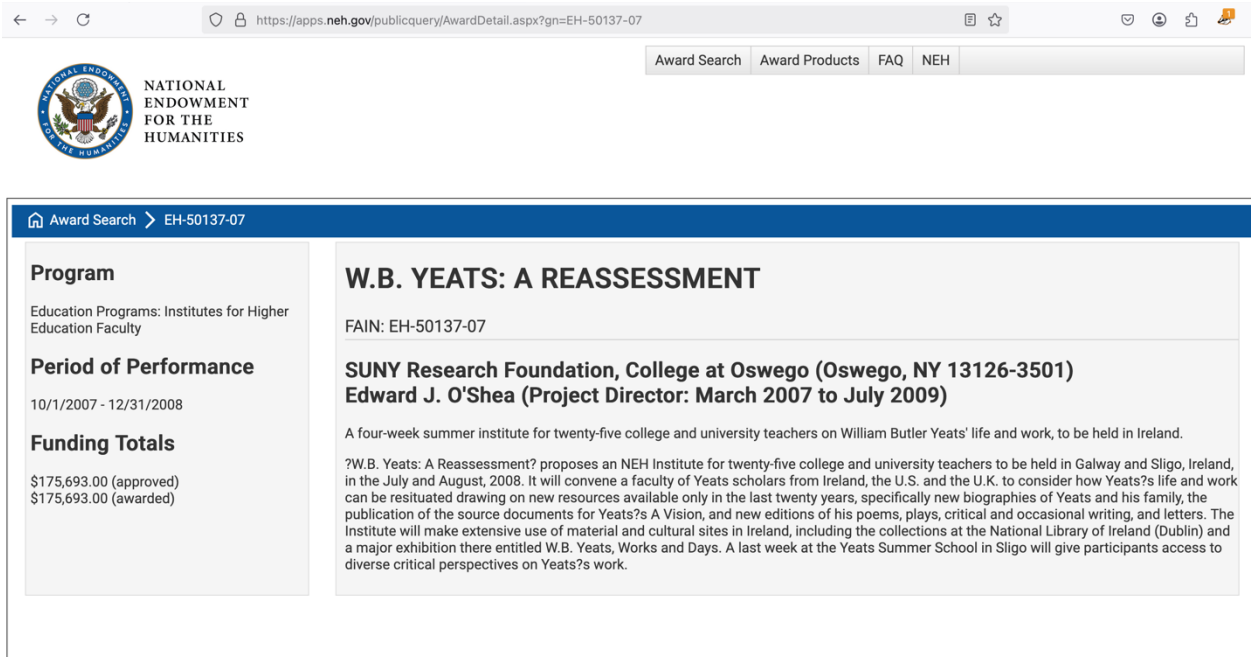
"W. B. Yeats: A Reassessment"*:* An NEH Institute for College and University Teachers, 2008

Introductory Background

In 2008, the US National Endowment for the Humanities funded "W. B. Yeats: A Reassessment," a four-week summer institute for twenty-five college and university teachers on William Butler Yeats's life and work in Ireland.

Professor Edward O'Shea's proposal set out a plan to convene "a faculty of Yeats scholars from Ireland, the U.S. and the U.K. to consider how Yeats's life and work can be resituated drawing on new resources available only in the last twenty years, specifically new biographies of Yeats and his family, the publication of the source documents for Yeats's *A Vision*, and new editions of his poems, plays, critical and occasional writing, and letters" (apps.neh.gov/publicquery/AwardDetail.aspx?gn=EH-50137-07). See the final report itself (attached) for further details.



The Institute's website, www.yeatsinstitute.org, expired in 2009, though parts can still be accessed via the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine: web.archive.org/web/20081209043620/http://www.yeatsinstitute.org:80/ .

Sadly, when the website went, it took the Institute's Final Report with it, though again, the

Wayback Machine does provide access—
web.archive.org/web/20081210125201/http://www.yeatsinstitute.org:80/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=50

As the report does not seem to be readily available elsewhere—with the approval of Ed O'Shea—I am making it available on yeatsvision.com (https://www.yeatsvision.com/WBY-Reassessment-NEH-2008.pdf), since I think it is an interesting and valuable document, not least about *A Vision* and its place in Yeats studies (section III, p. 19ff).

The version that follows has been slightly reformatted from the text that was sent to me by one of the participants to increase legibility (a list of participants appears at the end of the report).

Neil Mann

FINAL REPORT
"W. B. Yeats: A Reassessment"
An NEH Institute for College and University Teachers
Galway, Dublin, Sligo, Ireland
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INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

What follows is the product of a joint effort by the director and the participants in "W. B. Yeats: A Reassessment" to encapsulate four weeks of intense study and discussion in Galway, Dublin, and Sligo in summer, 2008. While the Institute faculty identified elsewhere on this site were extensively consulted in a variety of formats to produce this report, the conclusions and opinions expressed below are not necessarily theirs. Nevertheless, we thank them most emphatically for their help and advice.

We recognize that the premise of this Institute, to produce a "synchronic" view of the state of Yeats scholarship and Yeats studies in 2008, is highly artificial, but we hope also very useful. For the material resources and the discourse about a major poet like Yeats are strongly dynamic and changing.

A number of the projects cited in this report, *The Cornell Manuscript Series,* the various collections of letters to and from W. B. Yeats, and new biographies, are in various states of completion, and when they **are** completed or when they appear, they will further change the Yeatsian landscape. But it also is undeniably true that the "Yeats" we know today has changed immeasurably since, to cite one landmark publication, Richard Finneran's edition of *The Poems of W. B. Yeats* in 1983, which is now, difficult to imagine, 25 years old.

The text or properly "texts" of Yeats's work, most particularly his poems, have been a major focus of the Institute. We might describe the period that we are in, in regard to the text of the *poems*, as one of "détente." A small number of editions of the poems seem now to be used somewhat indiscriminately and non-judgmentally by most scholars and general readers. It is symptomatic that the Yeats Summer School recommends, without preference, the Richard Finneran edition, that of Jeffares-Gould, or Daniel

Albright's. While all reputable contemporary editions of Yeats's poems agree on the "new" re-ordering of *Last Poems,* i.e. beginning with "Under Ben Bulben" and ending with "Politics," consensus ends there. The debate over whether to order the poems more or less chronologically or to divide them according to "Lyrical" and "Narrative and Dramatic" seems to have faded in importance and seems less crucial to contemporary readers. Yeats's typical reader is now more likely (for better or worse) to encounter him in an academic setting. As Daniel Albright has noted, the circumstance of a contemporary bookstore reader being repulsed by finding "The Wanderings of Oisin" as the first poem in a collected Yeats edition (as it is in Albright's) seems risible or merely quaint.

The ideal of an "Authoritative Edition" of Yeats's work, most specifically his poems, but of all of his works, has received intense scrutiny and now seems highly problematic. Most tellingly, at least one of the early defenders of the concept of the "Authoritative Text," George Bornstein, coming under the influence social text theory, most specifically that of Jerome McGann, has rejected this concept in the Yeats chapters of his book *Material Modernism* (2001). Other editors, such as Daniel Albright explicitly and in practice reject a strictly positivist approach to establishing texts (based on manuscript evidence alone) for one that admits esthetic and critical judgment. James Pethica's *Yeats's Poetry, Drama, and Prose* (Norton, 2000) is indicative of a new emphasis on either historical printings (which show better Yeats's esthetic and stylistic development than the "homogenized" versions in various collected editions) or on the necessity to read at least certain of Yeats's poems embedded in their rich contextual circumstances. "September 1913" is one of the most notable examples studied extensively in the Institute.

Interestingly, the fierce "textual wars" alluded to in the body of this report seem to have exempted Yeats's other genres. For example, the volume of *The Plays* in the Scribner's series did not generate the kind of controversy attendant on the publication of *The Poems,* perhaps because of critical exhaustion or the implicit recognition that Yeats's poems are his privileged texts for contemporary readers.

When we consider the "life" of W. B. Yeats as it has been continued to be written in the last 25 years, several patterns have emerged. As new biographies of Yeats and his contemporaries have been written, we might imagine that the Celtic mists that encircled and obscured the craggy peak that we name "Yeats" have lifted, and what has emerged more clearly is an encircling rank of lesser peaks and foothills. Put

another way, because of new biographical work, we now have a much stronger sense of the cultural-political context in which Yeats worked as well as the complex social-familial network that energized and at times enervated the poet. Clearly, as this report indicates, we need to revise the Romantic myth of the genius-poet working in splendid and mysterious isolation and recognize that Yeats was a collaborator par excellence, from his early work editing the Quaritch Blake with Edwin Ellis, through his theatrical collaborations with Lady Gregory at the Abbey, continuing with the automatic scripts produced with George Yeats, to his late jointly-edited work with Dorothy Wellesley. What has yet to be explored fully is how the categories of gender and nationality factor into these relationships, to note that Yeats's collaborators were often women or individuals from emerging British colonies or former colonies, particularly India, and that these categories produced an asymmetry of power in the collaborations.

Roy Foster's two volume biography has become inevitably the "biography of record" for Yeats. To take just a few examples, our understanding of the complex personal, political, and compositional circumstances of the delayed publication of "Easter 1916" are immeasurably enhanced by Foster's discussion, as is Yeats's flirtation with the Irish Blueshirt party in the 1930's. After reading Foster, adumbrated by Ann Saddlemyer's parallel discussions in *Becoming George* (a rewarding strategy), we now understand much more fully Yeats's "Baghdad" period in the Thirties when he pursued complicated dalliances with Margot Ruddock, Ethel Mannin, Dorothy Wellesley, and Edith Shackleton Heald. We also understand much more clearly George Yeats's role in enabling these "parallel lives," and we can speculate with much greater assurance as to why it happened. Ann Saddlemeyer's discussion of the Steinach operation and her speculation about the role Ethel Mannin played in Dr. Norman Haire's "therapeutic" strategy for WBY, were particularly fascinating revelations in the Institute.

It should be said that Foster's biography does not claim to be a critical biography, and while his critical judgments, when they occur, are generally sound, there are occasional lapses, as with his claim that *The Words Upon the Window-Pane* "was the best play WBY had written (or would write)" (II.410). *The Words Upon the Window-Pane* was in fact exactly the type of Ibsenesque drama that Yeats typically rejected, and it is less impressive esthetically than the best of the Noh plays, such as *The Only Jealousy of Emer.*

Terence Brown's biography, *The Life of W. B. Yeats*, freed from the necessity to be comprehensive, makes a virtue of its shorter length, and its concise chapters give us a better sense of the "shape" of Yeats's life. His chapters on the "Occult Marriage" and his analysis of the circumstances and reasons for the lapse into conventionality of W. B.'s and George's once seemingly idyllic marriage (particularly of the Thoor Ballylee period) are some of the most sensitive and perceptive in Yeatsian biography.

Despite the abundance of new biography, and one should mention William Murphy's work on JBY and the Yeats family and further elaboration of the lifetime work of Elizabeth and Lily Yeats by a number of commentators, more remains to be done. James Pethica, in his research for the authorized biography of Lady Gregory, has unearthed fascinating information on Robert Gregory's marital infidelity, which episode he argues, is elaborately encoded into Yeats's elegies for Gregory, particularly "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory." While Maud Gonne's influence on the composition of "Easter 1916" has been long noted, Pethica, using new archival resources, has argued for a stronger presence and influence of Lady Gregory on that poem.

As the following report makes clear, the primary and secondary materials now available for understanding *A Vision* and Yeats's so-called "system" work are abundant, from the "automatic scripts" which were the genetic resources for the two states of *A Vision* to newly-edited critical editions of both editions, "A" and "B," by Margaret Mills Harper and Catherine Paul, which are either in hand or in process. We note, however, Margaret Mills Harper's statement that while, for example, the automatic scripts have been available for a number of years, they have been under-utilized by Yeats researchers. One challenge for *A Vision* studies is to release them, as far as is feasible, from the hermetic, self-reflexive terminology and formulations of Yeats's system and to reconcile them to a wider social-cultural and critical context where they can be more generally available to a larger readership.

