W.B. Yeats, Modern Poetry, and the Language of Sculpture

Jack Griffith Quin

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Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between poetry and sculpture in the work of W.B. Yeats (1865-1939). I focus on Yeats's poetical and critical engagement with Celtic Revival statuary, public monuments in Dublin, the coin designs of the Irish Free State, abstract sculpture by the Vorticists and the modernists, and a variety of *objets d'art*. The thesis shows that beyond constructing vague analogies between sculptural form and poetic form, Yeats's lifelong engagement with a range of sculptors and sculpture movements led to more nuanced pairings of poetics and sculptural aesthetics. Drawing on archives, letters, contemporary articles and debates, this thesis foregrounds the poet's engagement with sculptors and art writing on sculpture that have received only partial and fragmentary attention to date.

Chapter one traces Yeats's art school education, where he studied with George Russell and the sculptors Oliver Sheppard and John Hughes, and his imagining of an inter-arts Celtic Revival from 1884 to 1901. Chapter two examines his responses to Dublin public monuments and political readings of sculpture from 1898 to 1925. In chapter three I consider his role in redesigning the Free State coinage and his interest in Carl Milles and Ivan Meštrović, from 1926 to 1928. Chapter four examines Yeats in conversation with the sculpture writing of Henri Gaudier-Brzerska and Ezra Pound that proliferated the modernist 'little magazines' of early-twentieth century London, and the poet's subsequent fascination with Constantin Brancusi. The fifth and final chapter surveys Yeats's late poetry on sculpture and some of the profounder sculptural-poetic pairings borne from a lifelong interest in the art of sculpture. This project contributes to the intersecting fields of Yeats studies, Irish literary and visual culture studies, and new modernist studies.

Contents

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as references.

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Introduction

Poet and sculptor, do the work,
—W.B. Yeats, 'Under Ben Bulben'[1]

Yes, the work comes out more fair,
from a form that rebels against
handling,
verse, marble, onyx, enamel.
—Théophile Gautier, 'L'Art'[2]

I

On 26 October 1967, the Taoiseach Jack Lynch unveiled an eight-foot tall, patinaed bronze sculpture as part of a memorial garden in St. Stephen's Green, Dublin to the poet William Butler Yeats. In a public park teeming with commemorative statues and busts to notable Irish statesmen and writers including Countess Markiewicz, James Joyce, James Clarence Mangan, Robert Emmet and O'Donovan Rossa, the amorphous, abstract sculpture *Standing Figure: Knife Edge* (1961) by Henry Moore is something of an anomaly. Moore's sculpture is not W.B. Yeats. Unlike the figurative and conservative representations of various Irishmen in marble and bronze, Moore's work was not designed with a particular person in mind, nor was it dedicated as such, but was designed as a feature of the memorial garden. That hasn't stopped countless tourists – myself included – from visiting the memorial garden, squinting and tilting their heads to try to find a blurry resemblance of the poet in the sculpture. The memorial was unveiled by Lynch with Moore, George Yeats and her son, Senator Michael Yeats, and daughter, Anne Yeats, in attendance.[3] Extracts from Yeats poems were read by Austin Clarke, Brendan Kennelly and Eavan Boland.[4] 'Art knows no frontiers', the *Irish Times* stated boldly, with a nod to

[1] *VP*, 638.
[2] Théophile Gautier, 'L'Art', quoted and translated William D. Paden, *Christine de Pizan and Medieval French Lyric*, ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 32.
[3] In an obituary article for Barbara Hepworth, Moore recalled that he and Hepworth were introduced to Yeats and T.S. Eliot in London through William Rothenstein. See Moore, 'Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975)', *The Sunday Times*, 25 May 1975. Quoted in *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations*, ed. Alan Wilkinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 153-155.
[4] Gerry Walker, 'Poetic Performance', *Irish Arts Review* Vol 30, No 2, 2013. 98-101.

Renaissance *paragone* and Irish partition, 'and yesterday a great artist in one medium did homage to another'.[5]

Knife Edge is a lean, contorted vertical figure with the appearance, from a distance, of a human body. It consists of large smooth planes that finish in soft rounded curves or abrupt knife edges at the midriff. The applied patina gives an inconsistent green hue to the bronze that lightens or darkens in various surface indents and concave or convex planes. The colours change depending on the time of day, the position of the sun and the position of the viewer. Moore's own description of the sculpture ruminates on issues of abstraction and verisimilitude:

> Sculpture has some disadvantages compared with painting, but it can have one great advantage over painting – that it can be looked at from all round; and if this attitude is used and fully exploited then it can give to sculpture a continual, changing, never-ending surprise and interest.
>
> In walking round this sculpture the width and flatness from the front gradually change through the three-quarter views into the thin sharp edges of the side views, and then back again to the width seen from the back.[6]

The figural, frontal appearance of the sculpture is balanced on a knife-edge, as it were, disappearing as the viewer moves around the work. Moore allegorizes this pluri-faciality of the work in his peripatetic description: 'And the top half of the figure bends backwards, is angled towards the sky, opens itself to the light in a rising upward movement – and this may be why, at one time, I called it *Winged Figure*.' The sculpture seems to move in his description. His naming and renaming of the work corresponds to his perambulatory reflections on it. At various times it has been called '*Standing Figure – Knife-Edge* also *Standing Figure – Bone* and again, *Winged Figure*', as if the title changes with the sculptor's points of view: 'All three titles have some relevance to what it is, and how it came about'.[7] The third name raises a deliberate allusion in the work's frontal, forward-leaning and spread-eagle appearance to the *Victory of Samothrace*. Moore hoped that the work's suggestive dynamism would call to mind 'something Greek' like the headless winged *Victory*.

What W.B. Yeats would have made of his memorial is difficult to discern. At the unveiling, Taoiseach Lynch thought Yeats would approve of the abstract work: 'When the poet lived, he feared the debasing influence of what he called the shamrock and pepperpot. Dead, he

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[5] Quoted in Roger Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 338. *Irish Times*, 27 October 1967, reporter notes that Austin Clarke read 'Mad as the Mist and Snow', 'Beautiful Lofty Things', and 'High Talk'; Brendan Kennelly read 'The Municipal Gallery Revisited'; and Eavan Boland read 'The Wild Swans at Coole'.
[6] Moore, *Writings and Conversations*, 290.
[7] Moore, *Writings and Conversations*, 290.

would resent violently the triteness of any such facile monument in his honour.'[8] The poet was, however, an admirer of the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* precisely because of its verisimilitude. In an extract from 'Discoveries' (1907) he considered the tactility of the plastic art of statuary as the antithesis of, and an antidote to, certain forms of abstraction:

> Neither painting could move us at all, if our thought did not rush out to the edges of our flesh, and it is so with all good art, whether the Victory of Samothrace which reminds the soles of our feet of swiftness, or the Odyssey that would send us out under the salt wind, or the young horsemen on the Parthenon, that seem happier than our boyhood ever was, and in our boyhood's way. Art bids us touch and taste and hear and see the world,[9]

To be 'moved' by a painting or sculpture is taken literally in this extract.[10] The horsemen of the Parthenon marbles remind the spectator of his boyhood whilst also exceeding it. Yet Yeats refers to the *Winged Victory* almost physically moving the spectator onto the balls of his feet in a passage reminiscent of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's veneration of the *Apollo Belvedere*: 'In gazing upon this masterpiece of art, I forget all else, and I myself adopt an elevated stance, in order to be worthy of gazing upon it. My chest seems to expand with veneration and to heave like those I have seen swollen as if by the spirit of prophecy'.[11] Not for nothing did Goethe write of Winckelmann's art history that '[o]ne learns nothing from him […] but one becomes something'.[12] In his sprawling tribute to the *Apollo Belvedere*, Winckelmann is setting up an aesthetics whereby 'life imitates art', one that Yeats would become deeply invested in.[13] Winckelmann concedes his inability to adequately describe and praise the statue in words: 'How is it possible to paint and describe it! Art herself must advise me and guide my hand to convey henceforth the main features that I have sketched here. I place the concept of this figure that I have conveyed at its feet, like the wreaths offered by those who could not reach the head of the

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[8] *Irish Times*, 'Moore Memorial to Yeats unveiled', 27 October 1967, 13.
[9] Yeats, *CWIV*, 212.
[10] In Salomon Reinach's *Apollo: An Illustrated Manual of the History of Art throughout the Ages* (1907), the Winged Victory of Samothrace is praised for 'The irresistible energy, the victorious swing of the body, the quivering life that seems to animate the marble, the happy contrast afforded by the flutter of the wind-swept mantle, and the adherence of the closely-fitting tunic to the torso, combine to make the statue the most exquisite expression of movement left to us by antique art.' Salomon Reinach, *Apollo: An Illustrated Manual of the History of Art Throughout the Ages*, trans. Florence Simmonds (London: William Heinemann, 1907), 56-57 [*YL* 1734].
[11] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications, 2006), 333-334.
[12] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, quoted in Walter Pater, 'Winckelmann,' *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, ed. Matthew Beaumont, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 90.
[13] According to Michael North: 'His was the first suggestion that antique sculpture be arranged in some kind of historical order so that different styles could represent not just artistic variations but the rise and fall of whole civilizations. It is partly due to Winckelmann that so many cultural histories rely on sculpture as a major category of evidence, using it as a social diagnostic, an unfailing key to the health of the society that produced it'. North, *The Final Sculpture: Public Monuments and Modern Poets* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 29-30.

deities whom they wished to crown.'[14] His inadequate verbal description is set at the base of the Belvedere, marking the origins of a specific crisis of representation in art history: how to describe adequately the effects of sculpture in language and literature? Writing in fetters, Winckelmann alights upon the multiple and insurmountable frontiers of the arts.

