¹⁶

If the rewriting of the poem for its new context involved a new reading of "A Visionary", tinkering with the poem necessitated the editing of the prose account. All versions of "A Visionary" from 1893 to 1914 had concluded with a paragraph which had been (and remained) a central statement of his beliefs.

This old man always rises before me when I think of X—. Both seek—one in wandering sentences, the other in symbolic pictures and subtle allegoric poetry—to express something that lies beyond the range of expression; and both, if X— will forgive me, have within them the vast and vague extravagance that lies at the bottom of the Celtic heart. The peasant visionaries that are, the landlord duellists that were, and the whole hurly-burly of legends—Cuchulin fighting the sea for two days until the waves pass over him and he dies, Caolte storming the palace of the Gods, Oisín seeking in vain for three hundred years to appease his insatiable heart with all the pleasures of faeryland, these two mystics walking up and down upon the mountain uttering the central dreams of their souls in no less dream-laden sentences, and this mind that finds them so interesting—all are a portion of that great Celtic phantasmagoria whose meaning no man has discovered nor any angel revealed. (Yeats 1893: 23-25)

This paragraph had followed on directly from that already quoted above. But for the weakness of that one word "interesting" the sacrifice of this passage shows how

stern a sense Yeats had of the economy of the individual volume. The new version of the poem was preoccupied with civil unrest (topical in post-Civil War Ireland) and with the transfigurations of Time, into the face of which the defiant pensioner spits in the new last stanza. Yeats's new reading of both early prose and verse versions took place in the polishing of a single volume, *Early Poems and Stories* as a bibliographical unit. Its economy also demanded that "A Visionary" (the early stories follow the early poems) retain something of the unfinished misery of the old pensioner in the early version of the poem ("The well-known faces are all gone/And the fret lies on me.") Accordingly, the last paragraph was removed, leaving "A Visionary" to break off:

More than once also he said, waving his arm towards the mountain, "Only myself knows what happened under the thorn-tree forty years ago"; and as he said it the tears upon his face glistened in the moonlight. (Yeats 1925: 149; 1893: 25; 1959: 14)

5. Rewriting and new writing

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This fresh perspective opened up a whole new vein of poems for Yeats, beginning with four he first published in the *London Mercury* in April 1926 as "More Songs of an Old Countryman". Why "More"? The title must have seemed obscure to most readers. On the (undated) manuscript Yeats tries out, "Songs of a mad old man", then "More Songs of an Old Pensioner". The first poem, later "His Memories", associates Yeats himself (nearing 60) with the pensioner, whose "broken" thorn-tree becomes the locus (and focus) for Yeats's seventeen-year-old memories of the short-lived consummation of his love for Maud Gonne.

More Songs of a ~~mad old man~~ an Old Pensioner

A man should hide him self away
That Time has made a show
His body ~~twisted like a thorn~~ like a mountain ~~branch~~ thorn
Whereon ~~There~~ the foul winds blow
And ~~To~~ think of fallen Hector
And ~~his~~ tales none living know.

The women take so little stock
In what I do or say
Theyd sooner leave their cossetting
To hear a jackass bray
My arms are like the wicked thorn
And yet there ~~their~~ beauty lay

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The first of all the ~~tribe~~ tribe lay there
And did such pleasure take
~~Who~~ She who had brought great Hector down
And put all Troy to wreck
That she has cried into this ear
Strike me if I shriek.

we should be hidden from their eyes
~~old men should hide themselves away~~
~~That are~~ Being but holy shows
~~Battered like a mountain thorn~~
~~Our bodies broken battered like a thorn~~
and bodies broken like a thorn
Where on the bleak [?black] North blows
~~And~~ To think of buried Hector
And that none living know.¹⁷

It has been shown that when Yeats overcomes or incorporates the influence of seventeenth century poems, he frequently works in pairs: “In Memory of Major Robert Gregory” adapts the form of Abraham Cowley’s “Ode on the Death of Mr Harvey” and the material (multiplicities of friendship and grieving) of Ben Jonson’s “To the Immortall Memorie, and Friendship of that Noble Paire, Sir Lucius Cary and S. H. Morison”.¹⁸ Here, of course, another of his own earlier poems, “No Second Troy”, aligns itself alongside “The Old Pensioner”. Such dyadic rereadings of his own older texts are common in Yeats’s new writing, but in this case, a third, Maud Gonne’s favourite of his poems, “Red Hanrahan’s Song about Ireland” seems swept into the first stanza

