

*A Vision* (1925) A Review Essay  
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*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.<sup>1</sup> 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,<sup>2</sup> since Yeats spoke 'to AE's Hermetic Society on his lunar symbolism' in November 1918,<sup>3</sup> and in June 1919 Yeats asked one of his Instructors if he could lecture 'to Meads Quest on system in Sep. or Oct.' (*YVP*2 299), [266] though tonsillitis disrupted his schedule and it is not clear if he ever did.<sup>4</sup> Yeats counted both among his 'old fellow students' of the esoteric (*CW*13 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.<sup>5</sup> 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,

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<sup>1</sup> It is the only review mentioned in the volume under review: eds. Catherine E. Paul and Margaret Mills Harper, *A Vision: The Original 1925 Version, The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* Volume XIII (New York: Scribner, 2008), xxi. Subsequent references follow the norm for the *Collected Works*, with the abbreviation *CW*13 in the text. References with simply a page number are automatically to this volume, as is the case with multiple citations.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> J. S. Kelly, *A. W. B. Yeats Chronology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 202.

<sup>4</sup> They were far from alone. In a letter of October 1918, Oliver St John 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).

<sup>5</sup> 'A Vision', *The Irish Statesman*, 13 February 1926, 714–16. The full review is printed in *CH* 269–73. This and the others are also available at [www.yeatsvision.com/reviews/](http://www.yeatsvision.com/reviews/) (consulted June 2008).

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.<sup>6</sup>

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 surrounding C. W. Leadbeater to found the Quest Society in 1909.<sup>7</sup> 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’.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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 a 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 Giralduus (who remains one of the best candidates), but then proceeds to require that there should be

<sup>6</sup> *The Irish Statesman*, 13 February 1926, 715. The reviews are so short that, from here on, I shall dispense with page references.

<sup>7</sup> 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 n11 (cited *Life* 2 700 n19). 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’ in a private journal, *Mem* 282.

<sup>8</sup> 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’, letter January 1926, ed. R. Taylor, *Frank Pearce Sturm: His Life, Letters, and Collected Work* (Urbana, Chicago & London: University of Illinois Press, 1969) 88.

<sup>9</sup> ‘A Vision’, *The Quest* 18:1, October 1926, 96–98.

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 [268] enjoys a moment of mild apoplexy at Yeats’s *Homenorum*, ‘a “howler” for which Smith Minor at 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’,<sup>10</sup> 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’.<sup>11</sup>

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’.<sup>12</sup> 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 into the realms of the ambiguous’.<sup>13</sup> 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- [269] cances he actually unveils’ which is in its turn ‘the outcome of a slightly

<sup>10</sup> Letter to Ignatius MacHugh, 28 May [1926], cited *Life* 2 313.

<sup>11</sup> 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).

<sup>12</sup> ‘The Visionary Yeats’, *The New Statesman*, 27 March 1926, 749–50.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Mr. Yeats’s Occultism’, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 22 April 1926, 296.

wistful, slightly petulant, distaste for the surface 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 surface 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",'<sup>14</sup> 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- [269] 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.

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<sup>14</sup> In the phrase 'The Summum Bonum', 'the' has a capital in *AVA* (and *CW13*) but not in the review.

Apart from a brief notice in *The Adelphi*,<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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?<sup>17</sup>

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*.<sup>18</sup> Wilson, however, concludes that *A Vision*'s various wheels 'have [271] 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

<sup>15</sup> *Adelphi*, 4:4, 26 October 1926, 266.

<sup>16</sup> '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.

<sup>17</sup> 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).

<sup>18</sup> See Ch. 1 and n. 17 above for bibliographical details. Hereafter *WOT*.

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 an 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 [272] it may be in the words; they must affect my judgment of friends and of events’.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> *AVB* also offers greater indications, both direct and indirect, of Yeats’s own belief in the system—and more importantly the limits of his

<sup>19</sup> *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (Dundrum: Cuala Press, 1929), 32–33, dated ‘November 23rd. 1928’.

<sup>20</sup> The cloak had been publicly lifted in *A Packet for Ezra Pound*.