This thesis will examine the relationship between poetry and sculpture in the work of W.B. Yeats (1865-1939). In so doing, I will focus on Yeats's poetical and critical engagement with Celtic Revival statuary, public monuments in Ireland, the coin designs of the Irish Free State, abstract sculpture by the Vorticists and the modernists, and a variety of *objets d'art*. The poetry and art writing of Yeats record a lifelong fascination with sculpture from the classical to the modern period; in bronze, marble, ivory or lapis lazuli; and from low relief Sicilian coins to towering monuments in Dublin and Byzantium. He proposes curious analogies between the writing of poetry and the craft of sculpture, and uses art history to explain, or even anticipate, human history. Yet the language of sculpture is not merely a source of fortuitous puns and analogues for Yeats's writing. His lifelong friendships, collaborations and at times disagreements with contemporary sculptors of different stripes and styles have received only partial and fragmentary attention in critical studies of the poet. Drawing on archival research, this thesis foregrounds the poet's engagement with sculptors and art writing on sculpture. At the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art and the Royal Hibernian Academy, Yeats studied with George Russell and the sculptors Oliver Sheppard and John Hughes. He tried to raise funds for public monuments and promoted his peers for particular commissions in Dublin. As an Irish Senator, he raised awareness for ancient monuments in need of protection and chaired the committee charged with designing the Free State coinage. He was in conversation with the sculpture-writing of Wyndham Lewis, Henri Gaudier-Brzerska and Ezra Pound that proliferated in the modernist 'little magazines' of early-twentieth century London. His own writings on and contact with modernist sculptors – Constantin Brancusi, Carl Milles, Ivan Meštrović, Auguste Rodin, among others – offer new perspectives on Yeats's ambivalent engagement with Modernism as both a verbal and visual phenomenon in his later years.

The terms of my title require some explanation here. 'The Language of Sculpture' is borrowed from Lene Østermark-Johansen's recent monograph on Walter Pater, which in turn borrows its title from the 1974 book by British sculptor William Tucker. In an artist's view of modernist sculpture, Tucker's work encounters the age-old problem 'of dealing with the language of things through the language of words.'[15] A gulf emerges between sculpture and

[14] Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 334.
[15] Quoted in *Modern Sculpture Reader*, ed. Jon Wood, David Hulks and Alex Potts (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007), 463.

'sculpture writing', whether exhibition catalogues, reviews, letters, art history lectures or ekphrastic poems. In *Walter Pater and the Language of Sculpture* (2011), Østermark-Johansen extends the phrase to demonstrate Pater's deliberate pairing of sculptural aesthetic theories in *The Renaissance* and *Greek Studies* with his theories of language and writing borne out in *Marius the Epicurean* and various pieces on prose and poetry.[16] Sculpture's vernacular therefore implies the properties unique to its medium – mass, materials, processes of carving and modelling, gravity, effects of light on the surface – and yet, the history of sculptural aesthetics is haunted by what Alex Potts has defined as the modern sculptural imaginary: 'the new sculpture as impossible object, whose imaginative power was at odds with the ordinary positivity and reified aesthetic qualities' of 'an actual sculpture, realised as a material object'.[17] Writing on sculpture characterises and creates a very different thing to the material object in stone or steel. Potts notes that sculpture 'exists both as a distinct art form and as a set of ideas or phantasies about sculpture'. The latter ideas and phantasies are 'an alternative to the traditional sculptural object', negating or nuancing its conventional association with monumentality, solidity and durability.[18] Consequently this thesis examines the pervasive influence of sculpture in late nineteenth to early twentieth century poetry and art writing, and the competing ideas of sculpture as solid or fluid, durable or durational, abstract or figurative, autonomous or contingent. As I will show throughout the thesis, literary studies must appreciate the conflicted history, or individual histories, of sculptural aesthetics to understand the relationship between poetry and sculpture.

I attempt to avoid narrow analogies of poetic form as sculptural form by offering close readings and critical analysis of what W.B. Yeats actually writes about sculpture, sculptors and sculptural aesthetics across his poetry and prose. Yeats's understanding of sculptural practice, and his sustained conversations, at times collaborations, with particular sculptors, attest to a more complicated and less unidirectional or metaphorical use of the art of sculpture in his writings. As the only monograph on the subject of Yeats and the visual arts to date, Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux's 1986 study provides a magisterial account of the poet's early interactions with the Pre-Raphaelites in the 1880s-90s, his move from traditional ekphrastic poetry to a more nuanced Symbolist theory of word and image, his theatre business in the 1900s-10s, his immersion in esoteric art histories while writing each version of *A Vision* (1925/1937), and the 'sculptural turn' in his later poetry from the 1920s-30s.[19] This has proved to be an influential

[16] Lene Østermark-Johansen, *Walter Pater and the Language of Sculpture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 1-13.
[17] Alex Potts, 'Introduction', *Modern Sculpture Reader*, xiii-xxx, xviii. The complex and conflicted status of the sculptural in theory and art writing is discussed at length in: Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, (London: Yale University Press, 2000).
[18] Potts, *Modern Sculpture Reader*, xiii-xiv.
[19] Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux, *Yeats and the Visual Arts* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003).

narrative of the poet's lifelong forays in the visual arts, and this thesis would not have been possible without Loizeaux's scholarship, but her account is in need of revision and reassessment to appreciate the particularity of Yeats's engagement with sculpture. As I demonstrate in chapter one, Loizeaux's and Michael North's accounts of a late sculptural turn in Yeats should be qualified in the light of recent scholarship. Yeats's claim that he 'invite[d] a Marmorean Muse' in 1918,[20] and the abundance of poems about sculpture composed later in his career – 'Byzantium', 'Lapis Lazuli', 'A Bronze Head', 'The Statues' – lend credence to the prevailing narrative. Yet Bernadette McCarthy and John Turpin have uncovered Yeats's early art training and the history of the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art. My own thesis builds upon this scholarship by tracing Yeats's early exposure to sculptural practice and to a new generation of Irish sculptors, Oliver Sheppard and John Hughes. Furthermore, Yeats's earliest poem, *The Island of Statues*, which was written during his art school years points to an unacknowledged, lifelong engagement with sculpture and fantasies about the art form.[21]

Several critics have noted the versatility and ambiguity of sculpture as a metaphor for Yeats's poetry. Towards the end of her book-length study, Loizeaux writes of 'Yeats's sculptural poetry':

> Yeats's view of his poems as monuments as well as his desire for unity in all things suggest that he, like other modern artists, conceived of his works as objects. His poems were to be like the sculptural monuments he so admired: round, whole, independent, of themselves, enduring. […] The sound and rhythm, furthermore, speak, as we have seen in the early poems, of an order that does not exist in the natural world. They help create a solidity, but their very presence reminds us it is the solidity of art.[22]

Loizeaux's description of a 'sculptural poetry' is slightly problematic if the suggestion is that Yeats's poems become, or aspire to be, autonomous, monolithic and 'eternal'.[23] In the introduction to his edition of *W.B. Yeats: The Poems*, Daniel Albright also detects a monumental, self-immortalising impulse in the poet's later works: 'he immerses himself in dreams of supersensual splendour, he dwells in an austere and symbolical tower and tries to transmute

[20] Yeats, 'Per Amica Silentia Lunae' (1917), *CWV*, 1-33, 4.
[21] Bernadette McCarthy, 'William Butler Yeats: The Poet in the School of Art,' *Notes and Queries* 55, no. 4 (2008): 518-521; John Turpin, *A School of Art in Dublin since the Eighteenth Century: A History of the National College of Art and Design* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1995).
[22] Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux, *Yeats and the Visual Arts*, 188.
[23] Deirdre Toomey's review of *Yeats and the Visual Arts* in the *Yeats Annual* 7, provides an unsparing critique of the book's overreliance on painterly analogies to poetry and the principle of *ut pictura poesis*. See Toomey, *YA* 7, ed. Warwick Gould (London: Macmillan, 1990), 251-256.

himself to metal or stone, in order to assume a permanence equal to that of the beauty he seeks'.[24] Similarly in *The Final Sculpture: Public Monuments and Modern Poets* (1985), Michael North dedicates three chapters to the study of sculpture in Yeats's poetry as a ubiquitous, if ambiguous, metaphor for the poems themselves.[25] Suffice to say, the ambiguous or contradictory configurations of sculpture across Yeats's *oeuvre* trouble these taxonomic and analogic impulses. Many of Yeats's late great poems can be marshalled and paraphrased in aid of these deductions: 'A Bronze Head', 'The Statues', 'Sailing to Byzantium', 'Lapis Lazuli', 'Byzantium'. Loizeaux has contended that, 'Sculpture appears in the late poems as both exemplar […] and as analogy for his own poetry'.[26] I contend that sculpture paradoxically provides Yeats with a fluid medium, which is metaphoric and metamorphic in the hands of the poet. In Yeats's poetry, statues and sculptures often appear to become the things they represent, whether historical figures, landscapes, textiles, or gods. Instead of achieving monistic fixity or immortality, the statues in Yeats's poems are non-static, contingent upon time and audience, seemingly organic, and consequently subject to ageing or material degrading. Marble is weather-worn, wood is decayed, lapis lazuli is discoloured, and monuments are levelled by the wind or overturned in civil war and revolution.

The versatile metaphor of sculpture for the characteristics of poetry seems to be evacuated of the specifics of sculptural aesthetics, its rich history and dialogue with the verbal arts. Sculptures and statues have not always been understood as 'round, whole, independent, of themselves, enduring'.[27] To take Henry Moore's *Knife Edge* as a prime example, sculpture can change with the weather. 'Sculpture is an art of the open air', according to Moore, 'Daylight, sunlight is necessary to it, and for me its best setting and complement is nature. I would rather have a piece of my sculpture put in a landscape.'[28] Of *Knife Edge* in particular, Moore wrote of the 'continual, changing, never-ending surprise and interest' that the sculpture might elicit in the open air.[29] From the late nineteenth to twentieth century, sculptural aesthetics underwent a shift from the statuary tradition to sculpture in an expanded field that challenged certain

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[24] Daniel Albright, 'Introduction', *The Poems*, xlv.
[25] 'Sculpture is so common a metaphor in Yeats's work precisely because of its ambiguous nature'. Michael North, *The Final Sculpture*, 43.
[26] Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux, 'The Visual Arts', *W.B. Yeats in Context*, ed. David Holdeman and Ben Levitas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 339-352, 347. Similarly unilluminating or potentially misleading sculpture-poem analogies can be seen in F.A.C. Wilson's contention that 'The Statues' is 'one of the most monumental of *Last Poems*'; Tom Paulin's claim that in 'Sailing to Byzantium', 'Yeats is wary of being too monumental, so he uses half rhymes – *young/song, trees/seas/dies*', or Giorgio Melchiori's deduction that Yeats's late poems seek 'the feeling of concreteness'. See, respectively: F.A.C. Wilson, *Yeats's Iconography* (London: Macmillan, 1960), 291; Tom Paulin, *The Secret Life of Poems* (London: Faber, 2008), 161-162; Giorgio Melchiori, *The Whole Mystery of Art* (London: Routledge, 1960), 235. In Chapter Five I develop this critique of narrow sculpture-poem analogies.
[27] Loizeaux, *Yeats and the Visual Arts*, 188.
[28] Moore, *Writings and Conversations*, 245.
[29] Moore, *Writings and Conversations*, 290.

preconceptions about sculpted matter. The contested conceptions of sculpture, hitherto outlined, have not been appreciated in the study of Yeats's poems about sculptures. My thesis will complicate traditional understandings of the monument in Yeats's work as something monolithic, autonomous, timeless and therefore the condition to which his poetry aspires.