Margaret Mills Harper begins to do this in *The Wisdom of Two* where she contextualizes the automatic scripts specifically in the ethos of 19th- and early 20th-century spiritualism. She also shows how the insights of recent critical theory (on "authorship" and the construction of the "subject," for example) can be profitably deployed to understand the complex working relationship between W. B. and George Yeats in the production of the scripts and *A Vision.*

Institute faculty returned more than once to consider how Yeats himself attempted to control the framework in which his work was to be read by contemporary and future readers and critics, as for example, by his frequent use of apparently rhetorical questions in his poetry and by specific formulations in poems such as "The Choice" where Yeats encourages readers and critics to dichotomize the "man of action" and the "poet of contemplation." Similarly, Yeats's statement that "We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry" (*Per Amica, 331)* has been endlessly quoted and enormously influential, arguably obscuring the fact that Yeats made from the quarrel with *others* some of his best poetry, including "September 1913," "Easter 1916," and "A Prayer for My Daughter."

As the report that follows notes, historicizing and contextual criticism has always predominated in Yeats studies, not surprising for a poet who was so relentlessly and self-consciously involved in his country's political and social history in its most formative stage. But as the list of dissertations and theses included in the last section of this report shows, Yeats criticism continues to be eclectic and diverse.

But this report **does** signal a need for more "interdisciplinary" criticism in Yeats studies, and in this respect it reinforces a point made by Margaret Mills Harper, that Yeatsian criticism has, historically, been compartmentalized, i.e., one wrote biography or established Yeats's texts, or studied Yeats's political poetry, his "system," or "gendered Yeats," but that these categories were seldom transgressed, either in a single study or in one career, and that new alignments represent a productive future direction for Yeats studies. This report also states a need to extricate Yeats from a Eurocentric context and to explore parallel interests and developments among African and South American writers, but not necessarily along the lines of "influence."

This report has been edited to achieve uniformity of format, but it does **not** follow Yeats's dictum to "hammer all thought into unity." It is, after all, the product of almost two dozen teacher-scholars with diverse interests and perspectives, and it reflects that diversity. But these are exactly the individuals who will need to convey to and to re-imagine "Yeats" for a new generation of readers. The premise that we work from here is that the study and teaching of Yeats will benefit most from opening itself to new talent, new perspectives and new methodologies, and that a "gate-keeping" mentality by the "Yeats Industry" will

finally only impede, to rework a quotation from Michel Foucault, "the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition" of "W. B. Yeats."

I. W. B. YEATS: THE STATE OF THE TEXT

1. Introduction

What does it mean to be a textual scholar? How does textual scholarship differ from other types of literary scholarship? How is it reliant upon or compatible with other types of criticism? And what are the probable uses of the results of textual scholarship? We may find it advantageous to redefine Textual Scholarship as *Generative Scholarship*–study of the genesis of a literary artefact and of the creative process as supported by material evidence.

In a sense, the textual scholar begins in "the rag and bone shop" of the creative process. The practice of textual scholarship is dependent upon examining the materials from the earliest stages of genesis or production of a literary work of art. The first markings in which image and idea are transliterated into language are of interest, not perhaps at first in themselves, but in retrospect. An ideal textual scholar is one who works inductively, without hypotheses and without ego. An ideal textual studies approach is to be a recorder and a hoarder of data—*before* indulging in any attempts at critical evaluation of the "meaning" of these marks. Such objectivity may not be sustainable; however, it is advisable since we cannot predict the meaningfulness of a given mark or squiggle that may be of importance to scholars in the future. Therefore, the textual scholar should be able to approach the material evidence with the attitude of a forensic detective—recording (and eventually analyzing) paper types and conditions, watermarks, inks, pencil and other markings, incidental stains, and the vicissitudes of time and weather.

There are times in which biographical knowledge adds to the ability to collate and eventually evaluate the material evidence. For example, if we see that W. B. Yeats used both red ink and blue ink on a looseleaf school notebook and that some leaves of this notebook are more brown than others, regardless of their sequence, and that the blue ink on some of these brown pages (say, only on some recto or verso sides) is faded more than on the not-so-brown pages, or that the red ink is runny on the unfaded leaves, it

is helpful to know that he was sitting in the sun in Majorca on certain afternoons while working on this material, while on other, rainy, days he worked indoors out of the sun in a damp parlor or bedroom. Letters may confirm these shifts of location.

Perhaps the greatest difference between textual scholarship and other types of literary scholarship is in this need for objectivity. Unlike critics who bring a theoretical lens to an interpretation of a text (e.g., Marxist, Freudian, Feminist, Structuralist, Reader-Response/receptionist, phenomenological-hermeneutical, semiotic) or indeed unlike those critics who try *not* to bring any biographical or interpretive baggage to a reading of the text (e.g., the old New Critics of the "a poem should not mean but *be*" variety), textual scholars fundamentally record evidence before they evaluate.

The pre-computer days of editing are only partly superseded or made easier in the computer age. The advantages of faithfully recording material evidence, in withholding critical evaluation until substantial amounts of evidence have been described, and of allowing for the *multiplicity* of valid readings and acceptable though differing states (as George Bornstein discusses in his book *Material Modernism*) are perhaps the most important distinctions between textual and other forms of critical approaches to literature.

Since the Gabler/Kidd controversy over James Joyce's *Ulysses*, textual scholars realize the futility of the term *definitive text* (an invention of the publisher's advertising department). Critical theory has gone postmodern in that it realizes we must allow that postmodern theory encourages us to accept that there can never be a final truth, whether in interpretive reading/understanding of a literary work of art, or in privileging authorial intention in establishing copy text.

Textual scholarship can only provide carefully edited texts. How that material is used is not to be determined by textual scholars but by future teachers, readers, and critics. And the work is never completed. In transcribing manuscript materials, there is ample room for human error—misprints, misreadings, misunderstandings, and omissions that future editors will need to address. Even when all the manuscripts and typescripts have been transcribed, there will then be work to do… "vision and revision."

The holdings at the Berg Collection, New York Public Library, the Yeats microfilm archive at SUNY Stonybrook, the manuscript collections at SUNY Buffalo and at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and the extensive collections at the National Library of

Ireland will remain as meccas for the few scholars who must see the originals. For most, however, the work done by the *Cornell Manuscript Series* is meant to preclude handling of originals. In reproducing as faithfully as editors could transcribe and as photofacsimiles could (in their historical moment of production) show the contents and condition of individual leaves, a great service has been done that may or may not be useful to future scholars' understanding of the creation of individual works by Yeats. Which raises the question: what is there left for scholars—often encouraged by academia especially in America to pursue "fashionable" theoretical approaches—to do?

New methods of textual scholarship will also include evolving technologies. Hypertexts and other electronic versions of literary works are by definition primarily concerned with content, but they can also describe and simulate physical states—which, for that matter, is what has been done (in black and white photofacsimiles and described in footnotes) in the *Cornell Manuscript Series.* The role of advancing technologies will be addressed below.

2. Textual Scholarship concerning W. B. Yeats

Textual scholarship concerning the work of W. B. Yeats may be considered by some to be old fashioned, but the history of his texts—the changes in the versions and ordering of his poems—is part of the story of Yeats's ever-evolving canon. From the *Variorum Edition* to the debates over the English and American publications of *The Collected Poems* to the impressive *Cornell Manuscript Series*, readers are beginning to understand that Yeats sought to finish his texts but that there was also a countermove on his part to keep them unfinished and in flux. Each publication of a Yeats poem—often different because of authorial and editorial revisions, collaborations, and marketplace decisions—is a chapter in Yeats's idealized book of books.

3. Text Wars

In an engaging 1990 essay in the *Book Review* section of the *New York Times*, Hugh Kenner "treads softly" into the Text Wars fomented by Richard Finneran and A. Norman Jeffares, with Warwick Gould, to free Yeats and his readers from "corrupted" editions of his works. Launching his incursion into the fray with the banner headline, "Whose Yeats Is It Anyway?" Kenner quickly reduces the "design of opposites"

to this central question and concludes that Yeats himself, as the rightful owner of the text, should have the final word in any debate over "whether the arrangement [of his works] should be lyrical poems, then dramatic and narrative ones, or straightforwardly chronological."

The problem, of course, is Yeats's conflicting statements of agreement with both of these arrangements; Jeffares and Gould are certain that the chronological order is preferred, whereas Finneran insists that the narrative and dramatic texts belong at the end of the volume. For his own part, Kenner finds it difficult to sort out all of this text-rattling and confesses, "I find it's not something I can get agitated about."

Clearly Kenner is unwilling to tap into either Finneran's or Jeffares/Gould's particular perspective to mediate the battle, and now eighteen years later, the dust has settled, the quest for the definitive edition has ended (despite the false claim on the book jacket of the 1956 Macmillan edition that it is the "Definitive Edition, with the author's final revisions"), and both sides have agreed to disagree.

For textual scholars the repercussions are enormous, and they now have access to new knowledge and revelation in the *Cornell Yeats Series*, the Scribner Edition of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* and various other new editions of Yeats's poems.

4. The Future of Textual Studies in the Work of W. B. Yeats

Whatever rapprochement develops in the years ahead, several threats still loom for future scholars as they scan the landscape of textual studies of Yeats.

1. Will the new resources available in textual studies encourage or discourage emerging scholars to build on this important work?

2. Will advisors actively encourage students to make use of this work in choosing topics for theses and dissertations?

3. Will established scholars make use of these materials in rediscovering and reassessing Yeats in their own research and publication?

4. Will publishers and university presses continue to support books on Yeats and Yeats studies?

Preliminary statistical data from the last eighteen years suggest that the answers to these questions may well lean to the negative. Since 1990 only 9 of the 115 dissertations written on Yeats have titles and/or abstracts that indicate "Textual Yeats." Similarly, of over 500 journal articles on Yeats listed in the MLA International Bibliography only 8 have titles that suggest "Textual Yeats." Certainly not conclusive evidence, but enough to raise the concern that textual scholarship as it has been understood in the past may not be attracting a new generation of scholars.

Yeats scholars and researches who are interested in the existence and location of specific Yeats manuscripts need to consult Conrad A. Balliet's *W. B. Yeats. A Census of the Manuscripts* (Garland, 1990).

All of the known manuscripts of W. B. Yeats's writing have been allocated to scholars editing specific volumes in the *Cornell Manuscript Series* and the various collections of letters by or to WBY (or both) already in print or in process (see Bibliography). That is to say that the basic building blocks—manuscript transcription, ordering, etc.—that are so much the realm of the textual scholar, are already in the hands of particular scholars. But does that mean the end of Yeatsian textual scholarship, as some might be tempted to believe? Far from it. Most scholars will know by now that the future not only of textual scholarship but also of almost any publishing endeavor is in new and collaborative technologies such as online hypermedia texts, which could allow readers to view simultaneously different manuscripts versions and/or editions of the text. This is no revelation, and yet such texts have been rare in appearance, and certainly there has been no accessible digital archive of the body of Yeats's work completed.[1] The roadblocks that currently prevent a completion of a hypermedia Yeats archive are the same issues that textual scholars have dealt with whenever this type of work is undertaken—money and lawyers—with some technology-specific additions.

[1] Some digitized versions exist of poems and letters written by Yeats, including the Chadwick-Healy archive and the Oxford collection of letters; none of these archives, however, contains the complete works, nor have these versions been fully converted to hypertext/hypermedia.