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 [273] 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),<sup>21</sup> 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'.<sup>22</sup> It may still sometimes be regarded as an eccentricity but it is certainly part of the work as a whole, one of the only texts of Yeats's much

<sup>21</sup> Donald H. Reiman, *Romantic Texts and Contexts* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987), 170.

<sup>22</sup> 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*', *YAACTSI* (1983), 59.

revised *oeuvre* to appear in two distinct versions within the *Collected Works* [273] series, certainly the only one to appear as two separate volumes.<sup>23</sup>

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 (*YAI* 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.... (*YAI* 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' (*YAI* 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 [275] 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

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<sup>23</sup> 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*.

important periods' (*CW13* xliv) and they choose the example of how some of the ideas of group souls and 'covens', 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).<sup>24</sup> 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* xliii)<sup>25</sup>

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 [276] 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:

<sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> 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).

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 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 [277] 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.<sup>26</sup>

### 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,<sup>27</sup> 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

<sup>26</sup> 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.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, volumes of the *Collected Works* which he edited *CW1* 9–13, *CW3* 13–29 and *CW8* xvii–xl.

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* xlix), rather than floating as snippets from an unknown context.<sup>28</sup>

[278] 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* xlix). 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

<sup>28</sup> 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 rel[ate] that supersensual environment to itself’ (*CW13* 265; *YVP4* 233) instead of ‘to reach that superessential environment for itself’ (*CVA* Notes 30).

strange ‘Initial Point Gregorian Zodiac Fixed by Hipparchus at Equinox 150 B.C.’ (*CVA* Notes 38) is restored to ‘Initial Point Grecian Zodiac’ (*CW13* [279] 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).<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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’.<sup>31</sup> 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  
[280]  
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*

<sup>29</sup> A number of these were raised by Warwick Gould’s review of *CVA* in *Notes and Queries*, 28 (1981) 458–460, 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* 377–382). 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.

<sup>30</sup> It occurs at the opening of the Second Partition, ‘The Cure of Melancholy’, The First Section, Member, Subsection, ‘Unlawful Cures rejected’.

<sup>31</sup> Frank Pearce Sturm, 86

(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 Khalīfah Hārūn al-Rashīd with a bloodstain’.<sup>32</sup> 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’.<sup>33</sup> 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,<sup>34</sup> 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 [281] 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).<sup>35</sup> 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”’.<sup>36</sup> 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

<sup>32</sup> *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 Mathers*, 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.

<sup>33</sup> *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*, 4: 513.

<sup>34</sup> *The Contemporary Review* LXXII, September 1897.

<sup>35</sup> 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).

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in *L* 922 as ‘Man can embody truth but he cannot know it’, Ann Saddlemyer gives the wording of Pelham’s original copy (*BG* 559); see *WOT* 264.

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”’ (*CWI3* 158), the editors open their note with reference to Ellmann’s and Jeffares’s attribution of the quotation to Proclus (*CWI3* 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 [282] 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.<sup>37</sup> 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”’.<sup>38</sup> 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 Antoninus, son of Eustathius, that

<sup>37</sup> 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’ (μυθώδης) and ‘formless’ (ᾠειδέης) in *Builders of My Soul*, 114.

<sup>38</sup> *The Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* Vol. 17, 317.

soon ‘a fabulous and formless darkness shall tyrannise over the fairest things on the earth’.<sup>39</sup>

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 ’επι γης κάλλιτα’, together in a novel way.<sup>40</sup>

*The Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* is also behind another source that is said to be unknown, ‘the rather obscure Xenaias’ (*CW13* 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 *Encyclopaedia* in 1987.<sup>41</sup> The edi- [283] 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’,<sup>42</sup> while Athanasius’s *Life of St Anthony* refers to him as ‘the athlete’,<sup>43</sup> 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’.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup>

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

<sup>39</sup> *The Philosophy of Plotinus: The Gifford Lectures at St. Andrews, 1917–1918* 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1918), 26. Yeats’s copy (*YL* 954) contains marginalia referring to *A Vision*.

<sup>40</sup> ‘τι μυθώδες καί ’αιιδές σκότος τυραννήσει τα ’επι γης κάλλιτα’ as given in Thomas Whittaker *The Neo Platonists: A Study in the History of Hellenism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1901) p. 133.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Yeats and Bishop Xenaias’, *Notes and Queries* 34 (1987) 56–7.