A brief survey of the criticism of W.B. Yeats and the 'visual arts' raises the case for medium specificity[30] that this thesis seeks to redress. The conflation of art forms in literary criticism under the aegis of 'visual culture' or 'the visual arts' might risk marginalizing the art of sculpture. In the 1950s or 60s, the painter Ad Reinhardt allegedly defined sculpture as 'something you bump into when you back up to look at a painting'.[31] His tongue-in-cheek definition speaks to some of the real issues about privileging painting over sculpture when we speak broadly about the visual arts or visual culture. Hegel's *Aesthetics* lectures considered painting as modern and innovative, while sculpture was antiquated or primitive. Baudelaire asked 'Why sculpture is boring', in a review of the 1846 Salon that praised painting for having 'only one point of view; it is exclusive and despotic: and so the expression a painter can command is much stronger.'[32] Modern literature was 'under the dominion of painting', wrote Virginia Woolf in 1925.[33] However, modern sculpture was not outdated or lacking the innovations seen in painting. Sculpture experienced a different set of art-theoretical conditions that determined an alternative course of development. And yet a conscious or unconscious bias towards painting and painters persists in literary studies of visual culture, relegating sculpture to a secondary status. Sculpture is the focus of one concluding chapter in Loizeaux's *Yeats and the Visual Arts*, and the art form is largely absent from Karen Brown's recent study of the Yeats family circle and the 'nexus of inter-arts relationships' they cultivated.[34] John Butler Yeats and Jack Yeats's careers in painting might contribute in part to this bias. In the poetry of W.B. Yeats, statues and sculptures are anything but an inconvenient obstruction in Ad Reinhardt's definition, nor do they play second-fiddle to paintings. Whether we consider 'Lapis Lazuli', 'The Statues', 'To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee', 'A Bronze Head', 'The Island of Statues', 'The Three Monuments', or 'Easter, 1916', it becomes clear that 'the stone's in the midst of all'. This thesis proposes that the variety and centrality of sculpture to Yeats's work raises the importance of medium specificity. The distinct discipline of sculpture and the intellectual history

[30] In art history, the term 'medium specificity' refers to the principle of differentiating discreet visual art forms from one another: sculpture, painting, film etc.
[31] Ad Reinhardt, quoted in Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 1.
[32] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, volume II*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998), 702-703; Charles Baudelaire quoted in Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 62-63.
[33] Virginia Woolf, 'Pictures,' *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: 1925-1928*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1994), 243-247, 243.
[34] Karen E. Brown, *The Yeats Circle: Verbal and Visual Relations in Ireland, 1880-1939* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

of sculptural aesthetics is one that Yeats was deeply invested in across his career, and which stands apart from his fervent interest in painting, arts and crafts, and other aspects of visual culture.

II

Before surveying the critical landscape in more detail, it is necessary to outline the real or imagined sculptures with which Yeats's poetry is engaging and what is at stake in proposing a Yeatsian 'language of sculpture' by isolating a single poem. 'Lapis Lazuli' (1938) is a poem by Yeats about a carving gifted to the poet on his seventieth birthday by Harry Clifton. The Ch'ien Lung period sculpture (1739-1795) is 26.7cm high, carved in the semblance of a mountain with pine trees, crags, waterfalls and a temple that three men climb towards. The deep azure blue colour of the front contrasts with the back which has blanched white with the passage of time. In the final two stanzas of Yeats's poem, the significance of the sculpture and its referents also change with the passage of time. The fading of the upper part of the lapis from an intense blue colour to white becomes a snow-covered slope in the poet's imagination. The various cracks and dents are interpreted as newly formed rivers and streams running through the sculpture:

> Two Chinamen, behind them a third,
> Are carved in Lapis Lazuli,
> Over them flies a long-legged bird
> A symbol of longevity;
> The third, doubtless a serving-man,
> Carries a musical instrument.
>
> Every discoloration of the stone,
> Every accidental crack or dent,
> Seems a water-course or an avalanche,
> Or lofty slope where it still snows[35]

The lapis carving is reshaped by outside forces, whether by time or by the participation of the viewer who might accidentally drop or damage the stone. The sculpture in Yeats's verse is unstable, multi-faceted, contingent upon time and audience, and subject to erosion or erasure. The cracks, imperfections and faults, perhaps fault-lines, of the stone and the poem are defining characteristics of each. In the above lines the consistent *abab* rhyme scheme of the overall poem is supplemented by an internal rhyme scheme: 'dent' echoing 'accidental', and the assonance of

[35] Yeats, *VP*, 566-567.

'discol*or*ation' with 'water-c*our*se', as if to suggest that the changing shape of the stone has reshaped, or is mirrored by the reshaping of, the poem's form. These are the happy accidents of viewing and an ingenious interplay of word and image, wherein cracks can be interpreted as watercourses and discoloration as snow.

In the terms of ekphrastic studies, Yeats's meditation on the static carving conveys dynamic action. The poem narrativises and animates the sculpted figure's climb towards 'the little half-way house' depicted on the stone. And the speaker imagines events that have not been pictured on the lapis lazuli: 'I / Delight to imagine them seated there'; at the half-way house they have not reached in the sculpted object. Comparable to the paradoxes of John Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', the carved Chinamen play unheard and impossible melodies: 'One asks for mournful melodies; / Accomplished fingers begin to play'. The interpretative and imaginative possibilities of Yeats's ekphrasis depart from the fixed art object, accumulating a variety of artistic mediums along the way. While cataloging the features of the lapis lazuli sculpture, the viewer-speaker is performing his own act of interpretation on the sculpture, transfiguring it into a verbal medium:

> Two Chinamen, behind them a third,
> Are carved in lapis lazuli,
> Over them flies a long-legged bird,
> A symbol of longevity;[36]

The speaker's description of the 'long-legged bird' sculpted in the lapis is an act of metaphorising that can take place in a verbal medium but not necessarily in the original, visual medium. Indeed, it might be said that Yeats creatively *mis*appropriates the object. As Loizeaux notes, 'One look at the [actual] lapis lazuli, however, reveals that here, as before, Yeats makes free use of his source. The long-legged bird actually appears on the back of the piece, not on the front with the Chinamen'.[37] The oscillation between material and representation, a punning interplay between words and images, and dynamism and stillness, are all hallmarks of the modern ekphrastic poem. Crucially however, Yeats's 'Lapis Lazuli' it is not a stable, orthodox ekphrastic poem. The lapis carving is not the only sculpture in the poem.

In the third stanza, the speaker alludes to the elaborate, diaphanous sculptures of the fifth century BC sculptor Callimachus, none of which survive in the present:

> No handiwork of Callimachus,

[36] *VP*, 566.
[37] Loizeaux, *Yeats and the Visual Arts*, 151.

Who handled marble as if it were bronze,
Made draperies that seemed to rise
When sea-wind swept the corner, stands;
His long lamp-chimney shaped like the stem
Of a slender palm, stood but a day;
All things fall and are built again,
And those that build them again are gay.[38]

The syntax leaves the sculptures of Callimachus ambiguously balanced between existence and erasure. In short: 'No handiwork of Callimachus […] stands', yet lines 30-32 delight in the features of the marble statues that no longer exist and syntactically delays their destruction, which is only qualified at the end of line 32 with the word 'stands'.[39] If poetry can be understood as verbally perpetuating a moment, or in this case a moment's monuments, it might be said that lines 29-32 achieve a slowing down of time in order to observe Callimachus's sculptural works before their inevitable erasure, which has already taken place. In lines 33-34 of 'Lapis Lazuli' the speaker alludes to Callimachus's sculpture of a lamp, which was described in Pausanias's *Description of Greece* as belonging to a statue of Athena in the Erechtheion in Athens. Once again, the item no longer exists but the poet imagines the shape of the lamp, through simile, to be analogous to a palm-tree: 'His long lamp-chimney shaped like the stem / Of a slender palm'. This might be understood as the capacity of poetry, and the metaphorising imagination, to reanimate long lost sculpture and statuary by establishing a fictive consonance between it and living organisms. Yet the poem is also delighting in the sculpture as a purely textual reproduction that is creatively enabling through word-play, metaphor and alliteration. The present-day evidence of Callimachus's sculptures is wholly textual.[40] Yeats probably became familiar with Callimachus through J.G. Frazer's translation of Pausanias's *Description of Greece*, which describes in detail the gold lamp of the statue of Athena with 'a bronze palm-tree placed over the lamp and reaching to the roof'.[41]

The images of sculpture in lines 29-30 of 'Lapis Lazuli' are inherently tactile, with the repetition of 'hand' in 'handiwork of Callimachus' and 'handled marble' suggesting that the

[38] *VP*, 566.
[39] Evidently the poem's form allows for the simultaneous assertion of contrary possibilities. The sculptures of Callimachus are negated before their first mention '*No* handiwork of Callimachus', yet without the qualifier 'stands' it might be said that the sculptures are simultaneously in existence and extinct.
[40] It is estimated that Callimachus's statue of Athena and several other sculptures were destroyed when the Goths sacked Athens in A.D. 267, if not before (Stallworthy, 1969, 52), and there is insufficient evidence to correctly attribute other Greek sculptures of unknown origin, for example the Venus Genetrix, to the sculptor.
[41] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, trans. James Frazer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 39.

speaker conceives of stone as something protean that is molded by hand. Callimachus's lamp, 'shaped like the stem / Of a slender palm' puns on the palm of a hand, inviting contact and touch to make the extinct artwork, or its fictive reproduction, tangible; in order to bring it into being. Comparable to the statues that 'moved or seemed to move in marble or in bronze' and the 'Calculations that look but casual flesh' in Yeats's 'The Statues',[42] the handling of marble and Callimachus's lamp shaped like a palm-tree in 'Lapis Lazuli' present sculpture as organic, and suggest that such sculptures are subject to a process of ageing, or at least entropy. In this case the 'lamp-chimney', though beautiful, is described as fragile, 'slender' and suggestive of an etiolated palm-tree. Ultimately the speaker's lingering over the elaborately sculpted 'long lamp-chimney' is cut short by the qualification that it 'stood but a day' and has since been destroyed.