The old brown thorn-trees break in two high over Cummen Strand,
Under a bitter black wind that blows from the left hand
(Yeats 1966a: 206)

and even a fourth, “Her Praise” where “[s]ome beggar sheltering from the wind” “by the dry thorn” will bring up the beloved’s name (1966a: 351) might lurk in the “adaptive complex”. These apparently diachronic self-allusions show that his own text had a simultaneity for him. The constant reconstruction of that text is inevitable to Yeats’s continuing self-construction: “[w]hatever changes I have made are but an attempt to express better what I thought and felt when I was a young man” he said in 1925 (1966a: 842). And again, in 1927,

this volume contains what is, I hope, the final text of the poems of my youth; and yet it may not be, seeing that in it are not only the revisions from my “Early Poems

and Stories”, published last year, but quite new revisions on which my heart is greatly set. One is always cutting out the dead wood. (1966a: 848)

Yeats’s shaping at every point offers a unified self-reconstruct with its own chronology. Its profile —the young man old or the old man young?— is where his reading and ours intersect. Revision and new writing were not merely interdependent activities, revision of an old poem frequently made the next new poem possible. In *October Blast* in May 1927, he published such groupings as “Two Songs from the Old Countryman” and their counterparts, “Four Songs from the Young Countryman”, which he had begun as early as 31 January 1926 (Wade 1968: 159).¹⁹ More follow in letters to Olivia Shakespear, *October Blast* (1927) and *The Tower* (1928), where they found their final form in “A Man Young and Old”. This sequence led in turn to “Words for Music Perhaps” which sites “Love’s Loneliness” in the question

What did we remember
Under the ragged thorn? (Yeats 1966a: 519)

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and to “A Woman Young and Old”, the most consciously articulated of Yeats’s mature sequences.²⁰

Fresh perspectives in textual synchronics reveal that Yeats’s self-reading is deeply calculated. Lafcadio Hearn protested in 1901 about revisions to “The Host of the Air”:

You have mangled it, maimed it, deformed it, extenuated it —destroyed it totally [...] you have really sinned a great sin! *Do* try to be sorry for it!— reprint the original version, —tell critics to go to perdition, if they don’t like it, —and, above all things, *n’y touchez plus!*

Even as Yeats assured Hearn that he would restore parts of the poem, he confided, in his very next letter (to Thomas Hutchinson):

even when one certainly improves ones work, as when one disengages a half hidden meaning or gets rid of a needless inversion, no body who liked the old will like the new. One changes for the sake of new readers, not for the sake of old ones. (Yeats 1997b: 101-102)

That said, there is a deep solipsism in the writer as self-reader. In 1893 Yeats had drafted a quatrain claiming that his

[...] rhyme must be
A dyed & figured mystery,
Thought hid in thought, dream hid in dream. (Yeats 1994: 489)

For the author, as for those outraged older readers, revised poems are like De Quinceyan involutes, or redreamt dreams. Revision only apparently erases the precursor texts which they replace because the new text is in fact in dialogue with the old, and an imbrication of it, embracing that which it attempts to repudiate. The new text has a Janus function, it looks “before and after”, and pines “for what is not” (Shelley 1961: 605).

In *bibliographical* terms, however, textual effacement inevitably goes with textual development. The new drives out the old, there is a “continual vanishing away”, decay balances growth (Pater 1980: 188). Textual restlessness gradually winds down, until the presentation of poems in dated volume-units in the major editions gives the impression that poems gathered under the rubric e.g., CROSSWAYS (1889) or THE ROSE (1893) or RESPONSIBILITIES (1914) had been published in those years in the form in which readers found them. The updated poems are rather like retouched photographs.

Thus, *The Wind Among the Reeds* is barely readable without access to the forty-five pages of notes upon which its first edition is built, yet they eventually “annoyed” Yeats so much that he gradually cut them before *Later Poems* (1922),²¹ and there are countless examples of such changes. In *Poems: Second Series* Yeats changed the whole dynamic of *The Wind Among the Reeds* by readmitting “The Fiddler of Dooney” and deploying it at the close. The decision relieves that book’s psychodrama by allowing for a cheerful escape from the unendurable dilemma of the 1899 ordering in which “He Thinks of his Past Greatness When a Part of the Constellations of Heaven”, had been placed last in the volume. Just think of “Aedh Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven” (“Tread softly because you tread on my dreams”) being followed by:

I became a rush that horses tread:
I became a man, a hater of the wind,
Knowing one, out of all things, alone, that his head
Would not lie on the breast or his lips on the hair
Of the woman that he loves, until he dies;
Although the rushes and the fowl of the air
Cry of his love with their pitiful cries.

