

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF
W. B. YEATS

Volume II: The Plays



EDITED BY
David R. Clark AND Rosalind E. Clark

Scribner

NEW YORK LONDON TORONTO SYDNEY SINGAPORE



THE COLLECTED WORKS OF W. B. YEATS

VOLUME II

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF W. B. YEATS

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VOLUME XIV A VISION (1937)

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PREFACE

Yeats's great achievement in lyric poetry should not be allowed to overshadow his achievement as dramatist. Eric Bentley has called him "the only considerable verse playwright in English for seven hundred years."¹ T. S. Eliot spoke of "the triumph of his last plays" and of his laying "all his successors under obligation to him."² The revolutionary stage designer Gordon Craig, at an international theatre conference in Rome, reminded those who had "insisted on the prime importance of ... the written word," that "we have had in our midst for 3 to 4 days a great Dramatic Poet ... W. B. Yeats of Ireland."³

These tributes praise Yeats as a verse dramatist, but Samuel Beckett made no such limitation. Asked to honor George Bernard Shaw, he declared, "I wouldn't suggest that G. B. S. is not a great playwright whatever that is when it's at home. What I would do is give the whole unupsettable apple-cart for a sup of the Hawk's Well, or the Saints', or a whiff of Juno, to go no further."⁴

For Yeats is also a supreme modern dramatist for some of those who value the dramatic use of stage space equally with language, value "the pre-verbal, the pre-literary" as playwright Thomas Kilroy puts it. "... [M]ost readers of Yeats's plays come equipped with the experience of the poems, the prose, the *Vision*. And it is not enough." For "Yeats ... is to be found at one of the centers of the modern dramatic tradition. It is a center that subscribes to the integrity, the wholeness, the autonomy of stage practice, one which undermines the idea of humanist imitation which had long dominated the European theatre...."⁵ Katharine Worth finds Yeats "at the centre of the modern movement in the theatre." He "amazingly anticipated all that is most original in the European theatre." He conjured "out of nothing the forms the theatre at large would not see for almost fifty years. He grasped ... the words were not enough for ... the exploration of the 'interior'." "[A] technique of intense physicality was needed. All the resources of the theatre—scene, colour, music, dance and movement—had to be brought into play...."⁶

From the beginning Yeats regarded himself as a dramatic poet. "Poetry," for him as a youth, meant plays. "I had begun to write poetry in imitation of Shelley and of Edmund Spenser, play after play—for my father exalted dramatic poetry above all other kinds—and I invented fantastic and incoherent plots."⁷

Yeats conceived his poems and plays as part of one oeuvre. For many years the principal volume which represented the work of the early Yeats was *Poems* (London: T. Fisher Unwin), issued twelve times between 1895 and 1924, and giving prominence to the plays *The Countess Cathleen* and *The Land of Heart's Desire* as well as to the long narrative poem *The Wanderings of Oisín*.

In a 1916 note on the first of his middle-period dance plays, he wrote: "... I need a theatre; I believe myself to be a dramatist; I desire to show events and not merely tell of them; and two of my best friends were won for me by my plays, and I seem to myself most alive at the moment when a room full of people share the one lofty emotion. My blunder has been that I did not discover in my youth that my theatre must be the ancient theatre that can be made by unrolling a carpet or marking out a place with a stick, or setting a screen against the wall."⁸

While Yeats is listed as the single author of the plays, he would have insisted that we acknowledge the collaboration of Lady Gregory in those containing folk dialect, such as *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, *The P...*

of Broth, and *The Unicorn from the Stars*. Most of the dialogue of such plays must be hers, even when the conception was his. Yet these plays were published under Yeats's name alone, either with her consent or at her insistence, Yeats acknowledging his debt to her, inadequately it now seems, in notes and dedications.⁹ But each friend, in that milieu, sought and accepted help from the other at need.