For the moment, let us briefly review the context for the technological future of textual studies in Yeats. The enthusiasm for hypermedia texts,[2] as far as it concerns Yeats, began in the 1990's with prominent scholars like Richard Finneran and George Bornstein. What was conceived of in that decade—what Bornstein and his collaborators called 'the Hypermedia Yeats Project'—intended, as Bornstein tells us, "to exploit possibilities offered by the new medium" and create an electronic edition that could "surpass a printed one… in its handling of annotation, of alternate versions, and of bibliographic (as opposed to linguistic) code."[3] The possibilities of unlimited on-demand verbal and visual annotation, instant side-by-side comparison of alternate manuscripts (in digital reproduction and transcription both), and complete publishing histories in multiple media (including visual reproductions of original publication media) offered by Bornstein and others had scholars in a state of excitement, producing a flurry of hypermedia-related activity in the mid-1990's.[4]

This tantalizing hypermedia vision, populated by infinite textual connections, cross-text searchable contextual notes, and visual, oral, and textual references all available at the click of a mouse, has yet to be realized. The Hypermedia Yeats Project, like hypermedia literature in general, has run into many challenges, some of which are common enough in the scholarly world, others which are more specific to the changing nature of technology and media. Primary among these obstacles are the copyright issues encountered by most actively publishing scholars, textual or not. Coordinating multi-national laws and the collaborative efforts of major universities (each with their own Yeats-related holdings) requires extraordinary diplomatic negotiation. Marketing issues—and the question of saleability vs. open access—are the most-cited stumbling blocks to a hypermedia Yeats *oeuvre*. The sheer volume of texts, the monumental nature of the task of creating a complete hypermedia archive of Yeats' work, is its own challenge. It is

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[2] Hypertext editions, as understood in the 1990's, are thoroughly explained in John Lavignino, "Excerpted: Reading, Scholarship, and Hypertext Editions," *Journal of Electronic Publishing* (vol. 3, no. 2, Sep. 1997): http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3336451.0003.112.

[3] For a complete discussion of the conception of electronic editions of Yeats, see George Bornstein, "Beyond Codex Editing: A Prototype for the Hypermedia Yeats Project," *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies* (vol. XIV, 1996) ed. Richard J. Finneran, p. 48–58.

[4] Including not only articles such as Bornstein's, but also conference presentations such as Richard J. Finneran's "The Hypermedia Yeats" on 3 July 1996, at the Digital Resources for the Humanities conference, Somerville College, Oxford. See program archived online: http://xml.coverpages.org/drh96p.html.

unlikely that all those materials will ever be made fully available, given not only the challenges mentioned, but also the practical limitations of human effort. This is the work of generations, not an edition produced by one scholar in the space of a few months or years. Overcoming these challenges will be the work of the current and new generations of textual scholars, for there is no doubt that digital technology, even if it must always be a work in progress, is the key to a robust textual future.[5]

To even begin building that future will require more of the textual scholar than skill with words, an investigative method, and strong eyesight. Negotiators are needed, perhaps more so than they have ever been, as well as marketers and even programmers—these skills and roles will become increasingly important alongside those more traditional tasks of detection and organization.

Even if, or when, the issues currently preventing the impending explosion of techno-textual scholarship are resolved, digital editions will not, indeed cannot, replace the original manuscripts, especially when it comes to a poet so intent on revision, rewriting, and overwriting as Yeats. As James Pethica observes, only in the originals can you see "how hard he pressed the pen to the paper… you absolutely *have* to hold the thing in your hands."[6] There are bibliographic codes that can be comprehended only through tactile contact with the manuscript—the encoding of that information in a digital edition of the work cannot fully measure all that the physical artifact is.

A hypermedia Yeats must then become simply another scholarly edition, albeit one that will be perhaps the most accessible ever created. In terms of usability, hypertext, hypermedia, and searchable digital editions will surpass printed series such as the *Cornell Yeats Manuscript Series*, simply because of the natures of human scholars, who are more likely to use something if it is "just a click away," and of the technology they manipulate. Universities and libraries will need to maintain traditional collections alongside digitized collections. Hypermedia, *along with* current methods of textual study, will assist the bourgeoning sub-fields of cultural materialism and the History of the Book.

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[5] A position supported by Jerome McGann in "A Rationale for Hypertext" (May 1995): http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/public/jjm2f/rationale.html.

[6] In conversation during the course of the 2008 National Endowment for the Humanities summer institute "W. B. Yeats: A Reassessment," 23 July, National University of Ireland Galway.

If we return to where this section began, with the idea that all the currently known Yeats manuscripts are assigned and "in progress" as concerns textual scholarship, all this focus on technology seems to point to brand new directions in textual studies and the falling off of traditional modes of textual scholarship. But one must remember that the concrete, physical object—the material within reality rather than virtual reality—will never be completely plumbed. There will always be secrets that a manuscript might yet reveal. There will always be the possibility of other fragments, other objects to be discovered. Within virtual reality, we will encode the information of textual studies and allow scholars to enter Yeats's work in dramatically variant, accessible ways, and yet, even come the day when that vast work is labeled "complete," the work of the textual scholar will never be truly finished.

II. BIOGRAPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS: WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

While biographical accounts of William Butler Yeats are many since the poet's death in 1939, those interested in the man and his work are likely to rely upon two recent works: Terence Brown's *The Life of William Butler Yeats: A Critical Biography* (1999) and Roy Foster's two-volume set, *The Apprentice Mage* (1999) and *The Arch-Poet* (2003). That does not mean that other resources are not available; many will still find acclaimed scholar Richard Ellmann's *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (1948) and *The Identity of Yeats* (1964) to be foundational studies, and Ann Saddlemyer's extensive biography of Yeats's wife, *Becoming George: The Life of Mrs W. B. Yeats* (2002) is emblematic of tangential research that better contextualizes the man who is arguably Ireland's greatest poet. Many early studies, however, are all but hagiographic in nature, perhaps in part due to George Hyde-Lee Yeats, who, in her attempts to control her late husband's public image, slowed the tide of immediate biographies, apart from appreciative obituary notices, poetic elegies, and laudatory appraisals. And so it is largely to Foster and Brown that we today turn, and to combine their approaches is to provide an intriguing triangulation of Yeats's life: the former offering an abundance of fact and detail, the latter providing a measured historico-cultural approach to understanding Yeats.

Foster's extensively-researched first volume earned the James Tait Black Prize, and it is essential to note that the author is a distinguished historian rather than a literary critic. In that volume, *The Apprentice*

Mage, Foster claims to provide "historically grounded biography," examining Yeats's Victorian protestant and ascendancy backgrounds against the decline of those same institutions during the early and middle years of the poet's life. Socio-political elements—the Home Rule movement, land wars, and Ireland's nationalist agenda, for instance—comprise an objectively drawn background against which Foster arrays Yeats's emerging ideology, bringing into view a "whole range of identifications, backgrounds, experiences, epitomized by himself, his family, his collaborators, his friends: a palimpsest of Irishness which he never stopped interrogating" (xxix). Foster equally considers the intricate inspirational roles played by Lady Augusta Gregory and Maud Gonne, in particular, and as these relationships are traced, Foster returns repeatedly to the poet's complex, vexed, and sometimes painful family dramas. The initial volume ends with the beginning of the Great War—certainly an appropriate moment, if one is to situate Yeats within the scope of modernism and demonstrate chronological as well as cultural transition.

The Arch-Poet, Foster's second volume, continues to adhere to strict chronological arrangement in order to bring Yeats's ever-evolving mind and creative work into focus. Foster illustrates how Yeats, through interactions with Lady Gregory and Ezra Pound, develops ideologically and esthetically; how his marriage to George provides a sense of domesticity late in life; and how his search for spiritual grounding leads to increasingly intense and unusual occult practices. The charged atmosphere of 1915-16 is, according to Foster, a "crossroads" for Yeats, for "lying ahead were seismic transfigurations in [Yeats's] personal, artistic, political, and spiritual life" (4). Yeats's seeming disinterest in the Great War is revealed through his retreat into artistic projects and occult activities; his attempts to disengage from political chaos are filtered through the 1916 Rising, where Yeats shifted from irritation at the event to outrage at the executions to despondence and uncertainty about his lack of a role in the changed atmosphere of nationalist Ireland. Throughout his biography, Foster makes ample use of Yeats's poetry, prose, letters and autobiography to illuminate the poet's creative world. Ultimately, Foster indicates that Yeats's preoccupations included Ireland as well as the self—both of which are, to Yeats, ever-evolving, as transformation and re-creation become absolutes.

In contrast to Foster's historical account of Yeats's life, Brown's *The Life of William Butler Yeats: A Critical Biography* functions as both biography and literary interpretation, as the subtitle suggests. An epilogue, for example, focuses not on posthumous biographical events but on Yeats's influence upon later

poets both in Ireland (Patrick Kavanagh, Thomas Kinsella, Brendan Kennelly, John Montague, and Seamus Heaney) and throughout the Western world (Allen Tate, Theodore Roethke, John Berryman, Philip Larkin). Brown describes his text as "very significantly concerned with contexts"; for example, Yeats's situating of the Sligo countryside within his poems makes the area "as famous in the literary firmament as Scott's highlands" (2). Brown's eighteen-chapter organization proceeds by place and theme, such as "Victorian Cities: London and Dublin," "Occult Marriage," and "Visionary Modernist." Within each chapter, Brown provides a carefully-centered synchronous and often topical perspective of key issues in Yeats's life, each chapter serving as its own chronological container. Contextualization within contextualization frequently appears through Brown's concise synthesis, whereupon other major biographers and critics—as recent as Foster, Saddlemyer, Daniel Albright, Margaret Mills Harper, and Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, but also earlier writers such as Ellmann, Joseph Hone, and A. Norman Jeffares—serve as scholars of both affirmation and contention in Brown's richly detailed biographical interpretation. For example, in support of his claim that "*A Vision* is a key modernist text in its self-referential fictionality, in its Cubist abstraction, and its considerable investment in the potential powers of myth to apprehend and restore spiritual reality in a desacralized materialistic age," Brown recalls Albright's comments on Cubism: "Yeats was a Cubist only with the provision that the reader must decubify the image, must try to restore the uninflected beauty that lies behind it" (310). Careful attention to point of view in criticism such as this results in a record of scholarly conversation among key critics as yet another important model of intertextuality.

Unlike these richly-detailed and highly-critical assessments of Yeats's life, early biographical studies were largely laudatory or else concerned with each author's own troubled relationship to Ireland, such as Hone's *W. B. Yeats, 1865-1939* (1942), Louis MacNeice's *The Poetry of W. B. Yeats* (1941), Jeffares's *W. B. Yeats: Man and Poet* (1949), and Ellmann's *The Identity of Yeats* (1964). Some of these authors continued to rewrite their perceptions of Yeats and his writings, either in revised editions or under new titles, but George Yeats exercised great caution in revealing her husband's literary remains. Even after George Yeats's death in 1968, biographers still had limited access to his papers, some of which only now are receiving the attention and scrutiny they deserve. For example, Yeats's collaborations with Lady Gregory on the plays and with George on the automatic scripts have long been recognized, but recent biographers have focused less exclusively on the theatrical materials and the more esoteric products, choosing instead

to evaluate the poet's life and creative output in general. Useful biographies have more recently been produced, such as W. B. Rajan's *Yeats: A Critical Introduction* (1965), Denis Donahue's *William Butler Yeats* (1971), Douglas Archibald's *Yeats* (1986), and Alastair D. F. Macrae's *W. B. Yeats: A Literary Life* (1995). Also important to mention is Conor Cruise O'Brien's "Passion and Cunning: An Essay on the Politics of W. B. Yeats" (in *In Excited Reverie,* eds. A. Norman Jeffares and K. W. G. Cross, 1965) which attempted to deflate, at that time, recent lionizing of the great poet and "public man."

Of these middle-century efforts to disclose the life and work of Yeats, particular texts by Ellmann, Jeffares and Hone deserve additional attention. Ellmann's *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (1948) essentially is aimed at seeing how aspects of Yeats's life can illuminate the poetry—and almost diametrically-opposed program to Foster's more recent biography, in which the poetry is used more to illuminate aspects of Yeats's life. In stressing his unique access to Yeatsian material, Ellmann notes in his preface that the "book is based in part on published materials and in part on some 50,000 pages of unpublished manuscripts of W. B. Yeats which Mrs. Yeats, in her generosity, permitted me to examine" (vii); thus, Ellmann lays claim not only unpublished materials but also his unique access to Yeats's widow. A new preface to the book's 1979 edition, coming eleven years after George's death, is much more frank about Yeats's affairs, as all the major players were then dead; moreover, it devotes extraordinary space to the automatic writing, disclosing in particular that George originally planned to "fake it" but then felt controlled by another force (xiv–xv). Ellmann's Ph.D. thesis was on Yeats's mystical system, and he devotes an entire chapter to the automatic writing and *A Vision,* noting how the Yeats's metaphysical concerns were "inseparable from his greatness as a poet" (xix).