In 1909, after his affair with Maud Gonne had been consummated, Yeats managed to strengthen these lines by substituting for the last two:

O beast of the wilderness, bird of the air
Must I endure your amorous cries?
(Yeats 1966a: 177 and vv.)²²

and to restructure the closure of the book with “The Fiddler of Dooney”. This made it a different book, a closed chapter of his life.

In writing the life of the text, establishing the chronology of manuscripts allows one to discover the creative synergy between revision and new writing. But creative delay is also at work, according to some profound sense of textual priorities, at times a hierarchy of genres. Not-writing *The Shadowy Waters* allowed “The Wanderings of Oisín” to be written. Not finishing *The Wind Among the Reeds* allowed the revision of earlier work into *Poems* 1895, also *The Secret Rose*. Not-writing a novel, *The Speckled Bird*, made *The Wind Among the Reeds* achievable, and the revision of “The Countess Cathleen” for *Poems* (1899), and, finally, the first (1900) version of *The Shadowy Waters*. In Yeats’s creative economy this poem had to be rewritten for the stage, though it also remained a poem in a simultaneous incarnation. There are famous examples such as *The Player Queen*: Yeats needed blockages as much as he needed to resolve them.

Further, lyric poetry paradoxically came as a by-product of required writing. From the perspective of the text (rather than from the perspective of the man who made the Irish Theatre), Yeats’s plays and his prose are frequently a pre-text for lyric poetry.

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A year ago I found I had written no verse for two years; I had never been so long barren; I had nothing in my head, and there used to be more than I could write [...]
I wrote the prose dialogue of *The King of the Great Clock Tower* that I might be forced to make lyrics for its imaginary people. (Yeats 1966b: 1309-10).

So he set to work:

What though they danced! those days are gone,
Said the wicked, crooked hawthorn tree,
Lovely lady or gallant man
Are blown cold dust or a bit of bone. (1966a: 788)

Here the textual biographer inevitably see things rather differently from the biographer for whom “theatre business” shows one of the heroic sides of Yeats’s character. But then an exasperated Yeats roundly placed his “curse on plays” which took time from “the harvest of the Lord” (1966a: 260; 1973: 181).

In excavating various layers of writing, I am especially interested in Yeats’s turn to autobiography, because it is the key moment in the “discovery, creation, and imitation of the self” (in Longley 1994: 11). Roy Foster dates it to Yeats’s being “close on forty-nine” in 1914, when it is true, he wrote *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*,²³ but I date the impulse to Yeats’s most sustained self-arraignment in the presence of his text, during the impasse of 1907-8, when he and A. H. Bullen

confronted, edited, rearranged, or discarded his prose memoirs such as “The Pathway” on Mohini Chatterjee and notes on dead friends such as Lionel Johnson, for the final volume of *The Collected Works in Verse and Prose*. At this point he had to write what became *Discoveries*, a series of *pensées*, for *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, to make himself and Bullen (that journal’s editor —another hand-to-mouth role), enough money to live on while they finished the edition, and to plump it out.

The incident accords with my general hypothesis: the author as self-reader finds his way forward to new writing. There are “hidden roads” from poem to poem (Bloom 1973: 96). T. S. Eliot once wrote that

A poet [...] knows better what his poems “mean” than can anyone else; he may know the history of their composition, the material which has gone in and come out in an unrecognizable form, and he knows what he was trying to do and what he was meaning to mean. (1933: 130)

These days we regard such statements knowingly, and all too conscious of our rights as “empowered readers”. But Eliot in fact continued:

But what a poem means is as much what it means to others as what it means to the author; and indeed, in the course of time a poet may become a reader in respect to his own works, forgetting his original meaning —or, without forgetting, merely changing. (130)

23

Yeats sometimes felt this way, claiming in 1912,

I have not again retouched the lyric poems of my youth, fearing some stupidity in my middle years, but have changed two or three pages that I always knew to be wrong in “The Wanderings of Usheen”. (1966a: 848)

But Eliot also reminds us how language won’t stay still, how words “strain,/Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,/Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,/Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,/Will not stay still”, and how “every attempt/Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure”, each venture “a new beginning”.²⁴ To generalize a bit, it is precisely in discerning the different kinds of self-reader which an author may become that we might be able to get some purchase on his or her various self-reincarnations as a writer.²⁵

Let me now return to those galley proofs for *Early Poems and Stories*, which offer a close-up of the preliminary work on the “Old Pensioner” (**Plate 1**). By contrast with the new, three stanza version, he hardly started on these galleys, and “And scarce know what I be” and “So wherefore murmur ye” are not particularly promising interventions. The new second stanza must have come into being on a lost (probably page) proof state. On 3 October and again on 6 November 1924