In the present volume, the order of plays in the familiar *Collected Plays* is abandoned and the order of the unpublished collected editions is preferred. *The Collected Plays of W. B. Yeats* (London, 1934, and New York, 1935) was the fullest collection of plays published in Yeats's lifetime (1865-1939). In that book Yeats chose to place together the plays of the Ulster Cycle—*Deirdre* and the four plays about the Irish hero Cuchulain—and to arrange them¹⁰ in the order of the events of Cuchulain's life. Yeats did this at the cost of violating the order in which the plays were written and the order in which their various different dramatic forms evolved. After Yeats's death, *The Collected Plays of W. B. Yeats* (London, 1952, and New York, 1953) brought the first collection up to date with five plays first published between 1934 and 1939. No change was made from the order of the 1934 volume, the five new plays being simply added at the end, with *The Death of Cuchulain* appropriately concluding the volume rather than being placed back with the earlier plays of the Cuchulain cycle.

Unlike the *Collected Plays*, two collected editions which Yeats planned but which were never published maintained a roughly chronological order and did not gather together the plays of the Cuchulain cycle. Macmillan, London, was at various times preparing a De Luxe Edition of all Yeats's work, called, after Yeats's death, the Coole Edition. Yeats provided Macmillan copy for "six of the seven volumes"¹⁰ on 1 June 1931. Scribner's, New York, was preparing a Dublin Edition for which the Yeatses provided copy and lists for seven volumes in June 1937. The story of these two editions is complicated and may be followed elsewhere.¹¹ The roughly chronological order of the Macmillan collected edition was slightly different from that of the Scribner's edition. The "roughness" in both is that the four plays in *Four Plays for Dancers* (1921), as with the four plays in *Wheels and Butterflies* (1934), are treated as a unit and that Yeats puts these *volumes*, not the individual plays, where they would go chronologically. The result is that the order of the individual plays is not entirely chronological in either edition. Moreover, the order is slightly different in each edition. In the Macmillan edition, the plays in *Four Plays for Dancers* and *Wheels and Butterflies* are arranged as originally published in those volumes. In the Scribner's edition, the individual plays in *Four Plays for Dancers* and those in *Wheels and Butterflies* are arranged chronologically *within each volume*. The Scribner's list is the latest in Yeats's lifetime, and it is this arrangement which we have followed in *The Plays*.¹²

Part I below contains the twenty-eight plays which Yeats canonized by placing them in the collected editions. Included in the Macmillan and Scribner's collected editions, but omitted from each of *The Collected Plays* volumes, was the prose version of *The Hour-Glass*¹¹ (1903) and *Fighting the Waves* (1930), a ballet version of *The Only Jealousy of Emer* (1919). We have included these plays.

Part II adds, for the reader's convenience, two plays not so canonized, *Where There Is Nothing* (1900) (which was later rewritten as *The Unicorn from the Stars* [1908]) and *Diarmuid and Grania* (1901) coauthored with George Moore and never published in Yeats's lifetime.

Our aim has been to provide the latest texts in Yeats's lifetime, and the most accurate, of all these plays. Emendation has usually been held to a minimum. Little attempt has been made to regularize Yeats's sometimes unorthodox punctuation, nor has the spelling of Gaelic names been corrected or made uniform unless Yeats himself established a standard spelling (as with Cuchulain). The Textual Notes provide a full record of the copy-texts employed and the emendations admitted. The Explanatory Notes attempt to elucidate all *direct* allusions in the plays. Most of the Textual Notes are

by David Clark and most of the Explanatory Notes by Rosalind Clark, but we take equal responsibility throughout.

In the summer of 1937, Yeats wrote for the Scribner's edition three introductions: a general introduction, one for essays, and one for plays. These were sent to Scribner's London office by Yeats's agent on 15 October 1937¹³ but not published until 1961 in *Essays and Introductions* (Macmillan). Now for the first time "An Introduction for My Plays," newly edited, takes its place at the head of Yeats's collected drama.