Ellmann's biography garners widespread respect still today, though the first edition fared poorly; critic David Daiches, for instance, regards it as a "preliminary attempt to grapple with all the data," though he believes it occasionally ventures into "over-simplification" (268). The text remains relevant primarily because it provides insight into Yeats's poems, as opposed to Hone's more simple and adulatory approach. Hone's *W. B. Yeats: 1865–39* (1942) frequently waxes pseudo-poetical; the area around Drumcliff, for example, is described as "flat-topped Ben Bulben, that strange and beautiful mountain, famous in Irish legend for the encounter of Diarmuid with the enchanted boar," which "sets the scene,'" while "other hills run in an easterly direction from this range into the lovely valley of Glencar: Where the wandering

water gushes…/In pools among the rushes/That scarce could bathe a star" (3). The adulation of the Yeats family is almost saccharine, such as John Butler Yeats's family described as "high-spirited, handsome, full of health" (6), and his education commencing "under his aunts, who found it difficult to teach him to read, and supposed that his intelligence was defective; whereas really he was unable to attend to anything less interesting than his own thoughts" (18). George's automatic writing is covered in essentially one page, and Yeats's non-marital relationships are not directly discussed. With almost no citation of sources, the overall impression is of a breezy read, without much relevance to the poetry; in fact, George Yeats even commented that "someone will write another 'Life' from the only 'point of view' that I myself care for at all—poetry" (Saddlemyer 594). Though a second edition was released in 1962, Hone's biography remains, as do many other early biographies, adulatory in tone for Yeats and all things Yeatsian. Likewise, A. Norman Jeffares's *W. B. Yeats: A New Biography* (1988) offers little in the way of critical assessment of the poems or the plays; critic Michito Kakutani, for instance, considers the work "dull" and "plodding" because it does not address the poet's "passion" and makes "no attempt to chart the recesses of the poet's imaginative life."

In addition to Saddlemyer's *Becoming George: The Life of Mrs. W. B. Yeats,* other recent biographies have emerged that focus on Yeats's family and friends, such as William Murphy's *Prodigal Father* (1978) on Yeats's father and John Harwood's *Olivia Shakespear* (1989) on Yeats's life-long friend and muse. Also worth mention is Colm Tóibín's *Lady Gregory's Toothbrush* (2005), an impressionable construct of Lady Gregory's ideological constructs and their influence on Yeats. Consideration perhaps also should be given Yeats's autobiographical writings, though, as Ellmann points out, "because he was a myth-maker his autobiography was never pure" (3). It appears more likely, then, that attention to biographical studies tangential to Yeats's life and relationships, such as those mentioned above, will be of interest to future critics and writers. Whether these focus on other members of the immediate family, on Yeats's early associates in the artistic and literary circles of London and Paris, or influences and the influenced later in Yeats's life, this expansion of directed research and critical examination should be of merit to Yeatsian scholars in decades to come. Yeats's socio-personal dysfunction—including the possibility that he suffered from Asperger's syndrome, a socio-autistic malady that may explain his distant, aloof manner and myopic focus on the occult—might warrant the attention of a neuro-biographical approach, as would a discussion of family dynamics, such as sibling rivalry between or the developmental aesthetic differences of Jack and

W. B. Yeats. Likewise, biographical attention to members of the Golden Dawn may provide a way to better understand the group dynamics and its effect on Yeats's occultism and spirituality.

This, though, certainly is not the extent of where Yeatsian biographical scholarship might well be headed. Yeats clearly was influenced by eastern cultures, particularly Indian culture and also, in his plays, Japanese culture, and the manner in which this influence extends beyond his textuality provides a possible area of study. Yeats, in the words of Margaret Mills Harper, "invented Ireland," and the emphasis on the land the rootedness of many of his poems to specific locations and experiences creates a strong sense of place; this is complicated, however, by the manner in which the land is depicted. One view, for example, tends to emphasize and idealize the wild, unrestrained qualities of the Irish landscape, using Yeats's lived experience as a way to mythologize Ireland; at other times, the land at Coole Park, for instance, becomes an image of the colonizing Anglo-Irish ascendancy life Yeats feared was vanishing and thought must be recovered. Likewise, eco-environmental approaches critical of Yeats's use of the land, particularly at Thoor Ballylee, might better illuminate ideological aspects of the poet's life. Eugenic implications of Yeats's actions, both as a public figure and in his more personal writings, could expose further ethical tensions in his writing, and a study of rhetorical ethics in his works, both prose and poetic, similarly could clarify the more philosophical and yet oft-times dualistic postures—good and evil, right and wrong—Yeats presents. The commodification of the Yeats Industry—how the public persona was created and marketed by Yeats himself, and posthumously by George, and by others—could lead to an economic model of the poet's life, for Yeats was keenly aware of his market and clearly attempted to present himself in a particular manner that fulfilled his ideal of what a poet should be. Lastly, speculative biography, which thrives in today's public and academic setting (Tóibín's *Lady Gregory's Toothbrush* is a pertinent example), allows authors to take details of an individual's life and from that speculate on other biographical aspects; while the usefulness of this kind of biography is obviously limited, perhaps specious, it nonetheless offers potential for thinking beyond traditional and often-times constrained boundaries of academia.

These are but possibilities, and as more current critical approaches—eco-theory, cyber theory, systems theory, and globalization studies, among others—move outside the bounds of textuality, no doubt they will find their way into biographical studies. Until then, Yeatsian scholars, critics, and enthusiasts will no doubt find themselves centered on the recent biographical work of Foster and Brown, while utilizing

tangential sources such as Saddlemyer's biography of George. These texts provide a wonderful foundation for a biographical understanding of William Butler Yeats, while leaving open the door for future opportunities to expand our understanding of Ireland's great poet.

III. A VISION *AND "THE SYSTEM"*

1. Introduction

The world of William Butler Yeats and his wife George Yeats was one of immense challenge and change on all fronts. The Industrial Revolution, although not predominant in Ireland, had blighted the English urban environment, enslaved the common worker, and produced immense profit for an extreme few. The Great War, which was supposed to last just a few months, perverted technology into the indiscriminate killing of both combatants and non-combatants, and quickly became a pointless exercise in death and suffering for previously unimaginable numbers. The inherent rule of monarchs began to die literally and figuratively with the Russian Revolution. Fascism and Communism challenged democracy's social model.

Closer to home, impoverished Ireland desperately sought independence from oppressive English economic and political exploitation, and looked for a unique national identity in Irish tradition, folklore, and literature. Political outcry, rebellion and violent suppression split Catholic and Protestant in Ireland, which eventually led to an Irish Senate that was split by blood and bitterness.

Through his poetry and essays, his work with drama and the Abbey Theatre, his emphasis on Irish/Celtic folklore, stories and mysticism, and his lecturing throughout Britain and the United States, Yeats became artistically and politically influential. Recently, his brilliant wife and co-writer of *A Vision*, Georgie Hyde Lees Yeats (later shortened to George Yeats.) has become much more recognized for her contributions and support of her husband's work. The European artistic community of which WB and George were a part rejected the old established aesthetics and sought new directions in literary themes, structures, and heroes. Psychology opened the sub-conscious, examining neurosis and treatment. Established religion was confronted by Darwinian evolution and Nietzsche's ideas about the death of

God. As early as the mid-19th century, individuals began to seek more immediate experience of the spiritual. The manifestation of spiritualism as a religion, including séances intended to contact the deceased and seek answers to the questions of afterlife, became popular on both sides of the Atlantic. Secret hermetic societies were founded, including perhaps the most famous, the Order of the Golden Dawn, into which both W. B. and George were initiates.

From their close working together came a complex, esoteric system of thought entitled *A Vision*, generated from three years of automatic writing produced by George and later two years of dream recall from her sleeping state. The genetic material of the automatic writing and the "sleeps" pulls threads from the Yeats' experience with the Western hermetic/magical tradition, philosophy, non-Western religions, Blake's mystical system and many other sources, both occult and philosophical. Yeats would continue to refine the ideas communicated through George's trances, creating two versions of *A Vision*. The first published version, appearing in 1926 (though dated 1925), was significantly revised and was re-published in 1937; the earlier version is typically designated (A) and the later (B) to distinguish between the two.

It could be argued that *A Vision* is the magnum opus of Yeats' oeuvre, given that he spent 20 years of his life receiving, wrestling with, writing and revising the ideas it ultimately contains. And yet, to many, the book is bizarre, incomprehensible, fragmented, alien. Some shy away from its origins in the occult, or find it embarrassing that Yeats relied on automatic writing to produce the genetic material of the text.

However, as Margaret Mills Harper recently pointed out, to ignore the occult influence on Yeats' life is to be unable to fully engage with the poet's work. While *A Vision* has certainly not been ignored entirely by scholars, this paper will argue that—now that we have access to the full "story" of the text, from the automatic script to a new edition (forthcoming) of the 1937 version—there are profitable areas for further investigation of the several parts of *A Vision* that can add depth to our understanding of both Yeats and his contexts.

2. A Vision: Scholarship as of 2008

We will begin with an overview of current scholarship on *A Vision* and its genetic material. One of the circumstances that make new work on *A Vision* possible is the availability of good critical editions. George Mills Harper began the work in the '70s by editing *A Vision* (A) and Yeats's "occult papers," and moved on to work on producing edited editions of the automatic scripts, which appeared in three volumes (*Vision Papers*) in the early 90s. Just recently (2008), Margaret Mills Harper and Catherine Paul edited a new edition of *A Vision* (A) for the Scribner series, and their edition of *A Vision* (B) is forthcoming in the same series.

Literary critics in the 1950s and '60s looked to *A Vision* primarily as a tool with which to explicate the work of Yeats' canon. Today, however, there has been more interest in looking at the production of the text itself, in the automatic writing in particular, as a collaborative or performative piece produced by W. B. and George Yeats. While Ann Saddlemyer's biography *Becoming George* has been critical in helping us understand who George Yeats really was, Margaret Mills Harper has led the way in the critical work on the automatic scripts, looking at the ways in which George both resisted identification with and yet at the same time created identities within the automatic script, and the larger ways in which the historical context of spiritualism and mediumship may have shaped the automatic script. See especially her *Wisdom of Two: The Spiritual and Literary Collaboration of George and W. B. Yeats*. Brenda Maddox's 1999 book *George's Ghosts: A New Life of W. B. Yeats* is also a useful, if more popular, account.

It is almost impossible to talk about *A Vision* without reference to the automatic script, which has led many scholars to look at the occult influences on and connections to the text itself. Indeed, this is one of the largest areas of extant scholarship on *A Vision*. Much of the scholarship in this area has concentrated on explaining Yeats' own occult connections/experiences, books like Kathleen Raine's *Yeats, The Tarot and the Golden Dawn* (1976), as well as her work on Yeats' astrology (1978), Mary E. Bryson and R. G. Chabria's work on theosophy and Yeats (1977, and 1971 respectively), and George Mills Harper's own work: *Yeats's Golden Dawn* (1974) and *Yeats and the Occult* (1975). Some of the most helpful books in this line might be H.R. Bachchan's *W. B. Yeats and Occultism: A Study of His Works in Relation to Indian Lore, the Cabbala, Swedenborg, Boehme, and Theosophy* (1965) and Graham Hough's *The Mystery Religion of W.*

B. Yeats (1984). More recently, several scholars have looked at the occult connections as a system of poetics: articles on Yeats' "magical" or "metaphysical" poetics by D. S. Lenoski (1981) and Barton Friedman (1990) follow this line of thinking, as well as Barbara Croft's *"Stylistic Arrangements": A Study of William Butler Yeats' "A Vision"* (1987) and Susan Dobra's *The Rhetoric of Belief* (1999). One scholar taking a different approach, however, is Ted Spivey, who argued in the late 70s/early 80s that Yeats' work in *A Vision* was a forerunner of modern occult movements, an area that seems promising for further study. Such volumes as Alex Owen's study, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*, add both historical context and contemporary critical sophistication to our understanding of Yeats's occult milieu, as does Marina Warner's *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media*. (Warner's forthcoming book on magic and magicians, to be called *Stranger Magic*, should be especially welcome to Yeats scholars.)