Yeats wrote to his wife, George Yeats, in Dublin about this poem, saying on the latter occasion: “I have made a new poem of the “Song of the Old Pensioner”, and a good poem”.²⁶

At the same time he “worried” her with “all those revisions” for “The Dedication to a Book of Stories selected from the Irish Novelists” (numerous changes can be followed on **Plate 1**) for transmission to George Russell at the *Irish Statesman*. It is to be presumed that Russell yet again wanted an old poem reprinted and got more than he bargained for. The poem, originally “Dedication”, later “Dedication to “Irish Tales”, became “An Old Poem Re-Written” when placed in Russell’s *Irish Statesman*. An appeal to those Irish Americans who might buy his little two-volume selection of *Representative Irish Tales* from Putnam in their Knickerbocker Nuggets Series (1891) now seemed oppressively sentimental. “Ah, Exiles wandering over many seas/Spinning at all times Ireland’s good to-morrow” became “Ah, Exiles wandering over lands and seas,/And planning, plotting always that some morrow/May set a stone upon ancestral sorrow!”—note the redeployment of that stone from “Easter, 1916”—while Ireland itself became “A Country where a man can be so crossed/He turns to hate as in no other land/From mere discouragement” before becoming “That country where a man can be so crossed,/Can be so battered, badgered and destroyed/That he’s a loveless man”. Then on 7 November 1924 Yeats wrote to his wife:

24

Please make one more change in that poem: Stanza 5 should run thus

I tore it from green boughs winds tore & tossed
Until the sap of summer had grown weary!
I tore it from the barren boughs of Eire,
That country where a man can be so crossed.

So, while the “green boughs of good and evil” were abandoned, he could write to her with some satisfaction: “I think that removes the last sentimentality. If the copy has already gone to Russell send him this stanza. He can add it in proof”.²⁷ Russell, of course, given half the chance, would have set the 1891 version from memory. Amazingly, this “sheaf of wild oats” as Yeats called it, did get to Dublin for publication in the issue dated 8 November 1924 (1966a: 129). But then, after the Nobel Prize, things did tend to get done for Yeats.

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. But there is more. By 12 November: Yeats is writing “[...] I am exceedingly lively & have wholly rewritten “The Death of Cuchulain”. He does not now die at all. To rewrite an old poem is like dressing

up for a fancy dress ball”. Or, “I have just turned an absurd old poem of mine called “The Sorrow of Love” into a finer thing”.²⁸ I greatly admire that move from “absurd” to “finer”! What had he done? Setting aside numerous verbal changes, I turn only to the second stanza.

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.

becomes

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;
(Yeats 1966a: 120 and vv.)

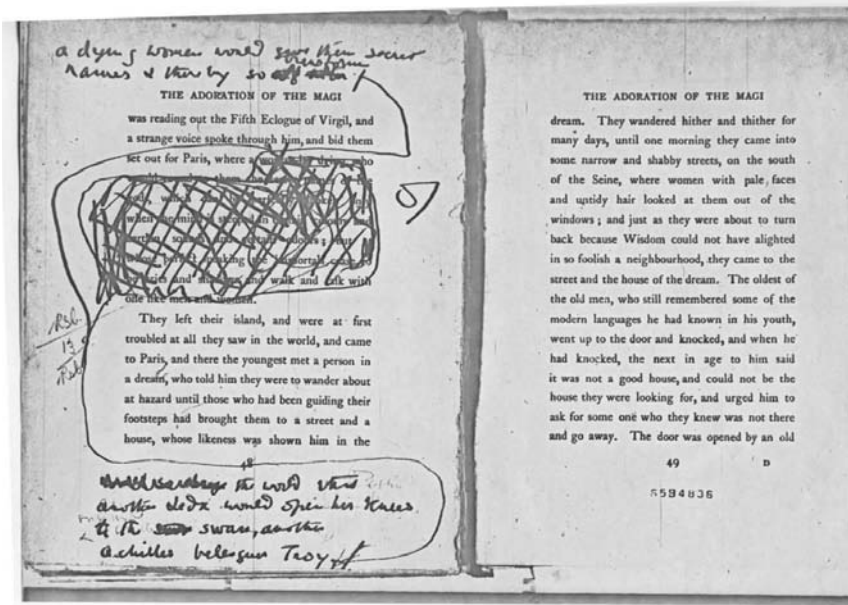
Here there had been implicit references to the Trojan War (the “lips/ships” rhyme gives it away, as does the *lacrimae rerum* reference in “the whole of the world’s tears”) ever since the poem’s first publication and collection in *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics* in 1892. There had been only one verbal change in that stanza (the key Yeatsian word “trouble” replacing “burden” in 1895 to form a repetition the last line of that stanza). Now, however, Yeats is determined to make the Trojan dimension explicit: “Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships/And proud as Priam murdered with his peers”.