We are indebted to a great many individuals for help, and we hope that the following list mentions most of them: Lionel and Muriel Adey, Gary Aho, Alison Armstrong, Nancy Lea Beaty, Norman Berlin, Thomas Bonnell, George Bornstein, Wayne Chapman, Mary Adele Clark, Mary Frances Clark, M. Ridgley Clark, John B. Clark, Mary Beth Dominello, Richard J. Finneran, Mary Fitzgerald, Roy Foster, Christopher Fox, Warwick Gould, George M. Harper, Jill Hobgood, Robert Hohl, Edla Holm, Dermot Keogh, A. Norman Jeffares, K. P. S. Jochum, John Kelly, the late Roy and Erica Leslie, Phill L. Marcus, William M. Murphy, Margaret O'Callahan, William H. O'Donnell, Stephen M. Parrish, AnnaLee Pauls, Anne Posega, Hilary Posega, Hilary Pyle, Catherine Ridenour, Joseph Ronsley, Ann Saddlemeyer, Ronald Schuchard, Michael J. Sidnell, Sandra Siegel, the late Robin and Sylvia Skelton, Colin Smythe, Charlotte Spivack, Henry Summerfield, Elizabeth Swaim, Kathleen Swaim, Maria Tymoczko, Robert Vacca, Nancy A. Watanabe, Hugh H. Witemyer.

We are especially indebted to Rebecca Klest for transcribing the music, and Richard Allen for his editorial assistance.

We thank the staffs of the following libraries for their cooperation: the Bodleian Library at Oxford; the Burns Library of Boston College; Cambridge University Library; the Cushwa-Leighton Library at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana; the W. E. Burghardt Du Bois Library of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst; the Indiana University Library at Bloomington; the MacPherson Library at the University of Victoria, British Columbia; the National Library of Ireland; the University of Notre Dame Library; the Olin Library of Wesleyan University; Peninsula College Library, Port Angeles, Washington; Princeton University Library; the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas, Austin; the University of Washington Libraries.

Our work is dedicated to Art and Joyce Hoffman.

NOTES

Eric Bentley, "Yeats as a Playwright," *Kenyon Review* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1948): 197.

T. S. Eliot, *Poetry and Drama* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), pp. 22-23.

Convegno di Lettere, 8-14 ottobre 1934/XII, Tema: Il Teatro Drammatico, Reale Accademia d'Italia, Fondazione Alessandro Volta, Atti Di Convegno, 4 (Roma: Reale Accademia d'Italia, 1935/XIII).

Quoted by Worth from *Samuel Beckett: An Exhibition Held at Reading University Library, May to July 1971*, catalog by J. Knowlson (1971), p. 23, where it was quoted from the Shaw Centenary program, Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, 1956. Katharine Worth, *The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett* (London: Athlone Press of the University of London, 1978), p. 242. Cited from now on as Worth. 13

Thomas Kilroy, "Two Playwrights: Yeats and Beckett," in *Myth and Reality in Irish Literature*, ed. Joseph Ronsley (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977), pp. 183, 184.

Worth, p. 3.

Autobiographies, ed. William H. O'Donnell and Douglas Archibald, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), p. 81. Cited from now on as Au.

The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats. Edited by Russell K. Alspach, with the assistance of Catharine C. Alspach. London:

and New York: Macmillan, 1966. Cited from now on as VP1.

See Yeats's comments on *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, pp. 681-82, *The Pot of Broth*, pp. 683-84, and *The Unicorn from the Stars*, pp. 685-86.

Yeats, interview by Louise Morgan, in *Writers at Work* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1931), pp. 8-9.

See Richard J. Finneran, *Editing Yeats's Poems: A Reconsideration* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 5-23 and passim. Cited from now on as EYP.