Another paradigm for making sense of *A Vision* has been to see its connections with psychology, particularly that of Carl Gustav Jung. Perhaps the seminal work in this area was done by James Olney in *The Rhizome and the Flower: The Perennial Philosophy—Yeats and Jung* (1980).

Yet another way of contextualizing *A Vision* has been to look at it as a modernist text—a production of the aesthetic climate in which it was created. The first scholar to address this issue was Arup Rudra in *A Vision: Between Romantic and Modern* in 1984; since then, Hazard Adams, Tom Gibbons, Margaret Mills Harper and Daniel Albright have looked at the issue of modernity in the text itself, and/or as part of a body of work that also includes Eliot and Pound.

Finally, there is the question of the text itself, not as a construct of the author(s) socio-historical context, nor as a system of poetics, but as a "scripture," if you will—a text intended to impart spiritual wisdom or knowledge to its readers. Very few attempts have been made to talk about the text in this light: Busteed, Tiffany and Wergin's *Phases of the Moon: A Guide to Evolving Human Nature* (1974) is perhaps the most ambitious—the authors are astrologers, not scholars, who attempt to adapt the system presented in *A Vision* to the lives of modern readers. Colin McDowell has, from 1985 on, written several articles appearing in *Yeats Annual* and *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies* on interpreting *A Vision*, including "To 'Beat Upon a Wall': Reading *A Vision*" (1986) and " 'The Completed Symbol: Daimonic

Existence and The Great Wheel in *A Vision* (1937)" (1988). His most recent work has looked closely at the Harper edition of the *Vision Papers*, offering the critique that the published text has been too selective—in essence calling for an even more complete access to all the genetic materials. Susan Graf's 2000 book, *W. B. Yeats - Twentieth-Century Magus: An In-depth Study of Yeats's Esoteric Practices & Beliefs, Including Excerpts from His Magical Diaries*, might well fit into this line of thinking about the text.

All this is to say that while much work has been done with *A Vision*, there remain promising areas of investigation, including more thorough work on the broader historical contexts in relation to world religions and the occult in which *A Vision* (including the generation of the automatic scripts) appears; ways in which the text is not only modern but perhaps postmodern in its esthetics; ways in which the text(s) provide a foundation for or look ahead to contemporary movements in "new" spiritualism; and ways to bring new audiences to the text, including how to effectively teach the text to undergraduates at varying stages of their studies.

3. Postmodern *Vision*

For students of Yeats, the early 21st century may indeed represent a Golden Dawn. Already on the horizon is a generation of scholars eager to interpret Yeats in terms of postmodernity, a generation that need look no further than *A Vision* for its golden critical opportunities.

One reason for the rise of interest in this direction surely has to do with the surprisingly postmodern texture of *A Vision*. For the generation of scholars that cut its eyeteeth on the instability of binary polarities, *A Vision* is the text par excellence for testing the play of antimonies and observing the blending of dancer into dance. (For an early example of a critical excavation from precisely this vein, consider Daniel Albright's *Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and the Science of Modernism*.) Or again: how may the provisional, postmodern self be mapped onto Yeats's shifting configurations in *A Vision* of Will, Body of Fate, Creative Mind, and Mask? Or yet again: to what extent does the human mind invent the world it lives in? A postmodern question indeed—and an especially Yeatsian one, as well, particularly

when brought to bear not on *A Vision* alone, but on the automatic script which lies behind and beneath it.

It is the automatic script itself, in fact, which may well prove to be the most significant site of discovery in the next wave of *Vision* studies. The earliest generation of serious *Vision* scholars was occupied of necessity with the task of spadework, of assembling, transcribing, recording and archiving the raw material of the Yeats's own notebooks, card files, and related paper ephemera. It remained to the following generation to move these materials toward definitive publication, and to continue the task of arguing for their significance and validity.

It will fall to a "third wave" of researchers to move beyond the inherent fascination of the automatic script as gnomic genetic material for *A Vision* and to consider it more carefully as a rich text in its own right, complicatedly metatextual down to its very bones, alive with experiments in gender, tantalizingly mysterious for its performative context, a challenge to even the most fundamental assumptions about narrativity.

4. **Occult *Vision*: New Directions**

To cite just one possibility among many: the nature of the spirit communicators of the automatic script constitutes a wide open field for *Vision* scholars. What are we to make of Ameritus, and Thomas of Dorlowicz, and Leo, of Rose, Fish, and Leaf, of that whole cast of spirits, daimons, controls, and guides? As Margaret Mills Harper observes, in her Introduction to *Wisdom of Two*, the Yeatses' acceptance of the joint authorship of the spirit communicators raises endlessly interesting questions about "conventions of authorship, technologies of representation or communication…about performance, authority, and subjectivity, all simmering in an ontological, epistemological and ideological stew."

As early as 1909, in his essay "The Last Report: The Final Impressions of a Psychical Researcher," William James observed that "I have come to see in automatic writing one example of a department of

human activity as vast as it is enigmatic." A century later, we may at last be prepared to give the Yeatsian experiments in that department the attention they deserve.

5. New Audiences for *A Vision*

The question of audience in *A Vision* is a perennial one. In his own day, Yeats was unsure of the number of people who might have enough interest in the work to purchase it. He seemed reluctant to allow a popularization of the work and limited access by those who were not part of his occult circle to specific parts of it (such as the Phases of the Moon). Add to this the ambivalence that the academic community has traditionally displayed in regard to teaching the text as a work in its own right, and the issue of audience becomes even more cloudy. Is there a place for *A Vision* in tomorrow's popular and academic culture, and if so, what work needs to be done to establish it and render it as accessible as Yeats's poems and plays? Three possibilities for developing future audiences for the concepts of *A Vision* and the system are found in three very diverse arenas: astrology, technology, and education.

In the past twenty years , there has been an amazing revival in interest in the occult and an equally amazing growth in the interest in what has been referred to as Neo-Pagan religions. People are looking for connections that go beyond the superficial bonds formed by industry and technology. Old questions are being asked in new ways and in new formats. Perhaps the part of this apparent occult revival that could be referred to as a growth industry is the practice of astrology. *A Vision* is not an astrological text; however the use of astrological symbols in connection to the system, and the cyclical vocabulary are not alien to those who study astrology. In addition, W. B., George, and their associates in the Golden Dawn constructed and consulted astrological charts frequently (note the horaries prepared by the couple).

A book written by historical scholar Richard Tarnas and published in 2006, *Cosmos and Psyche*, opens the door for *A Vision*'s emphasis on mathematical relationships in the unfolding of histories—personal and global. He revisits archetypical astrology, presents the universe as a vibrant, active entity, and ties in systems theory, referencing the work of Gregory Bateman. (System Theory is here defined as the transdisciplinary study of the abstract organization of phenomena, independent of their substance, type,

spatial or temporal scale of existence. It is the investigation of the principles common to all complex entities and the (usually) mathematical models that can be used to describe them.) Tarnas views the universe as a living system having impact on both micro and macro events. Yeats would agree with this construct, but what is needed is a key to decode the formulas in *A Vision* and render them comprehensible to both the scholar and the inquiring reader/student. That leads us into the next area for creating an audience: technology.

We have the technology that would enable new audiences to engage with *A Vision*. We also have ample foundational work in texts such as those of George Mills Harper and Margaret Mills Harper. We have the *Vision Papers* even though all the automatic writings have not yet been published. What is needed is a way to compile all existing works, as well as any yet unpublished, into a comprehensive volume along with some sort of interpretive key. We live in a world that favors compressed information and graphical explanation. This would require a huge collaborative effort among scholars, technicians, and publishers. Even more technologically centered is the possibility of creating a software program that could interpret data based on the *Vision* system. Since *A Vision* is not a tool for predicting the future but a mechanism for placing events and persons in a current framework, with a correlating link to the past, how could such software be used? That leads to the creation of the final audience for the text, which can be found in academia.

Yeats developed his work, including *A Vision*, over the entirety of a lifetime. Why would anyone believe that an attempt should be made to teach the Yeats oeuvre adequately in one semester? Yet, this is the way it is structured in most colleges. It may be time to approach the teaching of Yeats in an incremental—if not developmental—model. This is especially true if *A Vision* included in instruction. If we attempt to communicate the obscurities of the text to a group of young students who do not yet have the intellectual tools to process complicated texts, we are doomed to failure. Students are likely to be confused and may even reject Yeats' great body of work. An overview of the poems and the plays is certainly doable in freshman and sophomore classrooms. In this context, it may even be advisable to teach students about the occult interests and activities of Yeats, but an exploration of *A Vision* itself may best be reserved for a senior seminar with follow-on in graduate studies. Another way in which students may be exposed to the work, and come to view it in its own integrity, is to take it out of the English department (or at least allow

it to stroll about the grounds a bit). In the previous reference to technology and software, an interpretive key would allow students to view the historical cycles in *A Vision* and cross reference them to actual events. If a timetable is established for the cycles, analysis of trends based on past data might be possible. This would not be truly predictive but merely explanatory—an asset in the study of history. Work in systems theory has implications in math and physics as well; uncharted and alien territory in Yeats studies perhaps, but still a possibility.

IV. CRITICAL APPROACHES

> 'The work is done,' grown old he thought,
> 'According to my boyhood plan;
> Let the fools rage, I swerved in nought,
> Something to perfection brought;'
> *But louder sang that ghost 'What then?'*

A survey of recent scholarship to get a picture of the current trajectories of Yeatsian scholarship outside of biographical approaches, textual studies, and examination of occult influences, topics considered by the other groups.

1. Yeats's Poetic and Dramatic Legacies

Framing questions: How is Yeats an instructor, a touchstone, or a fraught presence for poets in his immediate wake and in current times? Is Yeats seen as a much-lauded figure whose poetry was part of a heroic age of modernism and Irish nation-making but who is no longer relevant to poets' projects now? How has Yeats's poetry, especially, been "modified in the guts of the living"? In what ways has his work been influential for various constituencies, including Irish poets, world poets in postcolonial times, African novelists and playwrights, and not least, readers and critics like us?

1. A

Terence Brown concludes his magisterial biography, *The Life of W. B. Yeats* (Blackwell, 1999), with a brief but compelling assessment of Yeats's lingering influence on Irish writing, finally observing, "By such

acts of creative appropriation, one senses, the permanence of Yeats is movingly secured" (382). Brown's statement invites further such explorations of Yeats's legacy. While there have been two notable anthologies (among several others) of contemporary Irish poetry that specifically address Yeats's influence and a seminal critical study that largely downplays his influence, especially for the generation of poets writing immediately after Yeats's death, there is only one monograph specifically on this topic, *Yeats As Precursor: Readings in Irish, British and American Poetry* by Steven Matthews (London and New York, 2000).