Why? Irish poets have frequently sought a Trojan frame of reference for Irish troubles from *aisling* poetry to such contemporary poets as Michael Longley and Seamus Heaney.²⁹ Yeats’s turn from the vague and stately to the explicit (“doomed”, “murdered”) might again reflect the savagery he had witnessed and expressed in his civil war poems.

But the refurbishment of an ancient intention accords well with work going on elsewhere in *Early Poems and Stories* proof materials. **Plate 2** shows the setting copy for the republication of “The Adoration of the Magi”.

This rather vigorously cross-hatched revision of the 1904 text shows Yeats deleting the passage about the secret names of the immortals given to the three old men by the dying prostitute in Paris, in 1924. In erasing thus the return of the Irish gods, he offers 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.
(Yeats 1992: 166-7)



26

PLATE 2

Here one sees how 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* in June 1924 and again in that short-lived adventure of Francis Stuart and others, *To-morrow*, in August 1924. This new poem was now crucial. 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”: “Leda, War and Love; history grown symbolic, the biography changed into myth” (Yeats 1978: 181, 214). So obsessed was Yeats with this *topos* that the rape of Leda is now thrust, if you please, into Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue. In Mackail’s translation: “Then shall a second Tiphys be, and a second Argo to sail with chosen heroes; new wars too shall arise, and again a mighty Achilles be sent to Troy” (Virgil 1950: 274-275).

Now it would be possible to chart the immediate history of this obsession, perhaps from the sprightly preface Yeats wrote for Oliver Gogarty’s *An Offering of Swans and Other Poems* on 30 August 1923, up to and through the “Two Songs from a

Play” of May 1925 through to 1931 when he adds a new stanza and the poems entwine themselves into “The Resurrection”:

Another Troy must rise and set,
Another lineage feed the crow
Another Argo’s painted prow
Drive to a flashier bauble yet.
(1966a: 437; first pub. 1927)

If we did so, we might miss one vital point. The top line of the page being corrected in “The Adoration of the Magi” in **Plate 2** has one of the old men “reading out the “Fifth Eclogue of Virgil”” (a schoolboy howler, of course Yeats means the Fourth Eclogue). In the Cumaean prophecy, the “world’s great age begins anew” (Shelley 1961: 477): all the Trojan *topos* had, then, been implicit in the story as written in late 1896, and as published in 1897. Yeats renewed himself by rereading himself, the old inflects the new as the new inflects the rewriting of the old: new writing and rereading show him writing while discovering his intention to write. *Early Poems and Stories* compelled such self-intertextuality, and not merely because of the co-presence in that volume of the early verse and prose (itself, of course, Yeats’s and Macmillan’s way of defeating T. Fisher Unwin’s claim on all editions of the early verse except those in “collected editions” of the works).³⁰

It was for Yeats (as he said), “difficult to get back into the atmosphere of things written so long ago”.³¹ But, finishing *A Vision*, he needed to reread himself. Self-refurbishment in any case helped him to “make as much as I can of this new wave of interest in my work”, as he said on the award of the Nobel Prize.³²

It would be possible, perhaps, to contrast the “revisionary ratios” of “The Sorrow of Love”, the “Old Pensioner” and the “Dedication [...]”, following the lead of Harold Bloom in charting those “hidden roads” from poem to poem. Some are mere by-ways of course, as when Yeats and F. R. Higgins thought of a book for Macmillan which would offer:

a hundred Irish songs old & new [...] as in the case of *The Broad-sides* many of the traditional songs will be worked over by Higgins & myself, you cannot imagine what an improvement it is when all ‘steeds’ become ‘horses’ & all ‘maids’ ‘girls’. I find it amusing & easy work & that it incites me to write my own poetry.³³

As early as 15 June 1943, George Yeats wrote of the freedom she had accorded to Joseph Hone in the writing of his biography.

I liked the book (Joe Hone’s “Life”) because, to me, it did not spoil my own image of the man. When the book was started I arranged with Joe that I should see no script or part, because if I were to ask for that the writer would have no freedom.

When I read the book I was sure that I was right in making that decision. It was a most difficult task —to write of a man at a time when so many of his friends and relations were still alive.