In both 'Lapis Lazuli' and the opening stanzas of 'The Statues' the speakers appear to soften the sculptural surfaces from cold, hard materials of marble or bronze to more appealing materials acting as a stimulant to touch; 'casual flesh', 'tender' sculpture, and 'draperies' that seem closer to skin and fabric than to stone. Yeats's fascination with the draperies sculpted by Callimachus that seemed to move or rise with the wind indicates that when the poet is most enthralled by a specific sculpture he nevertheless views the work as unfixed and transmutable, in this case desiring that it will change from stone to the fabric it seeks to represent. It might be said that sculpture is aspiring to the condition of fabric in these lines, problematizing the deduction that Yeats's poetry aspires to the condition of, and completion as, sculpture. Instead the reader is reminded that the statue itself is a representation that aspires to be the real thing that it merely represents. There is a slippage between materials and forms; from marble to textile and ultimately to text, since whether the statue is made of marble, bronze or cloth is rendered immaterial by the qualification that it 'stood but a day' and only exists as a textual reproduction in the present: the poem is a 'verbal representation of a visual representation'.[43]

What will emerge from this study of the relationship between sculpture and poetry that moves beyond vague analogies of 'form', is the overlapping aesthetic and theoretical resonances of each art form. Rather than proposing a catalogue of sculptural poems, or providing a taxonomy of sculptural characteristics in verse, my thesis traces the twin historiographies of poetics and sculptural aesthetics through Yeats. Chapter one looks at Yeats and George Russell's responses to Matthew Arnold on the Celt and the plastic arts, and traces their alignment with contemporary Irish sculptors, to propose an alternative historiography of Irish sculpture, one that is paired more directly to the Celtic Revival poetry of its time and suggests the reciprocal

[42] *VP*, 610.
[43] James Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 3.

influence of art forms on the revival and re-appropriation of Celtic mythic figures. Sculptors carve and model the mythic figures inscribed in verse, and reciprocally, poets respond to these sculpted manifestations in ekphrastic poetry. Chapter two traces the persistence of this Revivalist 'sculptural poetics' in the political and revolutionary writing of Patrick Pearse and Thomas MacDonagh, and Yeats's subsequent revisions to understanding poetry and sculpture in the public sphere. Chapters three and four, to varying degrees, underscore the alternative histories of modern sculptural aesthetics in the modernist period. Yeats's responses to the ovoids of Constantin Brancusi and his role in designing the Irish Free State's coinage, his most direct engagement with sculptural practice, indicate a resistance to the prevailing history of modernist sculpture inscribed by Ezra Pound, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and others in the magazines of the Vorticist movement. The art historian Penelope Curtis has contended that a Vorticist master-narrative around the tradition of carving shackled British sculpture and its historiography for the early twentieth-century.[44] As I discuss in chapters three and four, traditions of modelling actually ran concurrently and complementarily to those of direct carving, despite the claims of Pound, Lewis and Gaudier-Brzeska in various polemics for the *Egoist* and *Blast*. Figurative statuary was still considered modern and innovative across continental Europe, with Rodin as a forerunner, and later Carl Milles of Sweden and Ivan Mestrovic from Croatia, being lifelong sculptors from the model. What emerges from an alternative history, or individual histories, of modernist sculpture and sculptural aesthetics are several hitherto unacknowledged overlaps between European modernism and Irish regionalism in Yeats's writing. For example, chapter four shows that Yeats's admiration for Celtic Revival sculptors and the reanimation of Celtic myth in figurative statuary informed his later preference for modern sculptors who resisted modernist abstraction and the credos of Vorticism. And contrariwise, as chapter three documents, the 'Dove or Swan' section of *A Vision* (1925) feeds directly into Yeats's subsequent writing on the Free State coin designs. At this stage it is necessary to survey the intersecting fields of academic enquiry that this thesis will contribute to: Yeats studies, Irish literary and visual culture studies, and new modernist studies.

III

In line with Loizeaux's *Yeats and the Visual Arts* (1986), I chart a broadly chronological account of Yeats's lifelong interactions with sculptors and writings on the art of sculpture. While

[44] Penelope Curtis, 'How direct carving stole the idea of Modern British Sculpture', *Sculpture and the Pursuit of a Modern Ideal in Britain c. 1880-1930*. ed. David J. Getsy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 291-318.

Loizeaux's study is the only monograph on the subject to date, the last decade has seen a number of important revisions and reassessments of Yeats's relationship to the visual arts.[45] In *Reframing Yeats: Genre, Allusion and History* (2013), Charles Armstrong considers the excesses of Yeats's ekphrases, taking 'The Municipal Gallery Re-visited' as a prime example wherein 'ekphrasis does not come across as a matter of poetry's appropriation of tangible solidity, or the attainment of a restful simplicity borrowed from art'.[46] Frustrating stable, traditional models of 'ekphrastic poetry', Yeats's verbal descriptions of visual art objects are often dramatic departures from the artworks represented. While Yeats observes a number of paintings in the Municipal Gallery, he writes or 'envoices' a version of Irish history into the paintings. Nor does the poet settle on one artwork in the Gallery as suitably or sufficiently emblematic of Anglo-Irish history either. It is the collection or accumulation of artworks, and the figures these paintings represent, that motivate the speaker-spectator's thoughts. In a similar vein in a chapter on 'Modern Irish Poetry and the Visual Arts' (2012), Neil Corcoran describes Yeats's forays into the visual arts as 'poems which enact the opportunities of the ekphrastic', but not necessarily orthodox ekphrastic poems.[47] 'Leda and the Swan', 'Lapis Lazuli' and 'The Bronze Head', for example, encroach upon the territory of the visual arts, borrowing some of their appealing characteristics, and indeed, might have real-world art objects as sources of inspiration. Yet many other Yeats poems might be examples of what John Hollander has called 'notional ekphrasis': representations of imaginary works of art.[48] Tom Walker has recently shown how Yeats's art writing in modernist 'little magazines' attempts to unite aestheticism with the modernism of Pound, Jacob Epstein and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska.[49] And Karen Brown's *The Yeats Circle* (2011) has traced some of the networks of inter-arts experimentation in Ireland from 1880 to 1939, by attending to art writing *tout court*.[50] While chiefly concerned with painting, illustration and the decorative arts, Brown's case studies of collaboration between Irish artists and writers – Althea Gyles and Yeats, Norah McGuinness and Yeats, Jack Yeats and Thomas MacGreevy – has informed my broader methodology. Michael North's *The Final Sculpture* (1985) traces Yeats's use of sculpture in poetry

[45] In addition to the recent articles and chapters outlined above, see Ronald Schuchard, 'Yeats, Titian and the new French Painting', *Yeats the European*, ed. A.N. Jeffares (Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1989), 142-159; Catherine Paul, *Poetry in the Museums of Modernism: Yeats, Pound, Moore, Stein* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 39-64; Gifford Lewis, *The Yeats Sisters and the Cuala* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994).
[46] Charles I. Armstrong, 'Ekphrasis and Excess', *Reframing Yeats: Genre, Allusion and History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 111-122, 122.
[47] Neil Corcoran, 'Modern Irish Poetry and the Visual Arts: Yeats to Heaney', *Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Poetry*, eds. Fran Brearton and Alan Gillis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 251-265. See also Corcoran, *Poetry and Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 107-124.
[48] John Hollander, *The Gazer's Spirit: Poems Speaking to Silent Works of Art* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
[49] Tom Walker, "Our More Profound Pre-Raphaelitism': Yeats, Aestheticism and *Blast*,' *Blast at 100*, eds. Philip Coleman, Kathryn Milligan and Nathan O'Donnell (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2017).
[50] Karen E. Brown, *The Yeats Circle: Verbal and Visual Relations in Ireland, 1880-1939* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

back to Walter Pater and forward to the writings of Ezra Pound, while preserving the ambiguity or versatility of Yeats's thinking about the art form. North employs terms like 'repose', 'public monuments' and 'private memory', that recur across his study of Yeats, Pound, Wallace Stevens, John Berryman and Robert Lowell, to characterise their multiple and contrary allusions to sculptures in verse.