Maurice Harmon argues in the lengthy introduction to his 1979 anthology, appropriately entitled *Irish Poetry after Yeats* (Little, Brown), that the poets he has chosen—Austin Clarke, Patrick Kavanagh, Denis Devlin, Richard Murphy, Thomas Kinsella, John Montague, and Seamus Heaney—engage with Yeats positively but also try to avoid Yeats's example. In 1985, the influential American critic and (then) director of Wake Forest Press, the sole North American publisher of Irish poetry, directly attacked Harmon's thesis by provocatively entitling his study *Irish Poetry after Joyce* (Notre Dame UP; revised edition, Syracuse UP, 1997). In his opening chapter, Johnston argues that the immediate generation of Irish poets after Yeats such as Austin Clarke and Denis Devlin fled what he considers Yeats's authoritarian posture and hauteur. Johnston's pairing of a series of poets writing after Yeats suggests instead a multiplicity of influences on Irish poetry that depart from Yeats's example. Thus, Patrick Kavanagh is (appropriately) paired with Seamus Heaney, who certainly followed Kavanagh's injunction to write about the local. But Johnston's claim that mainly because of the multi-vocality of novels such as *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*, Joyce was finally more influential on later Irish poets than Yeats, does not take into account Yeats's own multi-vocality; instead, Johnston unfairly reduces Yeats's various voices into one authoritarian voice. More recently, Patrick Crotty, in the introduction to his 1995 anthology from Blackstaff, *Modern Irish Poetry: An Anthology*, more persuasively suggests that if for Yeats, poetry was famously a quarrel with oneself, much contemporary Irish poetry proceeds from a quarrel with Yeats. Crotty's ample selection from poets implicitly expands the compass of Yeats's influence over Irish poetry up through the mid-1990s even on poet-critics such as Peter McDonald, a Belfast-born Protestant who teaches at Christ Church, Oxford. McDonald himself has done much to dispel the notion promulgated by Johnston that Yeats's influence on later Irish poets is limited in comparison to that of Joyce. For example, in *Serious Poetry* (Oxford, 2002), McDonald retrieves and rehabilitates Yeats, especially his formal

procedures and innovations, as a positive influence on well-known Irish poets such as Seamus Heaney and Michael Longley in his chapter, "Yeats, Form, and Northern Irish Poetry."

Much work, however, needs to be done on Yeats's continuing legacy for later Irish writers. For example, a problem with the poets discussed in both the first edition of Johnston's book (rectified, to some degree, in the revised edition) and in McDonald's *Serious Poetry* is the absence of discussion of women poets influenced by Yeats. And certainly, while form is a crucial component of the Yeatsian legacy, there are other aspects of Yeats's poetry and poetics that continue to positively redound in contemporary Irish writing. Two recent articles addressing these lacunae are worth briefly noting here. In an essay entitled "Yeats and the Lights of Dublin," published in the Autumn 2002 issue of *The Dublin Review*, Derek Mahon addresses Yeats's influence on Northern Irish poets and on those poets from south of the border as well, concluding by noting that "His example shames and ennobles us all." In 2004, the distinguished American critic Ronald Schuchard published an essay entitled "The Legacy of Yeats in Contemporary Irish Poetry" in the Autumn/Winter issue of *Irish University Review*. Schuchard identifies Michael Longley, Seamus Heaney, and Derek Mahon in Northern Ireland, along with Eavan Boland in the Republic, as "conscripts of Yeats's poetic dialogue with history" because of the impact of the Northern Irish Troubles on their work (Boland was greatly impacted by the 1974 Dublin bombings). Schuchard's essay draws heavily on the archival work of these poets in the Emory University Woodruff Library holdings to document his argument. He finishes his fine essay by noting that, "what Longley, Boland, Heaney, and Mahon have achieved in their finest poems is precisely that hardest won of legacies, that Yeatsian sweep and generosity, that altitude and nobility of the unconstrained imagination" (314).

Richard Rankin Russell in his forthcoming monograph, *Michael Longley, Seamus Heaney, and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*, argues that Yeats's artistic integrity enabled him to take effective stances as a public poet in exemplary ways for Longley and Heaney, who have both been thrust into the limelight as public poets often asked to comment on the Northern Irish Troubles. Russell also argues that Yeats's penchant for ceremony, especially in poems such as "A Prayer for My Daughter," has proven salutary for Longley, who often inscribes ceremonies in elegies such as "The Ice-Cream Man." And Russell further holds that Yeats's essentially liminal mindset and acceptance of marvels from beyond our normal modes of perception sanctioned Heaney's own developing theory of liminalism that attunes him to airy

imaginings of the Other in poems such as "North" and "Station Island." Russell is currently researching and writing a monograph entitled *Inventing Yeats*, which explores the responses of Irish writers such as Boland, Heaney, Longley, Muldoon, and Marina Carr to Yeats and their constructions of Yeats.

1. B

The most important developments after W. B. Yeats's death involved then-active poets taking his measure and deciding how to respond to Yeats's achievement. The first critical study was Louis MacNeice's book, *The Poetry of Yeats*, published in 1941. MacNeice estimates the poetry as important, thematically and technically of a high order, but also tries to distance himself and others from the shadow of the Yeatsian mountain. MacNeice says that poets should feel themselves free to travel their own roads and to distance themselves from Yeats's rhetorically highly-wrought poetry and to "come down off their stilts" if they choose. He and Auden chose to do so, but it is important to note that they both felt WBY's strong influence and responded to it as admirers. T.S. Eliot early and late responded to Yeats in admiring fashion, praising his seriousness, his verse technique, his remaking of himself during a long poetic career. There is an excerpt from Eliot's estimation of WBY's achievement in James Pethica's Norton edition of Yeats. As Edna Longley points out in her important article, "It is time that I wrote my will: Anxieties of Influence and Succession," in *Yeats Annual 12A Special Number: Yeats and His Irish Readers*, ed. Warwick Gould and Edna Longley (Palgrave 1996), both Austin Clarke and Patrick Kavanagh knew they had to carve out their own territories with regard to Yeats's claims on Irish writing. Kavanagh was the freer of the two to do so. In his examinations of provincial and farming life and the poverties and constrictions besetting rural Ireland in the 1930s, especially in the narrative poem "The Great Hunger," Kavanagh developed themes far removed from Yeats's world-historical themes. So Kavanagh nodded in WBY's direction and went his own way, to the benefit of himself and, as he has famously said, Seamus Heaney. On the other hand, Longley argues that Austin Clarke felt the poetry of WBY as a weight on his own growth and direction in Irish poetry because Clarke sought a tone of urbanity, wit, and aphoristic commentary, and Yeats's posthumous shadow loomed too large.

To shift the terms of discussion toward debates on Yeats's current status and reception by critics: Importantly, Edward Said at the Yeats Summer School in 1986 and then in a Field Day pamphlet

welcomed Yeats as a culturally resistant writer and his work as modeling "sites of cultural resistance" within a colonized Ireland still dominated by alien, or British, modes of discourse. Widening and deepening the discussion of Yeats's poetry as possessing political and cultural force, Jahan Ramazani has argued for Yeats as a primarily postcolonial poet, a poet whose strong-voiced and developing nationalism has cleared a space for debates about identity, nation-formation and language, and has opened the gates for poets such as the Caribbean's (and St Lucia's) Derek Walcott and India's A. K. Ramanujan. In contemporary Irish criticism, Declan Kiberd extends the postcolonial arguments and demonstrations with great effectiveness in *Inventing Ireland*. This postcolonial framework for reading Yeats is also important for African poets and dramatists concerned to articulate new national, post-colonial identities. To Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, Yeats is a European precursor who repeatedly and successfully addressed himself to questions of national identity and crises of language and thought as new forms of self-rule took over from British governments.

Now we have those poets, Irish mainly, who respond to Yeats as an instructor, a tutelary spirit of the arts and the acoustics of modern poetry. The list might begin with Derek Mahon, Michael Longley, Paul Muldoon, Eavan Boland, and to some extent contemporary younger poets. Richard Russell has already discussed some of these inheritors of Yeats. So here we will look at Mahon and one recent poem, "Resistance Days," published in *Harbour Lights* in 2005. Mahon sees the necessity to take up at least one Yeatsian theme: The poorly made or cravenly made can drive out any knowledge or appreciation of the well-made or admirable. Because ignorance and the shoddy are still "peddled in the thoroughfares," Mahon sees that one of the poet's chosen jobs is to be clear-eyed in resistance, in naming the ersatz and exposing the pretentious. Yet "Resistance Days" is not merely a self-satisfied, angry screed or an elitist denunciation of the worst of mass culture: the poem is invitingly personal because it portrays the psychic and emotional energy that Mahon expends (and his readers expend, if we share that part of his sensibility) in deliberately choosing to locate and praise the beautiful, in resisting the impulse to tolerate what is shoddy or ersatz. Like Yeats, Mahon has the worldliness, the educated eye, the love of painting, sculpture, and drama, and a real love of singing "whatever is well-made"; he has much in common aesthetically and philosophically with Yeats. Other poets such as Micheal O'Siadhail (born 1948) take up Yeatsian ideas of cornucopia, flux, and dynamism, as what he calls the interesting and surprising "jazz" of our times.

O'Siadhail sees *eros* as a life force which frequently mystifies and yet sustains us (see his collection *Hail! Madam Jazz* and the more recent *Our Double Time*). He often takes up the mysterious and recurring patterns of emotional life and the beauty of reciprocated feeling in his love poems.

2. Approaches in the *Yeats Annual,* edited by Warwick Gould, to 2005

Research on the issues of the *Yeats Annual*, published in Britain, for 2001, 2002, and 2005, demonstrates that Yeats scholarship over the last eight years has been largely textual and historical with very little interpretive or theoretical material.

Issue 14, 2001, is a special issue on *Yeats and the Nineties*. It contains two articles on political history. The first, Denis Donoghue's "Ireland: Race, Nation, State," discusses Yeats's "On the Boiler" as a part of the larger consideration of this topic. Deirdre Toomey's "Who Fears to Speak of 98?" takes another view of Yeats's involvement with politics. R. A. Gilbert's "More Light on the Golden Dawn" is a later history of the magical society to which Yeats belonged. The other essays in the volume are all concerned with comparative/historical studies: Pamela Bickley's discussion of "Yeats and Rossetti," Warwick Gould's essay on Lionel Johnson, and William Halloran's article on Yeats and William Sharp who wrote under the pseudonym Fiona Macleod.

Issue 15, 2002, is a special issue titled *Yeats's Collaborations.* It includes six articles on collaborations and one interpretive essay. James Pethica contributes an article on separate translations of the Gaelic play *The Matchmaking* by Yeats, Hyde, and Lady Gregory. These three then collaborated on one translation entitled *The Marriage*. Ron Schuchard provides a historical article on "The Countess Cathleen and Chanting Verse," while Christopher Blake includes an article on Yeats's psychic research and his collaboration with his wife. Wayne Chapman's article studies the "Chronology of Composition"—writing, editing, dating—of some of Yeats's work. Laura O'Connor's article is on Yeats and his collaboration with Frank O'Connor on translations. Janis Haswell's "Reconstructive Interpretation of William Butler Yeats's play *Calvary*" provides evidence that *Calvary* stemmed at least in part from Yeats's collaboration with George on the symbolism of *A Vision*. Her article goes into depth on the manuscript changes but also

includes interpretive material drawn from the symbolism of *A Vision*. Meg Harper's article "Celestial Bodies: Sexual Cosmologies" is a useful contribution to interpretive criticism about women and celestial bodies in the poetry.

Issue 16, 2003, includes a historical study by James Pethica called "The Struggle for Coole," about the ways in which Yeats drew on his own myth as well as the reality of Ireland. Wayne Chapman discusses what he calls the "Rebellion Poems" and the Great War, the poems from *The Wild Swans at Coole* and *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. Jahan Ramazani, in "Self-Theorizing Poetry: Yeats's *Ars Poetica* in the *Green Helmet and Other Poems*," discusses the ascendancy of historicist and political models and claims that these books create as well as dismantle their own *ars poetica*. He claims that realism gains ground in Yeats's middle period and the love poems take a very different tone after the consummation of his love for Maud Gonne in 1908. Ramazani argues that in this period Yeats's poems take us into the real, not the ideal or dream-like universes of his earlier poetry.

With all the information now available to Yeats scholars—biography, manuscripts—a return to textual and historical scholarship is indeed essential to the body of work being done. At the same time, there is room still for interpretive and contextual criticism in light of the biography and manuscripts. It seems to us that the scholar cannot ignore the contextual information, and Janis Haswell's close look at the MSS of *Calvary* makes this quite apparent. Another good example of the reason that isolated new-critical readings of Yeats seem unnecessarily restrictive is the abundance of information we have about Yeats's revisions and the difficulty of deciding on his intentions.