But there was a further intractability: the 1949 *Poems* was still far from publication, and so she continued:

The lack of co-ordination of Yeats' poetic development with his life was almost inevitable in a book of this sort. To begin with, the "Collected Poems" (Macmillan) arranged by Yeats' [*sic*] himself, are far from being in a chronological order —as unchronological as many of the poems published in magazines etc. Then, unless a biographer's mind is naturally so concerned and saturated with poetry that he is compelled against his own will to write from that bias, what can he do but tell a story that will make a picture? Someone else will write another "Life" from the only "point of view" that I myself care for at all —poetry.³⁴

28 What is that point of view? It is, I think, the point of view of the author, in this case one who famously said that "works of art are always begotten by previous works of art", and that "images [...] yet,/Fresh images beget" (Yeats 1961: 352; 1966a: 498). Such a book would be a life of the text, and it lies beyond edited forms of it, in the history of books, in publishers' archives such as Macmillan's and in research collections of life documents and MSS. Every serious reader of Yeats engages at some level with that life of the text, which is why I am trying to write it.

For the revising author, the text is a pre-text (in both senses —an *avant-texte* and an excuse or occasion). Revising authors proceed by a series of closures. Perpetual genesis and textual imbrication can be followed by a combination of old-fashioned textual comparison with archival research into the surviving correspondence and proof states among the papers of authors, agents, publishers and printers. I find such methods permit an intimate and sustainable recuperation of that concept so derided a few years ago: intention, a recoverable, mutating, demonstrable intention not foreclosed at, or by, the publication of the text.

My argument, then, is a plea for the application of book historical methods to the construction of inner lives. It involves an accommodation of literary genetics, as practised, for example, at l'Institut des Texts et Manuscrits Modernes in Paris, and publishing history (as practised, let us say, at l'Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine) to single author bibliography. If this sounds formidable, then I have no doubt it is. An accommodation of the publishing standards of the CNRS to the representation of literary MSS in the Anglo-American tradition, where production values are quite frequently visually poor, is also long overdue.

Additional Note

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Notes

¹. See Foster ([1997] 2003).

². A by-product of working on 'life documents' and canonical works is my forthcoming *Yeats's Permanent Self*, a biography of the text itself to 1916 (when Yeats took his commercial publishing to Macmillan on the failure of A. H. Bullen's Shakespeare Head Press). I had written on Yeats's relations with Sir Frederick and Harold Macmillan elsewhere, and I wanted to know what sort of a writer Yeats had been *before* he came to Macmillan. I soon saw that a rather different kind of study could emerge from publishers' archives and the author's letters.

³. A remark made, in any case, to distinguish such rewriting from the "endless" correction of prose which, "has no fixed laws" (Yeats 1964: 22).

⁴. Elsewhere Shields extols "the feeling every poet knows of arrival home, the self returned to its self" (2003: 5).

⁵. *The Art of Poetry* (vol. 7 of the *Collected Works* of Paul Valéry) opens with an influential preface by T. S. Eliot:

I think I understand what Valéry means when he says that a poem is never finished: at least his words to this effect have a meaning for me. To me they mean that a poem is "finished", or that I will never touch it again, when I am sure that I have exhausted my own resources, that the poem is as good as I can make *that* poem. It may be a bad poem: but nothing

that I can do will make it better. Yet I cannot help thinking that, even if it is a good poem, I could have made a better poem of it—the same poem, but better—if I were a better poet (1958: xiii).

This volume includes the translation of the original passage in Valéry's "Au Sujet du *Cimetière Marin*", where he writes of the elaboration of poems over a long period, "entre l'être et le non-être", fashionable in the 1890s and at that time a custom taking on "l'importance secrète d'une entreprise de réforme de soi-même". Then there had, he says, been "une sorte d'*Ethique de la forme* qui conduisait au travail infini". Such an attitude comes "insensiblement à confondre la composition d'un ouvrage de l'esprit, qui est chose *finie*, avec la vie de l'esprit même — lequel est une puissance de transformation toujours en acte. On en arrive au travail pour le travail [...] Aux yeux de ces amateurs d'inquiétude et de perfection, un ouvrage n'est jamais *achevé* — mot qui pour eux n'a aucun sens— mais *abandonné*; et cet abandon, qui le livre aux flammes ou au public (et qu'il soit l'effet de la lassitude ou de l'obligation de livrer), leur est une sorte d'*accident*, comparable à la rupture d'une réflexion, que la fatigue, le fâcheux, ou quelque sensation viennent rendre nulle".

To Valéry, however, this was not a desirable state of affairs:

J'avais contracté ce mal, ce goût pervers de la reprise indéfinie, et cette complaisance pour l'état réversible des

oeuvres, à l'âge critique où se forme et se fixe l'homme intellectuel.