<sup>42</sup> *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’.

<sup>43</sup> *The Life of St Anthony*, 12.

<sup>44</sup> 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.

<sup>45</sup> 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).

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 various possibilities have been offered.<sup>46</sup> 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 [284] 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'.<sup>47</sup>

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*'.<sup>48</sup> 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 [285] 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 typescript 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

<sup>46</sup> Gould, *Notes and Queries*, 28 (1981), 459–460,

<sup>47</sup> Trans. J. M. Rigg, *The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio* 2 vols (London: A. H. Bullen, 1903; *YL* 132) Second Day, Seventh Novella.

<sup>48</sup> The couplet is also used by Arrigo Boito, the librettist 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: CUP, 1983), 29.

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’.<sup>49</sup>

In reference to the opposition of St John and Christ (*CWI3* 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).<sup>50</sup> 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 *CVA* 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’ (*CWI3* 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 [286] 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).

<sup>49</sup> NLI MS 36,276, 2 recto and 5 recto. This notebook is also called the PIAL Notebook and, under this name, a selection of pages from the book will be included in the National Library of Ireland’s virtual exhibition at [www.nli.ie/yeats/](http://www.nli.ie/yeats/) (this exhibit not ready at the time of writing).

<sup>50</sup> 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.

If the editors give a strong sense of *AVA*'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.<sup>51</sup> 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 *AVA* 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 [287] 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'.<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Colin McDowell commented on several occasions that George Mills Harper's 'knowledge of *A Vision B* is extremely sketchy' (*YALI* 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.

<sup>52</sup> Frank Pearce Sturm, 90, cited *CW13* 235.

<sup>53</sup> 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

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 detail. Giraldus'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 had made available to him' (*CW13* xliii) bringing greater distance and abstraction. It is no coincidence [288] 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).<sup>54</sup> 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

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(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/](http://www.nli.ie/yeats/).

<sup>54</sup> 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).

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 [289] ‘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*.<sup>55</sup> 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

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<sup>55</sup> 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 Giralduus 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.

creates quandaries, and the majority of the amendments, listed in a clear table at the end of the volume (*CW13* 353–364), are unexceptionable. Though the editors note that [290] 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* 340–352). 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),<sup>56</sup> but why not his other ones, such as ‘simulacra’ for ‘simulacrae’ (183) and ‘Archons’ for ‘Arcons’ (199ff)?<sup>57</sup> And if the editors must change ‘Dostoieffsky’ to ‘Dostoyevsky’ (43 & al.) or ‘Tolstoi’ to ‘Tolstoy’ (173) for the sake of ‘standard Anglicization’ (356 & 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, [291] 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

<sup>56</sup> Though ‘Sybil’ on page 204 has somehow slipped through the net.

<sup>57</sup> 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.

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  at the top [292] left just beyond the inner circle is marked , 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 *AVA* 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).<sup>58</sup>

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 ‘Fauré’ (299), and the Sepher Yetzirah as ‘Yetzivah’ (321).<sup>59</sup> 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 [293] ‘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.<sup>60</sup> However, the triumph of persuading the publishers of the importance of using red ink (the first time since *AVA* 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 (Ivi),<sup>61</sup> 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’,

<sup>58</sup> 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)’ the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* (*YL* 855), which Yeats used for this section, gives ‘12x2200’ (I: 185) or some 26,400.

<sup>59</sup> I would question the transcription of Ὀρειγένης as ‘Oregenes’ (300), but it appears to have some currency.

<sup>60</sup> The text of *AVA* does not explicitly refer to the colours, unlike *AVB* 256.

<sup>61</sup> The quotation about Odin’s self-sacrifice also omits ‘my’ from ‘a sacrifice to my (highest) Self’ (249).

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.<sup>62</sup>

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’ (*CWI3* 168). The editors repeat the note [294] from *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’ (*CWI3* 112–

<sup>62</sup> 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’ (*CWI3* 101) in the 630s.

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 [295] (*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 ‘13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 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* xlix) 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 [296] 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 Yeateses' 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.