My approach also utilises early Yeats scholarship by Giorgio Melchiori, T.R. Henn, and more recently Warwick Gould and Deirdre Toomey, that seeks to trace or source the specific artworks that appear in or inspired particular poems.[51] However, it is necessary to differentiate my research from attempts to attribute notional ekphrases and allusions to precise artworks. The overdetermined attribution of artefacts that appear in verse might risk undermining the ingenuity, syncretism and idiosyncrasy of Yeats's engagement with the visual arts. For example, several critics have noted that Yeats kept a photograph of Michelangelo's *Leda and the Swan* painting by his desk as he wrote the eponymous sonnet.[52] Giorgio Melchiori proposes – but then problematizes the suggestion – that two versions of *Leda and the Swan*, housed in the Spiridon collection and the Borghese Gallery were the principal 'visual stimuli' of Yeats's poem. Yet in each painting '[t]he scene is idyllic', with neither depicting the violence in the sonnet.[53] As Elizabeth Cullingford has noted, a Hellenistic bas-relief of Leda and the Swan is the most visually proximate artwork to the actions described in the poem.[54] In the sculpture, the swan is 'hovering' above Leda, her neck or 'nape' held in his bill, the bird's 'webbed toes' caress and almost blend into Leda's thighs in high relief. The carving is reproduced in the first volume of Elie Faure's *History of Art* (1921), which Yeats also owned. If the stone carving unequivocally depicts violence and rape when contrasted to the erotic and idyllic representations of the myth in painting, Yeats's poem nevertheless invites conflicting interpretations of Zeus and Leda's congress.[55] It is evident that the sonnet does not have a singular art source but multiple visual art resources. In these more oblique references to particular visual artworks we might ask if the 'bibliographical code' of the poem; the potential art sources and real-world sites of viewing, might be better left in the bibliography, appendix or endnotes of a critical study.[56] This thesis

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[51] See, for example, T.R. Henn, *Lonely Tower* (Oxford: Routledge, 1965); Giorgio Melchiori, *The Whole Mystery of Art*, (London: Routledge, 1960); Warwick Gould, 'Yeats and his Books', *YA 20*, 3-70; Gould, 'The Mask before *The Mask*', *YA 19*, 3-47.

[52] Ian Fletcher, *W.B. Yeats and his Contemporaries* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987), 220-251. Neil Corcoran, *Poetry and Responsibility*, 108.

[53] Melchiori, *The Whole Mystery of Art*, 151-2.

[54] Elizabeth Cullingford, *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 153-155.

[55] See Michael D. Hurley, 'How Philosophers Trivialize Art: *Bleak House, Oedipus Rex*, 'Leda and the Swan", *Philosophy and Literature*, Volume 33, Number 1, April 2009, 107-125.

[56] On the 'bibliographic codes' of ekphrastic poems, see George Bornstein *Material Modernisms: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

will contend that across Yeats's *oeuvre*, the multiple visual art representations of particular myths – whether Cuchulain, the golden bough, or the real Parnell – are syncretised in poems that meditate upon the varied aesthetic afterlives of real and mythic figures.

The thesis also attends to 'new formalist' approaches to poetry which have revitalised the close reading of Yeats in the past decade. Studies of poetry and the visual arts have, on occasion, relegated the close reading of the poem to tracing the provenance or significance of an artwork within the verse. If sculpture-poem analogies risk misrepresenting the nature of sculpture, they can also apply somewhat misleading, or simply unilluminating, characterisations of poetic forms as 'statuesque', 'sculptural', or 'blocky'. In *Our Secret Discipline* (2007), Helen Vendler defines Yeats's achievement as the sensitive alignment of form and content: 'As we follow a Yeatsian stanza through its unfolding, we often come to admire the way in which unusual or irregular stanza-rhythms and thought-rhythms seem effortlessly to agree'. And yet Vendler is keenly aware that the form, rhythm and structure of Yeats's poems about sculpture do not enact a seamless mimesis of their contents.[57] Peter McDonald notes, in *Serious Poetry* (2002), that the suggestive parallelisms of architectural form and poetic form in Yeats's Coole Park poems, 'puts an immediate metaphorical strain on the vocabulary of poetic structure […] Nevertheless, such metaphorical observations may turn in other, more fruitful directions' when Yeats sets up momentary symmetries or indeed asymmetries between the form and contents, words and images.[58] Such attentiveness to close reading shows that Yeats's use of sculpture, symbols or any recurring things across his *oeuvre* do not assume a programmatic or taxonomic consistency. As Nicholas Grene has shown, Yeats's 'poetic codes' are peculiar and singular to each poem.[59] Matthew Campbell's *Irish Poetry under the Union, 1801-1924* (2013) and Alan Gillis's *Irish Poetry of the 1930s* (2005) provide compelling close readings of Yeats while closely tied to the historical contexts of Ireland approaching and immediately after independence. Their attentiveness to historical poetics and genealogies of Irish poetry have informed this study and its wider pairings of Irish poetics with sculptural aesthetics.

One of the most crucial secondary resources for this thesis has been *Heroic Revivals from Carlyle to Yeats* (2012) by Geraldine Higgins, which traces the political aesthetic of the poet's writing on statues and public monuments in Ireland. In her chapter on Yeats, Higgins contends that the presentation of the poet as 'bardic memorialist' or 'cultural archivist' of modern Irish history is connected to his most material of concerns with statues, whether the Cuchulain

[57] Helen Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 297. Compare Vendler's close reading of 'The Statues' (271-272), which I discuss in Chapter Five.
[58] Peter McDonald, *Serious Poetry: Form and Authority from Yeats to Hill* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 53.
[59] Nicholas Grene, *Yeats's Poetic Codes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

sculpture in the General Post Office, the three monuments to Charles Stewart Parnell, Lord Nelson and Daniel O'Connell on O'Connell Street, the bronze bust of Maud Gonne in the Hugh Lane Gallery, or the place 'where Wolfe Tone's statue was not'[60] at the corner of Stephen's Green.[61] Across the Irish studies section of my thesis (Chapters One to Three) I extend Higgins's catalogue and evaluation of Yeats's poetic responses to Irish statues to take in his lifelong interest in the art of sculpture. Chapter Two centres on public monuments and Yeats's renegotiation of the Easter Rising and revolutionary politics mediated through his changing views of Dublin's statues. Consequently, Edna Longley's attempt to trace a revisionist perspective, *avant la lettre*, in Yeats's verse will be compared to Yeats's sculpture-writing and mediation of political change through the visual interpretation of monuments.[62] R.F. Foster's magisterial two-volume biography of Yeats is a central resource to each chapter of this thesis and each phase of the poet's career.[63] Chapters One and Three, however, depart from and build upon the biographical material by offering unfamiliar portraits of Yeats as an art school student from 1884 to 1886 and as the chairman of the Free State coinage committee from 1926 to 1928. In line with Bernadette McCarthy's work, the first chapter seeks to rectify the omission of Yeats's visual art training from biographical accounts.[64] In Chapter Three, my archival research in the National Archives (NAI) and National Museum of Ireland (NMI) aims to redress the critical neglect around Yeats's role in the designing of Ireland's coinage.

In proposing a 'sculptural poetics', this thesis aligns with theoretical approaches to the encounters, dialogues, or sibling rivalries between verbal and visual languages. This relationship between word and image has been outlined by studies in ekphrasis, thing theory, and 'iconology' by Leonard Barkan, Bill Brown, W.J.T. Mitchell, respectively, as well as researchers of the history of visual culture: Richard Neer, Alex Potts, Rachel Teukolsky, Mark Antliff, and Sarah Victoria Turner.[65] Each attests to the importance of medium specificity in the visual or plastic arts and

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[60] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1961), 229.
[61] Geraldine Higgins, *Heroic Revivals: From Carlyle to Yeats* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 116.
[62] Edna Longley, *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1994).
[63] R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: a Life*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, 2003), (hereafter abbreviated as *RF1* and *RF2*); Terence Brown, *The Life of W.B. Yeats: a critical biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001). This thesis also cites the dated but nevertheless richly detailed biography of Yeats by Joseph Hone. In the 1940s Hone corresponded with Oliver Sheppard about the sculptor's acquaintance with Yeats from art school to their later years: Joseph Hone, *W.B. Yeats 1865-1939*, 2nd edition (London: Macmillan, 1962).
[64] Bernadette McCarthy, 'William Butler Yeats: The Poet in the School of Art', *Notes and Queries*, 518-521, 519. Bernadette McCarthy, 'W.B. Yeats, John Ruskin, and the 'lidless eye", *Irish University Review* (Autumn-Winter, 2011), 25-41.
[65] See Leonard Barkan, *Mute Poetry, Speaking Pictures* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013); Bill Brown, *Other Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Richard T. Neer, *The Emergence of the Classical Style in Greek Sculpture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination* (London: Yale University Press, 2000); Rachel Teukolsky, *The Literate Eye* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Mark Antliff, 'Shaping Duration: 'Bergson and Modern Sculpture", *The European Legacy*, 16:7, (2011), and Antliff's *Inventing Bergson*

accumulates their own principles or taxonomies, however varied they may be, of the peculiar properties of sculpture *in* writing. Guided by these methodological lenses, the project moves beyond a narrow account of Irish studies and Yeats's responses to individual artworks to theorise the relationship between poetry and sculpture. I argue that Yeats conceived of poetry and sculpture as intertwined lineages, providing complementary or competing archetypes for mythic figures and real statesmen. I propose that the history of sculptural aesthetics and the language of sculpture must be understood in any workable definition of sculptural poetics, whether this means expanding 'ekphrasis', as Armstrong and Corcoran have, or departing from the term. The art historian David Getsy has also convincingly argued that individual statues by Rodin, Leighton, Thornycroft and others have the character of a manifesto or theoretical statement about the nature of sculpture itself.[66] In these accounts the language of sculpture might be resituated in, or *as*, the sculpture with a renewed investment in close-looking. This is an approach I take up, particularly in relation to sculptures by Sheppard and Hughes, where the art criticism surrounding works might be deemed partial, partisan or somewhat unilluminating.

The interdisciplinary and inter-arts approach of this thesis seeks to redress a critical neglect of Ireland's visual and material culture, within a field that has typically prioritised the study of literature in isolation from other art forms. It embraces an expanded definition of sculpture that encompasses a range of works from public monuments in Dublin, abstract sculpture, the coin designs of the Irish Free State, Celtic Revival statuettes, to Yeats's lapis lazuli carving. An extension of the remit of the plastic arts is offered in Rosalind Krauss's 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (1978) attending to issues of environment and site specificity. More recently the ambitious catalogue *Sculpture Victorious* (2014), edited by Martina Droth, Jason Edwards and Michael Hatt, has shown that advances in science and technology in the Victorian period shifted our understanding of sculpture, its material and modes of viewing, long before the arrival of modernist abstract art.[67] Yet the expanded field of sculpture in Victorian and Modern Ireland has not been sufficiently charted along these theoretical lines.