Worse was to come when he returned at the age of fifty to the writing of poetry, and was forced again to live a great deal with his poems, and for nearly ten years they became "une occupation de durée indé — un exercice plutôt qu'une délivrance, une manoeuvre de moi-même par moi-même plutôt qu'une préparation visant le public". Above all, he wrote, "Je ne conseille pas cependant que l'on adopte ce système". It seemed particularly disastrous for "une époque pressante, confuse, et sans perspective. Nous sommes dans un banc de brume [...]".

In Valéry's original context the passage looks rather different without the interpretative twist Eliot supplies when he observes that Valéry had "ceased to believe in *ends*, and was only interested in *processes*". Valéry himself had discovered that he was "much more concerned with the formation or fabrication of works [of art] than with the works themselves". Eliot translates this remark from *Variété V* in his *From Poe to Valéry* (1948: 27-8). W. H. Auden enthusiastically offers an endorsement as "a matter of principle", quoting Valéry in the preface to his *Collected Shorter Poems* (1950: 16). Auden, "nearing sixty" decided that "I know myself and my poetic intentions better" and therefore rearranged his poems in an overall chronological array, and claimed that he had "never, consciously at any rate, attempted to revise my former thoughts or feelings, only the language in which they were first expressed when on further consideration, it seemed to me inaccurate, lifeless, prolix or painful to the ear" (15-16). Thus Valéry's remark was invoked as a nostrum of English Modernism, and as an excuse for post-publication revision (which was not, of course, what Valéry had in mind).

⁶. See *British Library Additional MS 54898 f. 55, n.d.*; *British Library Additional MS. 54898 f. 138, 30 January 1922*. See also Gould (1995: 212).

⁷. W. B. Yeats to Florence Emery, 4 October 1914 (Private).

⁸. See 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", in Gould (1988: 108-133, esp. at 118).

⁹. See *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*. Ed. Warwick Gould, John Kelly, Deirdre Toomey. *Volume II, 1896-1900* and *Volume III, 1901-1904: 107-108, n.1*.

¹⁰. Peter Kuch has discussed the textual changes in relation to "the distinction that [George] Russell draws between the Irish imagination and the European imagination", seeing the rewriting as a move towards "Europeanism". See his "A Few Twigs from the Wild Bird's Nest: Yeats the European": 103-5.

¹¹. Yeats offers another perspective on his association with W. E. Henley, editor of *The Scots Observer*, who "rewrote my poems as he re-wrote the early verse of Kipling, and though I do not think I ever permanently accepted his actual words I always knew he had found a fault" (Yeats 1973: 38) (I am grateful to Deirdre Toomey who alerted me to the possibilities of this passage).

¹². First published in *The Scots Observer*, 15 November 1890. The text here is as in *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics* (1892).

¹³. "X" is George Russell (AE). Other comments place the conversation as occurring on the Two Rock Mountain, southwest of Dublin, eg., "Russell has just come in from a long walk on the Two Rock mountain, very full of his conversation with an old religious beggar, who kept repeating, "God possesses the heavens, but He covets the earth—He covets the earth" (Yeats 1893: 249). See also Yeats (1966a: 844), and "My Friend's Book" (Yeats 1961: 412-413) for AE's meditating there.

¹⁴. The galleys are dated 8 Oct, 1924 (Berg Collection, New York Public Library). *Early Poems and Stories* was published on 22 September, 1925.

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¹⁵. which, in even more altered form, he quickly published in the *Irish Statesman*, 8 Nov 1924.

¹⁶. A few examples only will suffice: "They had hands like claws, and their knees/Were twisted like the old thorn-trees"; the "old thorns innumerable" of "My House"; "What though they danced! those days are gone,/Said the wicked, crooked hawthorn tree" (1966a: 208, 419, 788); trees on the west coast of Ireland "grown into the semblance of tattered beggars flying with bent heads towards the east" (in "Rosa Alchemica"; see Yeats [1992: 137]). Yeats's change produces some arresting reactions: Tom Paulin, for instance, tells me that he thinks "Green oak and poplar tree" is the best line in the whole set of verses. Few, I imagine, automatically associate poplars with Ireland.

¹⁷. National Library of Ireland, MS 13589. The transcription offers a necessarily simplified view of a very difficult draft.

¹⁸. Wayne K. Chapman develops these ideas of the "adaptive complex" in *Yeats and English Renaissance Literature* (1991: 137 & ff).

¹⁹. The MS can be found in the National Library of Ireland, MS 13589, and the date is established by the MS of "The Death of the Hare".