The Scribner list ends with *The Herne's Egg*. We have followed the chronological order of a typescript at the Harry Ransom Research Center, seemingly by Mrs. Yeats, which reads "SCRIBNER EDITION / Additional Plays. / Purgatory. 1938 / The Death of Cuchulain. 1939." We believe that Yeats's reversing order for *Last Poems and Two Plays* (Dublin: Cuala Press, 1939)—in which *Purgatory* follows *The Death of Cuchulain*—was meant for that volume alone, being thematic rather than chronological.

Copy of letter of Charles Kingsley, Scribner's, London, to A. P. Watt & Son, 19 October 1937 (Princeton): "I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of October 15th accompanied by the following:—Typewritten copy of three prefaces...." 14

ABBREVIATIONS

Works not used enough to be listed here and so not abbreviated receive full citation the first time they appear in each section.

Published works by Yeats or works including substantial letters or manuscripts.

- Au *Autobiographies*, ed. William H. O'Donnell and Douglas Archibald (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994)
- B *A Bibliography of the Writings of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. by Russell K. Alspach (Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968).
The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats: Volume One, 1865-1894, gen. ed. John Kelly, ed. John Kelly, assoc. ed. Eric Domville (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986)
- CL1 *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats: Volume Two, 1896-1900*, gen. ed. John Kelly, eds. Warwick Gould and Deirdre Toomey (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)
- CL2 *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats, Volume Three, 1901-1904*, gen. ed. John Kelly, eds. John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994)
- CL3
- E&I *Essays and Introductions* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1961)
- Ex *Explorations*, selected by Mrs. W. B. Yeats (London: Macmillan, 1962; New York: Macmillan, 1963)
- FFT *Fairy and Folk-tales of Ireland* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1973)
- L *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allen Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954; New York: Macmillan, 1955)
Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley, intro. Kathleen Raine (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1964)
- LDW
- LE *Later Essays*, ed. William H. O'Donnell, with assistance from Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeau (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994)
- LFF Florence Farr, Bernard Shaw, W. B. Yeats, *Letters*, ed. Clifford Bax (London: Home and Van Thall, 1946)¹⁵
- LTSM *W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence 1901-1937*, ed. Ursula Bridge (London: Routledge and KeganPaul, 1953)
- LTWBY *Letters to W. B. Yeats*, ed. Richard J. Finneran, George Mills Harper, and William M. Murphy (London: Macmillan; New York: Columbia University Press, 1977)
- Mem *Memoirs*, ed. Denis Donoghue (London: Macmillan, 1972; New York: Macmillan, 1973)

Myth	<i>Mythologies</i> (London and New York: Macmillan, 1959)
OBMV	<i>The Oxford Book of Modern Verse</i> , chosen by W. B. Yeats (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936)
P	<i>The Poems</i> , second edition, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Scribner, 1997)
UP1	<i>Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats</i> , vol. 1, ed. John P. Frayne (London: Macmillan, 1970; New York: Columbia University Press, 1970)
UP2	<i>Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats</i> , vol. 2, eds. John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson (London: Macmillan, 1975; New York: Columbia University Press, 1976)
V(1925)	<i>A Vision</i> (London: Werner Laurie, 1925 [January 1926])
V	<i>A Vision</i> , 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1937)
V(1925)CE	<i>A Critical Edition of Yeats's A Vision (1925)</i> , eds. George Mills Harper and Walter Kelly Hood (London: Macmillan, 1978)
V Making	George Mills Harper, <i>The Making of Yeats's 'Vision': A Study of the Automatic Script</i> , 2 vols. (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987)
VP	<i>The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats</i> , eds. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York: Macmillan, 1957; cited from the corrected 3rd printing, 1966, or later printings)
VPI	<i>The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats</i> , ed. Russell K. Alspach, assisted by Catharine C. Alspach (London and New York: Macmillan, 1966; cited from the corrected 2nd printing, 1966, or later printings)