In recent publications, there is evidence of a renewed critical attention to Irish sculpture and a corrective turn in Irish studies more broadly. These include a dedicated *Sculpture* volume in the landmark Royal Irish Academy *Art and Architecture of Ireland* series (2015), a book-length

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Sarah Victoria Turner, 'Ezra Pound's New Order of Artists: "The New Sculpture" and the critical formation of a sculptural avant-garde in early twentieth-century Britain,' *Sculpture Journal* 21:2 (2012), 9-21.

[66] See David J. Getsy, *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain, 1877–1905* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). Getsy, *Rodin: Sex and the Making of Modern Sculpture* (London: Yale University Press, 2010).

[67] Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field,' *Modern Sculpture Reader*, ed. Jon Wood, David Hulks and Alex Potts (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007), 333-342. *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837-1901*, ed. Martina Droth, Jason Edwards, Michael Hatt (London: Yale University Press, 2014).

survey of nineteenth-century Irish sculpture by Paula Murphy (2010), a special issue of the *Eire-Ireland* journal on 'Irish Things', important histories of Irish museums, exhibitions and art schools by Fintan Cullen and John Turpin, as well as monographs on previously neglected Irish sculptors, such as Oliver Sheppard, John Hogan, and Thomas Farrell.[68] These recent scholarly contributions supplement the magisterial studies from previous decades that tended towards general overviews of the arts in Ireland or sweeping accounts of sculpture that spanned several centuries of Ireland. Nevertheless, Ann Crookshank's *Irish Sculpture from 1600 to the present day* (1984), Jeanne Sheehy's *Rediscovery of Ireland's Past* (1980) and Judith Hill's *Irish Public Sculpture* (1998) remain foundational to Irish art history and to this thesis.[69]

Scholarship on Irish sculpture in the expanded fields of public art, urban geography and the politics of memorials informs the discussion of Dublin's public monuments in Chapter Two.[70] Theorising the role of sculptural aesthetics and its relationship to politics within Irish culture becomes particularly pertinent in the current 'Decade of Centenaries'. My research engages conceptually with issues of commemoration and communal memory, and materially, in the nation's role commissioning and sculpting public memorials. The widespread re-examination of Ireland's revolutionary period – between the Easter Rising (1916) and the Irish Civil War (1922-3) – has begun to acknowledge the role of artists and art school students whose contributions have typically been conflated or elided with the better known literary and theatrical interests of the revolutionaries. R.F. Foster's *Vivid Faces* and articles on William Orpen and Jack Yeats, Roisin Ni Ghairbhi's biography of the sculptor Willie Pearse, Patrick Pearse's brother, and the National Gallery of Ireland's exhibition and catalogue *Creating History: Stories of Ireland in Art*, have offered a corrective to this oversight.[71] In Chapter Two, my discussion of the overlooked exhibition reviews written by Patrick Pearse as editor of the Gaelic League newspaper, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, contributes to this revisionist account of how the visual arts,

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[68] Paula Murphy (ed.), *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume III: Sculpture 1600-2000* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015); Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture: Native Genius Reaffirmed* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2010); John Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard, 1865-1941: Symbolist sculptor of the Irish Cultural Revival* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000); Turpin, *John Hogan, Irish Neoclassical Sculptor in Rome* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1982); Paula Murphy, 'Thomas Farrell, Sculptor', *Irish Arts Review*, vol. 9, (1993), 196-207.

[69] Anne Crookshank, *Irish Sculpture from 1600 to the Present Day* (Dublin: Department of Foreign Affairs, 1984); Jeanne Sheehy, *The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past: the Celtic Revival 1830-1930* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980); Judith Hill. *Irish Public Sculpture: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998).

[70] Yvonne Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2003); Gary Owens, 'Nationalist Monuments in Ireland, c1870-1914: Symbolism and Ritual,' *Ireland: Art into History*, ed. Brian P. Kennedy and Raymond Gillespie (Dublin: Town House, 1994), 103-117.

[71] R.F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890-1923* (London: Penguin, 2014). Róisín Ní Ghairbhí, *Willie Pearse: 16 Lives* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2015). Brendan Rooney (ed.), *Creating History* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2016).

and particularly sculpture, were appropriated as the handmaiden to revolutionary politics in 1900s to 1910s Ireland.

The last decade has seen a variety of responses to inter-arts aesthetics in the Victorian to modernist periods. Rebecca Beasley's *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* (2007) nuances and challenges accounts of Pound's 'visual poetics' by proposing, in Pound's words, a 'profounder didacticism' wherein visual culture and aesthetic theories seep into Pound's writing across the 1910s-30s.[72] Beasley's extensive scholarship on Pound and Vorticist art informs the fourth chapter of this thesis on Yeats, Pound and the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi. Furthermore, Beasley's broader methodology, drawing on archives, memoirs, contemporary articles and debates to illuminate Pound's lifelong preoccupation with the visual, has guided the direction of my thesis to re-evaluate and complicate Yeats's lifelong writing on sculpture. Recent art history and interdisciplinary scholarship has expanded the definitions of the terms 'art writing' and 'sculpture writing' that this thesis draws upon. Writing about art appears in contemporary periodicals, exhibition reviews, lectures, correspondence and ekphrastic poems.[73] In *The Literate Eye*, Rachel Teukolsky contends that nineteenth-century art writing – responding to Turner's watercolours, the first photographs of natural history, the international art of the 'Great Exhibition' – was anticipatory and constitutive of the changes in modernist aesthetics. A chief contribution to knowledge in my thesis involves situating Yeats's lifelong interest in and collaboration with contemporaneous sculptors, within a wider and relatively unexplored discipline of 'sculpture writing' in Ireland from the nineteenth to early-twentieth century. Prominent figures in the art world of Dublin figure in the epistolary and biographical material on Yeats, but the significance of their contact with the poet has largely gone unexamined. Drawing on archives, memoirs, contemporary articles and debates, this thesis documents and analyses an Irish vein of sculpture writing. Chapters One to Three show that the critically neglected art criticism of Thomas Bodkin, C.P. Curran, Patrick Pearse and George Russell among others can be connected to Yeats and the sculptors of their time to propose a collaborative and 'panaesthetic' ambition to Celtic Revival and Irish modernist art. Discourses on the plastic arts in Irish periodicals, exhibition reviews, letters and lectures can be recuperated under an expanded definition of 'art writing' or sculpture writing. The papers of several Celtic

[72] Rebecca Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 152. See Chapter Three of *Pound and Visual Culture*, where Beasley updates and nuances accounts of Pound's *Mauberley* by Vincent Sherry and Douglas Mao that propose a Vorticist 'visual poetics' as the poem's guiding principle (148-153).

[73] In addition to Elizabeth Prettejohn and Sarah Victoria Turner, previously cited, see Stephen Cheeke, *Writing for Art: The Aesthetics of Ekphrasis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008). On 'sculpture writing' in particular, scholarship in the *Sculpture Journal* (2005-present) has expanded the definition of what are considered written sources and discourses of sculptural aesthetics.

Revival sculptors, including Oliver Sheppard (NIVAL) and John Hughes (NLI), have received meagre critical attention. This expanded definition of art criticism beyond canonical artists and canonical published texts will appreciate these sculptor papers as constitutive of an alternative Irish sculptural aesthetics. Moreover, the reception of contemporary artworks in articles, reviews and lectures indicate a coterie culture or discreet networks of artists, the inter-arts and sculptural aesthetics of which have yet to be fully delineated. These groups include the Pan-Celtic Congress, the United Arts Club and the National Literary Society, among other Dublin-based arts groups.[74]

IV

Finally, I will outline the five chapters of my thesis and the overlapping discussions of Yeats's writings on sculpture. The chapters are arranged broadly chronologically, though chapters one to three focus on Yeats's interventions in Irish poetry and sculpture from the Revival to the emergence of the Irish Free State. Chapters Four and Five consider the poet's placement, or self-placement, in the stream of modernist writing on poetry and sculpture from the late 1910s to 1939.

Chapter One constructs an unfamiliar portrait of Yeats as a poet who was educated and invested in the art of sculpture in Ireland. It outlines how his Dublin art school training in the 1880s put him in contact with John Hughes and Oliver Sheppard who would become the foremost Irish sculptors of the early twentieth century. Later sections consider the collaborative and interdisciplinary aesthetic of the Celtic Revival as a point of intersection for the poetry of Yeats and the statuary of Sheppard and Hughes. The art writing of George Russell and Yeats from the 1890s to early 1900s promoting contemporary sculptors is examined in order to propose an alternative historiography of modern Irish sculpture, one that is aligned more directly to Irish poetry through their renegotiation of Matthew Arnold's critique of the plastic arts of the Celt. The multiple representations and adaptations of Celtic mythic figures – Oisin, Niamh and Cuchulain – in verse and sculpture during Yeats's life will be documented in order to understand the poet's early treatment of statuary as a creative resource for reviving myth. At the same time, this chapter qualifies the prevailing narrative of a 'sculptural turn' exclusively in the late writing of Yeats by recuperating his early art school training, exposure to sculptural practice and to the emerging Irish sculptors of the early twentieth century.

[74] Yeats's ground-breaking essay 'Ireland and the Arts' (1901), discussed in Chapter One, was delivered at the Pan-Celtic Congress. The National Literary Society commissioned Sheppard's Mangan memorial in Stephen's Green, which is discussed in Chapter Two.

If Chapter One is situated around the real or imagined geography of the National Gallery, National Library and Museum complex of Yeats's early years, Chapter Two is centred on Dublin's main thoroughfare: O'Connell Street. This chapter covers Yeats's engagement with the politics of Dublin public monuments. It starts by situating a wider field of Revivalist sculpture-writing from the late 1890s to early 1910s, as discussed in Chapter One, within the context of Irish independence movements. Patrick Pearse's admiration of Oliver Sheppard in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, and a sonnet by Thomas MacDonagh notionally addressing the James Clarence Mangan memorial, will be examined to understand the political dimensions of Irish sculptural aesthetics in the period. The third section of the chapter traces a competing conception of public sculpture through Yeats's varied aesthetic responses to the Parnell monument. The fourth and fifth sections consider the mid-career poetry of Yeats on statues and public monuments, 'Easter, 1916', 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', 'The Three Monuments', and their political circumstances.