3. W. B. Yeats and the Visual Arts

According to *The New York Times* of January 17, 1903, W. B. Yeats, in *Ideas of Good and Evil*, declared good ideas and bad ones are derived from poetry and art. The link between poetry and art, so vital to Yeats, has suffered from the separation of fields in the academy. For the most part, scholars of literature pursue the study of W. B. Yeats and scholars of the visual arts spend a small amount of time looking at the paintings of father John Butler Yeats and brother Jack Yeats. There is a rich area of future study that

can cast a wider vision on the larger Yeats family and intimates who engaged the visual arts alongside the literary arts. Yeats's wife George, as detailed in Ann Saddlemyer's biography, regularly visited the art galleries in the first half of the 20th century and brought her experience with the avant-garde to Yeats, a poet well-versed in the aesthetics of the Pre-Raphaelite era, the Renaissance and the Classical past. With further study could we understand just what ideas from poetry and art George and W. B. thought were good and which were bad? Did they argue about this? What if Jack Yeats entered the room? What would be his perspective on art of the day? And, if daughter Anne were old enough, what point of artistic view would she bring?

The larger Yeats family and its circle can offer the details and nuances of an Anglo-Irish educated milieu formed of many different generations and sensibilities during a powerful period in European culture, one that was instrumental in defining our concepts of both Modernism and modern life. Such a study would be of interest not only to Yeats scholars but also to those outside the borders of the "Yeats Industry" who are intrigued by the art of the late 19th and early 20th century Western world.

In the mid-1980s, two authors took a closer look at W. B. Yeats and the visual arts. In 1985, Michael North included a discussion of Yeats and public sculpture in *The Final Sculpture: Public Monuments and Modern Poets*. A year later, 1986, Elizabeth Bergman Loizeaux published *Yeats and the Visual Arts*, a more thorough study of the connections of Yeats's written art to the visual arts he held in high esteem.

Loizeaux laid the groundwork for future study of the Yeats circle and visual art in her 200-page book, which takes a close look at the Pre-Raphaelite culture crucial to his father's art and to WBY's early aesthetic sensibility. The publisher was not lavish in the number or quality of illustrations, but Loizeaux included pertinent works by Pre-Raphaelite Rossetti and examples of William Morris's Arts-and-Crafts designs as well as illustrating classic works admired by Yeats such as the Parthenon. She examined the work of Edmund Dulac, friend of W. B. Yeats and one selected for a number of commissions including the symbolic portrait of George Yeats. Loizeaux examines Pre-Raphaelite, Classical and Byzantine art against the poetry and *The Vision*. She also discusses Yeats's admiration for Medieval and Renaissance in Europe and how his Eurocentric lens incorporated the art from India. She concludes with the sculptural properties of Yeats's writing. Two sculptors, Auguste Rodin and Ivan Meštrović, now considered part of

the Modernist canon, represent the expressionist and abstracting direction of art contemporary to Yeats. However, artists of the avant-garde such as Kupka, Mondrian, Kandinsky share with the poet an intense and influential involvement with Theosophy; a comparative study would add depth to both our understanding of Theosophy itself and to the ways individual artists interpreted the teachings.

A 1998 article in the *Yeats Annual*, edited by Warwick Gould, "Visits and Revisits: W. B. Yeats and the Municipal Gallery, Dublin" by Catherine E. Paul (pp. 58–83), brings context to both Yeats and the role of Hugh Lane's collection. During her work with our group, Margaret Harper outlined continuing work by Catherine Paul on the visual arts and the world of Yeats. Significantly, Paul notes, the Municipal Gallery had a zealous two-fold educational mission: 1) to be a site of study for Irish painters and 2) to educate the Irish people in artistic taste. In other words, the aim was to bring Ireland into the artistic trajectory of Continental art. On our visit to Dublin, most of the NEH Yeats scholars visited a Municipal Gallery exhibition celebrating 100th anniversary of Hugh Lane collection, which brought together the European paintings usually housed in the National Gallery with the majority, though not all, of the Lane collection housed at the Municipal Gallery. With early 21st century eyes, most of Lane's Modern painting and sculpture appeared anything but radical. Nonetheless, the 100th anniversary exhibition suggests paths for scholarly pursuit on the position of Modern art in Ireland in the early decades of the 20th century.

The Yeats curator at the National Gallery, Róisín Kennedy, spoke to the group on the paintings, sketchbooks, and other visual material by Jack Yeats whose illustrations and paintings demonstrate an intense interest in popular culture and an artistic vision quite different than his poet brother. Along with all the Jack Yeats material, several detailed needlework landscapes by Lillie and Lollie Yeats and an abstraction by Anne Yeats in the National Gallery offered a small window on the visual culture of the wider Yeats family; further research could provide a well-textured portrait of a visually and verbally artistic family.

4. Scholarly Directions; Recent Dissertations

In response to the charge to investigate current paths in Yeatsian scholarship and to delineate novel possibilities for future scholarship, we have embarked on the following tasks:

- to create a chart indicating titles of theses and dissertations dating back to 1990
- to provide an itemized version of Holdeman's summary of recent critical approaches
- to offer our observations/opinion on the Yeatsian scholarship outside of the canon
- to list further critical approaches mentioned by members of the Institute

a. Theses and Dissertations: The path of recent Yeatsian scholarship in institutions of higher learning from 1990 to 2008:

1. Smith, Carly Catherine. *"The right twigs for an eagle's nest": Children in the writings of William Butler Yeats.*

2. Ehlke, Roland Cap. *Wind from the shore: Secular spirituality and the journey of William Butler Yeats from Romantic transcendence to monistic Modernism.*

3. Doggett, Robert Michael. *"Deep-rooted things": Empire and nation in the poetry and drama of William Butler Yeats.*

4. Krajewski, Eileen Theresa. *Secular messianism and the nationalist idea in the plays of Adam Mickiewicz and William Butler Yeats.*

5. Kimmer, Garland. *William Butler Yeats and meditative verse: "Where got I that truth?"*

6. Schneider, Stephen Patrick. *Elemental gyres: The structure of William Butler Yeats' "A Vision."*

7. Tawil, Miriam Judith. *Kabbalah, poetry and criticism: The Jewish mystical tradition in the poetry of William Butler Yeats and Edmond Jabes.*

8. Bonafous-Murat, Carle. *L'auteur en travail: genealogie de l'ecriture poetique dans quatre recueils de William Butler Yeats.*

9. Turso, Betty Doris. *The religion of William Butler Yeats.*

10. Looper, Ruth Buroine. *"The consecration of multiplicity": William Butler Yeats and the grotesque.*

11. O'Doherty, Fergal Columba. *The garden, the pasture and the bog: William Butler Yeats, John Hewitt and Seamus Heaney on colonialism and national identity.*

12. Carriere, Peter Michael. *The influence of decadence on the works of William Butler Yeats.*

13. Wagner, Patricia Mary. *Conventions of Celtic music in the early poetry of William Butler Yeats.*

14. Taaffe, Thomas Patrick. *The shaping of the eternal in the lyric poetry of William Butler Yeats and Gerrit Achterberg.*

15. Peterson, Barbara Ellen. *"Stylistic arrangements of experience": Space and time in the aesthetics of William Butler Yeats and Wyndham Lewis.*

16. Hassan, Syed Khwaja Moinul. William Butler Yeats, resistance, and Ireland.

17. Dobra, Susan Martha. *Collaboration and consensus: Constructing a rhetoric of abnormal discourse for composition from the esoteric prose of William Butler Yeats and Annie Wood Besant.*

18. Klironomos, Martha E. *Formations of the nation/state: Hellenism in the poetry of Ezra Pound, William Butler Yeats, and Odysseus.*

19. McNeilly, William Kevin Eric. *"Harmony in struggle": Poetic indeterminacy in the later work of William Butler Yeats.*

20. Olbrys, Nancy Jane. *Cuchulain and the Old Man: Antinomies symbolized by the gyre in three plays by William Butler Yeats.*

From the titles above, it is safe to say that scholars are well aware of the volume of work produced by and about Yeats. What is absent here is a truly interdisciplinary study of Yeats. Could this be the new direction?

2. Critical Approaches (Holdeman, David. *The Cambridge Introduction to W. B. Yeats*)

The last chapter in Holdeman's text summarizes critical approaches to the study of Yeats. How does the Institute build upon these approaches? (It is important to note that the dissertation and theses above have in some form of the other covered these critical approaches.)

Textual Yeats (compositional practices)
The Yeats's Aesthetics (Art and Artists)
Yeats's Occultism (the Automatic Script)
Yeats's Drama (theatrical theories)
The Politics of Yeats (Irish nationalism/cultural nationalism)
Yeats and Postcolonial Theory
Yeats and Feminism
Yeats and Folklore[vii]
Yeats as Yeats
Yeatsian influence on other writers

3. Observations

a. The material sources for Yeatsian scholarship address many subject matters sprinkled with a number of –isms to explicate Yeats's tendentious literary production. In the analyses of the Automatic Script, for instance, we are confronted with 1) occultism/spiritualism and/or spiritism split along a) mediumistic methods and b) magic. The *A Vision* texts and the System poems and plays are the end results. 2) Romanticism / Victorianism / Modernism have been apt movements to define the poetry and drama of 20th century Yeats. 3) Mythology/mythopoeia offers insights into Yeats's more politicized poems and plays, and so forth. What the material sources point to, in many instances, is Yeats's acute awareness, and use of contemporary movements to keep his craft current. For scholars in the twenty-first century Yeatsian scholarship is receptive to multiple interpretations. On the other hand, the numerous isms requiring background reference and counter-references may be daunting to new scholars. Is there room therefore to forge critical, hybrid approaches that place Yeats's works into manageable wholes?

b. Perceived limitation in the scope of Yeatsian scholarship (evidenced by the demographic in this year's institute,) is its persistent and decidedly Eurocentric focus. Other than the interest evoked in the 1980s by Edward Said's theory on Yeats and decolonization, and the resultant studies on Yeats and post-coloniality, little has been done to showcase Yeats's influence on other writers outside of the canon, or undertake comparative/parallel studies involving Yeats and writers from the "periphery." Cases in point:

i) In 1922, three years before the publication of *A Vision*, the Peruvian poet Cesar Vallejo published *Trilce*. The book was variously described as taking "language to a radical extreme, inventing words, stretching syntax, using automatic writing and other techniques now known as 'surrealist' (though he did this *before* the Surrealist movement began.)" The same could be said for the Chilean Vicente Huidobro whose 1919 treatise on avant-garde poetry, *Altazor*, precedes even Yeats's *Per Amica Silentia Lunae.*

ii) Cultural nationalism forges a bond between Yeats's politics/Irish Nationalism and struggles for national cohesion and inclusion in Latin America, Africa, and elsewhere. There have not been studies, for instance (this project addresses the parallels between Manuel Zapata Olivella and W. B. Yeats) to

fully understand similarities between the politics/aesthetics of writers such as the Afro-Colombian Manuel Zapata Olivella and those of W. B. Yeats.

iii) A fruitful area for scholars would be the embracing of parallel scholarships that highlight Yeats's influence beyond Europe. For example, Yeats has been studied within the context of myth criticism, most particularly the connections to the Greek mythologem. Yeats's use of Greek and Celtic mythology can be compared to the use of both Greek and Yoruba mythology by Nigeria's playwright and poet Wole Soyinka. Broadening the scope, Yeatsian studies can move outside the Western mythological inheritance and examine the connections and the disconnections to other mythological traditions.

5. Future Directions

The current exhibition at the National Library of Ireland, "The Life and Work of William Butler Yeats," displays the sheer volume of work that Yeats did indeed bring to perfection in his lifetime. From his early publication of "Voices" and "Song of the Faeries" in *The Dublin University Magazine* in March 1885 to "The Black Tower," written shortly before his death in 1939, Yeats gradually and sometimes painfully evolved into the great poet of his "boyhood plan." The manuscripts and first editions at the National Library of Ireland, the exhibition space also devoted to his plays, his metaphysical system, his many friendships and societies, his relationships to women, and his work in the Irish senate—all stand as testimony to Yeats's vitality and genius. If Yeats could somehow view his work in the retrospective now on view in Dublin, would Plato's ghost still taunt him? Did Yeats continue to believe, as he wrote in "Reveries over Childhood and Youth," that "all life weighed in the scales of my own life seems to me a preparation for something that never happens"? (*Au* 106).