²⁰. Yeats wrote to Harold Macmillan while preparing proof of *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*, "Please leave the section called "Words for Music Perhaps" as I have arranged every poem with its number. It is a series of poems related one to another & leads up to a quotation from The Delphic oracle, as the two other series "A Man Young & Old" and "A Woman Young & Old" lead up to quotations from Sophocles. The poems in "Words for Music Perhaps" describe first wild loves, then the normal love of boy & girl, then follow poems about love but not love poems, then poems of impersonal ecstasy & all have certain themes in common" (*British Library Additional*, MS. 55003 f. 147). Harold Macmillan's reply on 9 August 1933 was that the "explanation of the scheme" had been

"very interesting" and that "the numbering will make the arrangements clear" (*British Library Additional*, MS. 55743 f. 19).

²¹. When I wrote these poems, I had so meditated over the images that came to me in writing "Ballads and Lyrics", "The Rose", and "The Wanderings of Oisín", and other images from Irish folk-lore, that they had become true symbols. I had sometimes when awake, but more often in sleep, moments of vision, a state very unlike dreaming, when these images took upon themselves what seemed an independent life and became part of a mystic language, which seemed as if it would bring me some strange revelation. Being troubled at what was thought a reckless obscurity, I tried to explain myself in lengthy notes, into which I put all the little learning I had, and more wilful phantasy than I now think admirable, though what is most mystical still seems to me the most true. I quote in what follows the better or the more necessary passages (Yeats 1966a: 800). The cut passages are recoverable in the *Variorum Edition*, but a broad summary might be helpful. Yeats cut entirely the notes entitled "'Aedh", "Hanrahan" and "Michael Robartes" in these Poems", "'A Cradle Song". "Michael Robartes asks Forgiveness because of his many Moods" and "Michael Robartes Bids His Beloved be at Peace". Passages within notes were cut, such as those from "A solar mythologist" to "little at a time" (in the note to "Mongan laments the Change that has come upon him and his Beloved" and "Hanrahan laments because of his Wanderings"); from "It is possible" to "different countries" (in the note to "The Valley of the Black Pig"), from "Two Birds" to "forgetfulness" in the note to "The Secret Rose", which removes the entire history of Cuchulain, recoverable from Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*. In the same note, the gesture to Yeats's source for Caoilte mac Rónáin ("I am writing away from most of my books") is made more triumphantly evasive: "maybe I only read it in Mr. Standish O'Grady, who has a fine imagination, for I find no such story in Lady Gregory's book". The same note is further cross-referred to Yeats's own *Deirdre* (Yeats 1966a: 814).

²². Such closing questions are a well-known signature of Yeats. See Smith (1968) and Zimmerman (1983). They were a characteristic of his work from very early on, and pervade the 1899 volume.

Surely thine hour has come, thy great
wind blows,

Far-off, most secret, and inviolate rose?

Where Yeats also uses a characteristically troubling polysyllable in a last line, something Shelley—"Ode to the West Wind" was Yeats's model here—did not.

²³. "He was completing a long process of self-examination, concentrated since 1912 but going back at least to the aftermath of Synge's death" (Foster 2003: 526).

²⁴. See "Burnt Norton", ll. 152-6 and "East Coker", 176-184.

²⁵. It is this which drew my attention to that mysterious dotted line from reader back to author in Robert Darnton's communications circuit in his 1982 essay "What is the History of Books?". See his *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (1990: 107-135). Readership studies are already a growth area in the History of the Book. I imagine that the study of authors as self-readers (within that larger field) could in future qualify theories of reading, and help the History of Books to provide a new context for criticism.

²⁶. *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*. (2002). Accession No. 4669 (7 November 1924).

²⁷. *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*. (2002). Accession No. 4670 (7 November 1924).

²⁸. *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*. (2002). Accession No. 4672 (12 November 1924); Accession No. 4675 (13 November 1924).

²⁹. As Yeats himself acknowledges in "Dust hath closed Helen's Eye". See Yeats (1959: 28).

³⁰. Letters from Yeats to his agent, A. P. Watt, and to Ernest Benn. *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*. (2002). Accession Nos. 4277 (31 January 1923) and 4280 (2 February 1923).

³¹. Letter from Yeats to A. P. Watt, quoted in a letter from Watt to Messrs. Macmillan. *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*. (2002). Accession No. 4628 (19 August 1924).

³². Quoted in a letter from Yeats to A. P. Watt, in a letter from Watt to Sir Frederick Macmillan. *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*. (2002). Accession No. 4405 (20 November 1923).

³³. ALS to Edith Shackleton Heald, und 1937, Harvard.

³⁴. TLS Private.

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