In the third chapter on Yeats and Irish sculpture, I examine Yeats's role in the designing of the Free State coinage, 1926-1928, and his subsequent poetic responses to coins. Despite the wealth of evidence demonstrating Yeats's interest in coins and medals; his appreciation of coins as an art form and his role in designing the Free State coinage have not received sustained critical attention. This chapter considers coins as low-relief sculpture, connected to his deep interest in sculpture and European sculptors. His role as chairman of the committee charged with selecting new coin designs for the Irish Free State from 1926 to 1928 is reassessed with reference to government documents, Yeats Library materials, and recent research into the political context of redesigning the Irish coinage. The chapter isolates the singular contributions but also the frustrations that Yeats faced in this role. In so doing, the chapter situates Yeats's various poetic engagements with coins from 'Brown Penny' (1910) to 'Parnell's Funeral' (1935) within a complex negotiation of the coin as a visual arts medium of portraiture in ekphrastic episodes, as a durable talisman that records and transmits ancient myths, or as a structural metaphor for the poem itself.

Chapter Four explores the counter-narratives in modernist approaches to poetry and sculpture. I examine Yeats's status as a modernist by comparing his writing on modern verse with his writing on modern sculpture. Ezra Pound is identified as a totemic figure in a prevailing schema of modernist sculptural poetics that has adopted or appropriated the work of Jacob Epstein, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and Constantin Brancusi. Yeats's own partial but astute engagements with these same figures and sculptures will provide an alternative but no less modernist idea of sculptural aesthetics. The centrality of sculpture to critically neglected writings

by Yeats, including 'Dove or Swan' and a fragment of verse on Brancusi will complicate our understanding of Yeats's view of the modernist canon and his self-placement within it.

Chapter Five traces the prominence of sculpture in Yeats's late poems. His extensive engagement with sculptors and sculpture writing, elaborated in previous chapters, necessitates a reassessment of his poems about sculpture. Beyond considerations of sculptural practice, I will examine the fantasies of sculpture that recur in 'Byzantium', 'A Bronze Head', 'The Statues', and other late poems. In these poems, I contend that sculpture provides Yeats with a fluid medium that is metaphoric and metamorphic in the hands of the poet. I begin with close readings of poems about Maud Gonne where statues or busts are invoked to address concerns with ageing, loneliness and a thwarted or unreciprocated desire. In subsequent sections I connect Yeats's esoteric ideas about ancient statues in *A Vision* and a Rapallo Notebook to *New Poems* and *Last Poems*, where statues are non-static, seemingly organic and consequently subject to ageing or material degrading. I conclude that Yeats's late 'sculptural poetics' brings him into dialogue with Pound and T.S. Eliot. In his last poems he returns to and reanimates his early fantasies – as well as the material realities – of the art of sculpture.

In my appendices I provide transcriptions of unpublished material by Yeats and the sculptor Oliver Sheppard uncovered in the course of my archival research. These include a 1922 essay on Irish sculpture by Oliver Sheppard, two uncatalogued Yeats letters to the Free State Department of Finance in 1926, and a page from Yeats's 1928-29 diary in the third Rapallo notebook. I am grateful to John Kelly and Wayne Chapman for helping me with the transcription of the letters and Rapallo notebook, respectively.

Before the Taoiseach's speech at the unveiling of the Yeats memorial garden in 1967, the poet's son Michael Yeats was asked, 'what lines of his father would most adequately apply to this combination of patriot-poet Yeats and artist Moore'.[75] Michael Yeats replied with lines from his father's self-elegy turned chilling self-epitaph, 'Under Ben Bulben':

> Poet and sculptor, do the work,
> Nor let the modish painter shirk
> What his great forefathers did,[76]

The age-old sculptor has pride of place beside the poet, followed a line later by the more 'modish painter'. Yeats's pairing in 'Under Ben Bulben' is just one of many allusions he made during his

[75] *Irish Times*, 'Moore Memorial to Yeats unveiled', 27 October 1967, 13.
[76] *VP*, 638.

life to a sculptural poetics that stretches from his great forefathers to the modish modernists and beyond. What is left is to do the work.

Chapter 1: Art School Confidential – Yeats, Russell, Sheppard, Hughes

I

In an article on 'The Irish National Literary Society' (1892) for the *Boston Pilot*, W.B. Yeats complained of the lack of authentic Irish literature and concurrently observed a poverty of statues around the new National Library. The fledgling poet depicted himself before an American readership as he sat 'writing, or trying to write, in the big, florid new National Library with its stone balcony, where nobody is allowed to walk, and its numberless stone niches, in which there will never be any statues'.[1] The new library and the adjacent Museum of Science and Art on Kildare Street were completed in the late 1880s. However an ambitious project to decorate the library's roof level façade with statuary groups, single figures and urns was never realised. The sizeable commission was offered to the sculptor Thomas Farrell, but his designs were severely curtailed within a few years due to lack of funds. Just four groups of statues were completed in time for the opening of the National Library and Museum complex in August 1890, and the band of stone niches along the façade remained empty at the time of the sculptor's death in 1900.[2] At the end of his article, Yeats returned to the thwarted sculptural ambitions of Ireland, intermingling the sculpting of public statues with the writing of public or national poetry for Ireland: 'In England I sometimes hear men complain that the old themes of verse and prose are used up. Here in Ireland the marble block is waiting for us almost untouched, and the statues will come as soon as we have learned to use the chisel.'[3]

This brief vignette provides an insight into the Dublin art institutions of Yeats's time and his self-placement within them. While voicing an emphatic, bordering on quixotic, project of verse-making as analogous to monument-making, Yeats was attuned to the very real shortcomings of Ireland's art scene in the late nineteenth century. His writing hints at a symbiotic relationship between literature and sculpture, wherein each is a source of inspiration to its sister art. Turning from the statueless library to the Museum of Science and Art across

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[1] W.B. Yeats, 'The Irish National Literary Society', *Letters to the New Island*, ed. Horace Reynolds (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 154. Abbreviated as *LNI*.

[2] Adding to the symbolic significance, the four statues were representations of four of the Muses: *Painting*, *Sculpture*, *Architecture* and *Poetry*. Paula Murphy notes that these four statue groups were carved in stone that eroded and crumbled rapidly, probably soft Mountcharles stone. By 1910 the decaying statues were removed from the building. See Paula Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture: Native Genius Reaffirmed* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2010), 166, 272n28. In an essay on Dublin's public sculpture for the *Irish Statesman*, C.P. Curran reflected that 'the Muses of our youth fled the roofs of the National Library and Museum', vanishing from sight, they were 'etherealised by the nibbling of the incessant winds', C.P. Curran, 'On Statues in the Air', *Irish Statesman*, 24 September 1927, 55-56.

[3] *LNI*, 158-159. In contrast to the untapped riches of Irish literature, in a *Providence Sunday Journal* review of John Todhunter's poetry, Yeats characterised English literature as old and weather-worn, it would soon be 'crumbled into dust' and 'blown away in pieces by the wind'. *CWVII*, 89.

Leinster House lawn, the aspiring writer seeks solid objects for inspiration among the rich collection of ancient stonework, gold torcs and early Christian metalwork:

> [I]f history and the living present fail us, do there not lie hid among those spear heads and golden collars over the way in the New Museum, suggestions of that age before history when the art legends and wild mythology of earliest Ireland rose out of the void? There alone is enough stuff that dreams are made on to keep us busy a thousand years.[4]

The untouched, unsculpted marble block, and the ancient artefacts made in stone, steel or gold dug out of the earth, suggest the concrete and tactile imagination of the poet. His turn from the National Library to the Museum would appear to be a literal manifestation of his later claim in 'Ego Dominus Tuus' to 'seek an image, *not a book*'.[5] Yet an abiding sense of the *realpolitik* of Irish art, and particularly public sculpture in Dublin, are disclosed in these passages.

This chapter will trace W.B. Yeats's art school education in the grounds of these emerging institutions on Kildare Street. I will examine his contact with the generation of Irish sculptors that succeeded Farrell: John Hughes and Oliver Sheppard, to identify their fruitful inter-art exchange of ideas. In the Revivalist art writing of Yeats and George Russell, another student of the Kildare Street art school, the sculpture of their peers was repeatedly promoted. Russell incorporated both Sheppard and Hughes into what he deemed a 'Celtic Renaissance' in the plastic arts,[6] and Yeats proposed several statues by the pair as suitable alternatives to the 'bad statues in our streets and the bad decorations in our churches'.[7] Looking at several articles and essays by Yeats and Russell from the 1890s to the early 1900s I will show the articulation of an alternative historiography of Irish sculpture, one that is closely tied to poetry and a collaborative, panaesthetic ambition for the Celtic Revival. The stuff that dreams are made on is solid, cast and carved.

II

'W.B. Yeats the autodidact' could be more accurately portrayed as Yeats the art school kid, receiving a formal education at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art (DMSA) from May 1884 - July 1885, followed by more than a year at the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA).[8] The

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[4] *LNI*, 159.
[5] *VP*, 370.
[6] George Russell (Æ), 'Art in Ireland', *The Daily Express*, 10 September 1898, 3.
[7] W.B. Yeats, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Daily Express*, 14 September 1898, 5. (*CL2*, 269).
[8] Bernadette McCarthy has traced the chronology of Yeats's art training at the DMSA from May 1884 to July 1885 and the RHA from roughly late 1885 to early 1887, with reference to the College Registers and Annual Reports of the Metropolitan School of Art. The RHA's records for this period were destroyed during the Easter Rising, 1916.

omission or relegation of the poet's art education in various biographies has contributed in part to the critical neglect of Yeats's fascination with sculpture as a practice, art product, and resource for poetry.[9] The poet's own negative recollections of art school in *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*, his draft *Memoirs*, and a 1906 parliamentary committee deposition, have heavily informed these studies and their consequent oversights. Yet Yeats's art school education, however begrudged at the time or in later life, was an exceptional pedigree in several respects. During his time at the DMSA, modelling classes were ably instructed by E.W. Ascough, under whose tutelage John Hughes and Oliver Sheppard received their earliest induction into sculptural practice. John Turpin notes that the provision of greater facilities and materials for modelling classes in the early 1880s meant that 'the sculpture teaching was among the most up-to-date instruction' at the DMSA.[10] And by the end of the century Ascough's successor and Yeats's peer, John Hughes, took over as instructor of modelling; a move that cemented the school as the most important centre for sculpture in Ireland.[11]

In the 1880s the Metropolitan School of Art was part of a new complex of facilities centred around Leinster House that would eventually include three museums and the National Library. The cluster of cultural institutions mirrored Prince Albert's ambition to locate multiple museums and art training schools in London's South Kensington district.[12] As Bernadette McCarthy notes, Yeats's decidedly British art school education conformed to the same requirements of manufacturers in an age of growing foreign competition.[13] The Dublin South Kensington, as the Leinster House complex became known, emphasised the technical application of art to industries, and the training of artists to meet the demands of a burgeoning Empire. R.F. Foster notes that while John Butler Yeats – who taught at the Metropolitan School of Art – was listed as an 'Artist' in the DMSA records, his son's surname was misspelt 'Yeates', appearing under a different home address and under the bizarre title of 'ecclesiastical sculptor' in the same records.[14] Foster speculates that some concealment was perhaps necessary because

Bernadette McCarthy, 'William Butler Yeats: The Poet in the School of Art,' *Notes and Queries* 55, no. 4 (2008): 518-521, 519.