In the early 1990s, new material in the form of *Yeats's* A Vision *Papers* was published, and several landmark biographies have subsequently and comprehensively analyzed the life and work of W. B. and George Yeats. Not surprisingly, once new information surfaced regarding Mrs. Yeats's role in Yeats's oeuvre after their marriage in 1917, feminist criticism has focused on this collaboration. And yet surprisingly, as Margaret Mills Harper noted in her address to the Institute, comparatively little critical scholarship has yet emerged. Her recent book, *The Wisdom of Two*, has opened new avenues for future

scholars to explore: reading the Automatic Script and *A Vision* as texts rather than as enigmatic contexts for the poetry. The new edition of *A Vision* of 1925, co-edited by Harper and Catherine Paul provides additional material for analysis.

Although the sheer volume of this genetic material may seem daunting to a scholar beginning to study Yeats, the Automatic Script is comprised of discrete components that may lend themselves to analysis in article-length studies. Possible directions for book-length treatments could include analysis of the Automatic Script as psychodrama, as literary drama, as comic novel, and as writing-in-process.

The recent biographies by Roy Foster, Ann Saddlemyer, Stephen Coote, and Terence Brown seem exhaustive, yet perhaps another biography is yet to be written from a psychoanalytic approach. Terence Brown's comments to the NEH Institute raised perplexing questions about his views of the personality of Yeats. Ann Saddlemyer's forthcoming edition of the letters exchanged between W. B. and George Yeats promises to pose new questions for critical examination. Dr. Saddlemyer also notes that further biographical study of Yeats's circle also could deepen our understanding of his work.

Clearly, Yeats's legacy is ongoing, multiple, and profound, and demands our further critical attention as it plays out in the ongoing creative and critical conversations occurring around the world.

6. Widening the Yeats Circle: A Summary

Recent work by Ann Saddlemyer, Meg Harper, and Catherine Paul has illuminated how WBY collaborated with George Yeats and with Lady Gregory. Further research into these collaborations and new research on other Yeats collaborations can expand on how Yeats's work resulted from close artistic relationships with others. Biographies and studies of those in Yeats's circles would contribute to how the larger artistic milieu contributed to the work authored by WBY. Meg Harper informed us that a book on the fluidity between the Yeats brothers, W. B. and Jack, is forthcoming.

Other critical approaches suggested during our Institute include the following:

Yeats and Ecocriticism

Yeats and Tagore

Yeats and Orientalism

Yeats and Myth Criticism

Yeats and other Interdisciplinary Studies

Yeats and Science Fiction

The Yeats family and circle: both creative connections and biographies

Hypertext: for working with the successive revisions of Yeats work

Yeats poems set to popular music

Yeats as successful literary entrepreneur

Comparison of Yeats and German artist Joseph Beuys; both saw themselves as shaman for their times

This report was written by the following members of the Yeats Institute:

Introduction –
Edward O'Shea, Institute Director

Textual Yeats
Mark Amdahl
Alison Armstrong
James Farrelly
Sarah Gibbons
Rob Merritt

Biographical Yeats
Eric Binnie
Kurt Bullock,
Shirley Kahlert,
Laurence Morris,
Julia Rawa,
Amy Smith

System / A Vision
Douglas Rosentrater,
Phillip Snyder
Renee Tryon,
Lara Whelan

Critical Directions
Richard Rankin Russell
Joseph Heininger
Deborah Fleming
Judith Meighan
Uchenna Vasser
Barbara Frieling
Sandra Sprayberry
Invaluable computer support by Amy Smith

Appendix A:

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The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats to 2006 (* available)

**Vol. I: The Poems, Revised,* ed. Richard J. Finneran (Macmillan, 1989);

**Vol. II: The Plays,* ed. David R. Clark and Rosalind E. Clark (2001);

**Vol. III: Authobiographies,* ed. William H. O'Donnell and Douglas N. Archibald (1999);

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**Vol. X: Later Articles and Reviews,* ed. Colton Johnson (2000);

Vol. XI: Mythologies, ed. Jonathan Allison (forthcoming0

**Vol. XII: John Sherman and Dhoya,* ed. Richard J. Finneran (Macmillan, 1991);

**Vol. XIII: A Vision (1925),* ed. Margaret Mills Harper and Catherine E. Paul (2008);

Vol. XIV: A Vision (1937), ed. Margaret Mills Harper and Catherine E. Paul (forthcoming).

The Cornell editions are in the process of publication; the following, including facsimiles and transcripts, have appeared:

Plays

The Countess Cathleen, edited by Michael J. Sidnell and Wayne K. Chapman

The Land of Heart's Desire, edited by Jared Curtis

Diarmuid and Grania, edited by J. C. C. Mays

Collaborative One-Act Plays, 1901–1903 ("Cathleen ni Houlihan," "The Pot of Broth," "The Country of the Young," "Heads or Harps" edited by James Pethica

The Hour-Glass, edited by Catherine Phillips

The King's Threshold, edited by Declan Kiely

Deirdre, edited by Virginia Bartholome Rohan

"The Dreaming of the Bones" and "Calvary," edited by Wayne Chapman

"The Only Jealousy of Emer" and "Fighting the Waves," edited by Steven Winnett

The King of the Great Clock Tower and *A Full Moon in March,* edited by Richard Cave

Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus, edited by Jared Curtis

The Words Upon the Window Pane, edited by Mary Fitzgerald

The Herne's Egg, edited by Alison Armstrong

Purgatory, edited by Sandra F. Siegel

The Death of Cuchulain, edited by Philip L. Marcus (out of print)

Poems

The Early Poetry, Volume I: "Mosada" and "The Island of Statues," edited by George Bornstein

The Early Poetry, Volume II: "The Wanderings of Oisin" and Other Early Poems to 1895, edited by George Bornstein

The Wind Among the Reeds, edited by Carolyn Holdsworth

"In the Seven Woods" and "The Green Helmet and Other Poems," edited by David Holdeman

Responsibilities, edited by William O'Donnell

The Wild Swans at Coole, edited by Stephen Parrish

Michael Robartes and the Dancer, edited by Thomas Parkinson, with Anne Brannen

The Tower (1928), edited by Richard J. Finneran, with Jared Curtis and Ann Saddlemyer

The Winding Stair (1929), edited by David R. Clark

Words for Music, Perhaps, edited by David R. Clark

"Parnell's Funeral" and Other Poems from "A Full Moon in March," edited by David R. Clark

New Poems, edited by J. C. C. Mays and Stephen Parrish

Last Poems, edited by James Pethica

A Vision

A Vision (1937; London: Macmillan)

Vision A, ed. Margaret Mills Harper and Catherine Paul (Scribner, 2008)

Harper, George Mills, general ed., assisted by Mary Jane Harper, *Yeats's Vision Papers:*

Volume 1: The Automatic Script: 5 November 1917–18 June 1918, with eds. Steve L. Adams, Barbara J. Frieling and Sandra L. Sprayberry (London: Macmillan & Iowa City IA: University of Iowa Press, 1992)

Volume 2: The Automatic Script: 25 June 1918–29 March 1920, with eds. Steve L. Adams, Barbara J. Frieling and Sandra L. Sprayberry (London: Macmillan & Iowa City IA: University of Iowa Press, 1992)

Volume 3: Sleep and Dream Notebooks, Vision Notebooks 1 and 2, Card File, with eds. Robert Anthony Martinich and Margaret Mills Harper (London: Macmillan & Iowa City IA: University of Iowa Press, 1992)

Volume 4: "The Discoveries of Michael Robartes," Version B ("The Great Wheel" and "The Twenty-Eight Embodiments"), with Margaret Mills Harper, and with Richard W. Stoops, Jr. (London: Palgrave, 2001)

Appendix B:

What follows is a list of terms and other information related to *A Vision* that we feel may be useful to scholars beginning or continuing work on the text:

***SOME BASIC TERMS/CONCEPTS FROM* A VISION:**

Anima Mundi
Astrology (Natal)—Horoscopes/Horaries
Automatic Writing
Cycles of Change
Daimon—Daemon—Oversoul
Equinoxes
Four Faculties—Will, Mask, Creative Mind, Body of Fate
Four Principles—Husk, Passionate Body, Spirit, Celestial Body
Four Quarters of the Wheel
Gyres—Cones—Concord/Unity, Discord/Desire
The Great Memory
Hermeticism
Incarnations—Reincarnations—After Life
Masks
Objectivity to Subjectivity to Objectivity
28 Phases of the Moon—each quarter consists of 7 phases each
  Phase 1—begins new moon
  Phase 8—begins first quarter moon
  Phase 15—begins full moon
  Phase 22—begins last quarter moon
Quadrants and Poles
The Record
"Sleaps"
Tinctures—primary and antithetical
Unity of Being
The Wheel

CHRONOLOGY CONNECTING WITH WBY AND GHL

1865 WBY born

1885 WBY founds Dublin Hermetic Society (WBY is 20 years old)

1886 WBY meets AE (George Russell)

1887 WBY (age 22) in London first meets Madame Blavatsky, then MacGregor Mathers and Moina Mathers

1888 WBY joins London Theosophical Society, attends first seance

1890 WBY initiated into Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, asked to resign from Esoteric Section of Theosophical Society

1892 WBY initiated into Second Order of the Golden Dawn

1892 Georgie Hyde Lees born (WBY is 27)

1896 WBY meets Lady Gregory

1898 WBY and Maud Gonne agree to contract a mystical marriage between themselves

1900 WBY ejects Aleister Crowley from the GD

1910 influential in folklore uncle George P. dies (WBY is 45)

1914 Georgie Hyde Lees joins Stella Matutina (successor of Golden Dawn) with WBY as sponsor

1915 play "At the Hawks Well" first produced

1916 WBY begins purchase of Thoor Ballylee

1917 WBY proposes (again) to Maud Gonne, Iseult Gonne, GHL; WBY and GHL marry; "faked" then authentic automatic writing begins in fourth day of marriage; WBY looks at Arabic language; essay "Per Amica Silentia Lunae" published

1918 daughter Ann born (WBY is 53)

1920 GHL exhausted by daily automatic writing begins "sleaps"

1921 son Michael born

1922 "sleaps" begin to end

1923 WBY is awarded Nobel Prize

1925 first version (A) of *A Vision* published (Yeats is 60)

1929 last visit to Thoor Ballylee

1930 WBY finishes revision second version (B) of *A Vision*

1936 Macmillan publishes second version (B) (Yeats is 71); *The Ten Principle Upanishads* published

1938 WBY dies

1948 WBY's remains (possibly) re-interred at Sligo

1968 GHL dies

2002 Ann Saddlemyer's *Becoming George* first published.

INFLUENTIAL "MYSTICS"

AE (George Russell)
Henri Bergson
William Blake
Helena Blavatsky
E. Gordon Craig
Dante
Edmund Dulac
Florence Farr
Ernest Fenollosa
Fox sisters (American)
Lady Gregory
Iseult Gonne
Maud Gonne
Mediums Anna Luise Karsch
Elizabeth (Bessie) Radcliffe
Etta Wriedt
Michio Ito
William James
Allen Kardec
MacGregor Mathers/Moina Mathers
Thomas Sturge Moore
Pico della Mirandola
Plotinus
George Pollexfen
Ezra Pound
Olivia Shakespear
Emanuel Swedenborg
Rabindranath Tagore

MAJOR SPIRIT GUIDES

Leo Africanus
Thomas of Dorlowicz
Others

SOME INFLUENTIAL PLACES CONNECTED WITH WBY/GHL

Ashdown Forest (England)
British Museum
Coole Park
Dublin of that era
Florence, Italy (Firenze) (GHL)
London of that era
Rock of Cashel
Sligo countryside in collecting of folklore

Thoor Ballylee
Effect of American tours

MYSTICAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THAT ERA CONNECTED WITH WBY/GHL

The Abbey Theatre/The Peacock Theatre
Anthroposophical Society (Rudolf Steiner)
The Futurist Club
The Golden Dawn—London, Dublin
The Ghost Club (London)
London Spiritualist Alliance
The Quest Society
Society for Psychical Research
Thoor Ballylee

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