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

In the preparation of the notes in Appendix A and Appendix B and in the Explanatory Notes, we have helped ourselves to the information in many books of general reference and of Yeats scholarship. Sources of help with specific problems have been acknowledged in specific notes, but the field of indebtedness is much too wide and various to be adequately detailed. Besides editions of Yeats's own writings (to whose editors we owe much), some of the books which we have used constantly (but have usually cited only when quoting) are the following:

Blue Guide L. Russell Muirhead, ed., *The Blue Guides Ireland*, 3rd ed. (London: Ernest Benn, 1962)

Boylan Henry Boylan, *A Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 3d ed. (Niwot, Colorado: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1998)

Cross and Slover Tom Peete Cross and Clark Harris Slover, eds., *Ancient Irish Tales* (1936; New York: Barnes Sc Noble, 1996)

Curtis Edmund Curtis, *A History of Ireland* (1936; London: Methuen, 1961)

Ellmann Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats* (1954; London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1961; 1983)

Ellmann, M&M Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (New York: Macmillan, 1948)

Finneran EYP Richard J. Finneran, *Editing Yeats's Poems: A Reconsideration* (New York: Schocken Martin's Press, 1990)

Flannery James W. Flannery, *W. B. Yeats and the Idea of a Theatre: The Early Abbey Theatre in Theory and Practice* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976)

Foster, Modern Ireland R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London: Allen Lane, 1988; London: Penguin Books, 1989)

Foster, Yeats1 R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life I: The Apprentice Mage 1865-1914*, vol. 1 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Gayley C. M. Gayley, *The Classic Myths of English Literature* (Boston: Ginn &c Company, 1903)

Gregory, CM Lady Gregory, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (London: John Murray, 1902)17

Gregory, Gods Lady Gregory, *Gods and Fighting Men* (London: John Murray, 1904)

Gregory, OIT Lady Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre: A Chapter of Autobiography* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913)

Gregory, Visions *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, collected and arranged by Lady Gregory with two Essays and notes by W. B. Yeats (1920; Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1970)

Hall James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (New York: Harper and Row, rev. ed. 1979)

Holloway *Joseph Holloway's Abbey Theatre*, eds. Robert Hogan and Michael J. O'Neill (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press; London and Amsterdam: Feffer and Simon, 1967).

HRC Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin, Texas

Jebb R[ichard] C. Jebb, *Sophocles The Plays and Fragments*, Part II, *The Oedipus Coloneus*

(Cambridge: At the University Press, 3rd ed., 1900; reprint, 1907)

Jeffares and Knowland A. Norman Jeffares and A. S. Knowland, *A Commentary on the Collected Plays of W. B. Yeats* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975)

Jeffares A. Norman Jeffares, *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984)

McGarry James P. McGarry, *Place Names in the Writings of William Butler Yeats*, ed. Edward Malins (Gerrard Cross: Colin Smythe, 1976)

Miller Liam Miller, *The Noble Drama of W. B. Yeats* (Dublin: Dolmen Press; North American Humanities Press, 1977)

NLI National Library of Ireland

OED *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 1971)

O'Shea Edward O'Shea, *A Descriptive Catalog of W. B. Yeats's Library* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1985) and "The 1920s Catalogue of W. B. Yeats's Library," *Yeats Annual*, no. 1, ed. Warwick Gould (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 279-90

P. W. Joyce *The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places*, 2nd ed., in 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co.; Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, 1898)

Robinson Lennox Robinson, *Ireland's Abbey Theatre: A History, 1899-1951* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1951)

Saul George Brandon Saul, *Prolegomena to the Study of Yeats's Plays* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958; New York: Octagon Books, 1971)

SB The William Butler Yeats Microfilm Archive, State University of New York at Stony Brook

Tain Thomas Kinsella, trans., *The Táin* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, in association with the Dolmen Press, Dublin, 1970)

Welch Robert Welch, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)

YA *Yeats Annual*, ed. Warwick Gould (London, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan)

Yeats *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press)

Part One



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