[9] For partial biographical accounts of Yeats's art school education see *RF1*, 36; Terence Brown, *The Life of W.B. Yeats* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 27-28; Joseph Hone, *W.B. Yeats, 1865-1939*, 2nd edition (London: Macmillan, 1962), 41-42. Hone includes an anecdote about Yeats recounted by Sheppard on their time together at the Kildare Street art schools: 'As [Yeats] modelled he would sway backwards and forwards, reciting his verses; and Oliver Sheppard remembers that once while so engaged he stepped back into the modelling clay with disastrous results to his very short trousers' (42).

[10] John Turpin, *A School of Art in Dublin since the Eighteenth Century: A History of the National College of Art and Design* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1995), 177.

[11] Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture*, 36.

[12] Fintan Cullen, *Ireland on Show* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 14-15.

[13] McCarthy, 'Poet in the School of Art', 519.

[14] *RF1*, 36.

of a difficulty with fees. Yet the choice of architectural sculptural practice also reflects the applied art orientation of the South Kensington system in which Yeats was enrolled.[15]

The ideological bent of the Kildare street art schools made for a rigorous but boring regimen. In line with London's South Kensington and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, figure-drawing classes began with the practice of copying prints of classical sculpture, and later plaster-casts. Artists would learn the principles of contour, light and shade from canonical works and the past masters before being permitted to classes in which a live model posed. According to McCarthy the casts used by the students were chosen to uphold the aims of the parent Kensington System, including 'the usual Graeco-Roman classics […] *Venus de Milo*, *Antinous*, *The Dying Gladiator*,[16] and *The Dancing Faun* as well as examples by Michelangelo, Donatello, Antonio Canova, and Bertel Thorwaldsen'.[17] The system and sparse syllabus were not well-received in the later accounts of W.B. Yeats, Lily Yeats, William Orpen, George Russell, W.J. Leech, Beatrice Elvery, and many others.[18] Yeats complained that the school was dominated by 'commercial hacks; there was no artist amongst them'.[19] 'We had no scholarship,' he recalls elsewhere, 'no critical knowledge of the history of painting, and no settled standards'. The repetitive 'drawing of some plaster fruit', or the same antique eyes and noses was stultifying for the aspiring artist.[20]

In 1906 Yeats gave evidence to a parliamentary committee of enquiry on art education at the DMSA and the RHA. The former institution received sustained criticism from Yeats for its rigid adherence to classical sculptures and Neoclassical theory at the expense of the live model and modern art:

> In the Metropolitan School of Art, you went through a routine; you were in your 4th year there before you got into the Life Class. You kept working at geometry; you were kept drawing eyes and noses; you were kept working from the antique and then when

[15] Similarly John Hughes was enrolled as an 'artisan' at the DMSA from 1883, and Oliver Sheppard was enrolled as an 'architectural sculptor' while studying at the National Art Training School in South Kensington from 1888-1891. Alan Denson, *John Hughes, 1865-1941* (Kendal: Alan Denson, 1969), 37; John Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard, 1865-1941* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 11.
[16] John Turpin suggests *The Dying Gaul*, or *Dying Gladiator*, as an inspiration for Oliver Sheppard's *Cuchulain* bronze. Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard*, 139.
[17] McCarthy, 'Poet in the School of Art', 521.
[18] See Lily Yeats letter quoted in *RF1*, 36; Turpin, 'The South Kensington System in Dublin,' *School of Art in Dublin*, 176-178; Alan Denson, 'W.J. Leech', *Capuchin Annual* (1974), 119; Beatrice Glenavy, *Today We Will Only Gossip* (London: Constable, 1964).
[19] Evidence of W. B. Yeats, in the *Report by Committee of Enquiry into the work carried on by the Royal Hibernian Academy and the Metropolitan School of Art, Dublin* (HMSO, 1906), 60-61, 60. See also Yeats 'Reveries over Childhood and Youth', *CWIII*, 90.
[20] *CWIII*, 91.

> you came to the Life Class, you came to it with whatever individuality you had largely crushed out.[21]

The prioritising of modelling and the rigorous attention to anatomically correct sketching were evidently the cause of immense boredom for Yeats, and his deposition illustrates an impatience to move from copying to creating, from sketch to painting or sculpture.[22] Yeats for one, did not remain at the Metropolitan School of Art until his fourth year, but was allowed to attend the Royal Hibernian Academy to study for free from 1886, at the same time as Sheppard and Hughes;[23] his individuality still intact. Although Yeats's criticisms of the DMSA in 1906 have been documented by Foster and McCarthy, his recommended reforms to the life-drawing classes deserve closer attention. In an inversion of the practice at the school, Yeats insisted in 1906 that 'It is only after you have studied from the life that you can even understand the antique. After you have studied from the life the antique begins to be full of meaning, and you can work at it with enthusiasm.'[24] Drawing from life necessarily preceded and cultivated an appreciation of the past masters and classical sculpture. Further, the would-be painter or sculptor should be exposed to the 'influence of great examples of Modern Art exhibited somewhere […] he has to learn his language from men who have the same place in the stream of time, and the evolution of things'.[25] Yeats's recollection of art school peers smuggling in French illustrated magazines featuring the latest statues of Rodin, Jules Dalou or Camille Lefèvre, is just one such example of a longing for modern art as a means of situating oneself in the current of art history.[26] Characteristically, Yeats's critique of the Metropolitan School of Art extends beyond the institution to the galleries surrounding it, that they might exhibit the modern art resources that could aid the DMSA and RHA in turn. The importance of practice in Yeats's

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[21] Yeats, *Report by Committee*, 60. On the wider context of the 1906 committee hearings see Turpin, *School of Art in Dublin*, 190-192.

[22] Compare John B. Yeats's complaints about the DMSA in *The Shanachie* the following year: 'Go into the Metropolitan School of Art, says this engineer, and you will learn solid geometry and the rules of perspective, and acquire the difficult art of drawing straight lines and right angles, and some day may qualify to be good draughtsmen […] Enter the Metropolitan School of Art, say the two noblemen, and you will be under discipline – a world of inspectors and a universe of red tape will cure any dangerous taste you may have for fresh initiative and eccentricity' (2-3). J.B. Yeats, 'The Royal Hibernian Academy and Home Rule in Art,' *The Shanachie*, III (March 1907), 1-9, 2-3.

[23] The DMSA's 'Annual Report and Distribution of Prizes', 10 February 1887, implies that it was the talents and success in examinations of these 'more advanced male students' that allowed them to progress to the RHA so early and for free. Denson, *John Hughes*, 41.

[24] Yeats, *Report by Committee*, 60.

[25] Yeats, *Report by Committee*, 60. Yeats elaborates: 'The student will learn more from a modern man of moderate genius than from the greatest of the ancients; but, after he has learned from the modern artist, he will be able to learn from the great ancients'.

[26] *CWIII*, 90. Paula Murphy corroborates Yeats's recollection from *Reveries* that the work of Rodin, Dalou and French sculptural aesthetics seeped into the Dublin art schools about this time: 'Neoclassical theory, in the form of art education, dominated nineteenth-century Irish sculpture until its close, when contemporary French stylistic concerns, in the guise of influence from Rodin particularly, began to creep in.' Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture*, 45.

schema and not merely sketching and copying in the flat is clear from his criticisms of the art schools. One of the few concrete recommendations made by Yeats in his evidence to the committee in 1906 was the provision of a 'proper sculpture room' for students at the RHA.[27]

The most detailed recollections of Yeats's time at art school appear in *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*, written in 1914 and published in 1916. The distance between Yeats's art school education and his autobiography underscores the extent to which *Reveries* was a skewed portrait of the artist as a young man. The account of his formative art education deserves attention as well as healthy scepticism. The DMSA's conservative methods of figure-drawing and the insistence on drawing an anatomically correct figure are once again presented as anathema to the young Yeats and his father. He frames himself as a Paterian Michelangelo, preserving or adding an unfinished sculptural quality to his drawings: 'The masters left me alone, for they liked a very smooth surface and a very neat outline, and indeed understood nothing but neatness and smoothness. A drawing of Discobolus, after my father had touched it, making the shoulder stand out with swift and broken lines, had no meaning for them; and for the most part I exaggerated all that my father did'.[28] John B. Yeats's frayed, freehand pencil sketches were the antithesis of the schoolmasters' practice of figure-drawing as preparation for sculpting.[29] If the retrospective account aligns Yeats's formative style with the sketching of his father, it also aligns him with the sculptural style celebrated by the Aesthetic movement of the time. Walter Pater's elevation of the frayed surfaces of the Venus de Milo, Michelangelo's *non finito*, and his opposition of rough and smooth stone surfaces in *The Renaissance* are indirectly alluded to in Yeats's self-styled rebellion against the 'smooth and neat' at art school: 'I longed for pattern, for Pre-Raphaelitism, for an art allied to poetry'.[30] Perhaps for these reasons, the modelling classes at the RHA are rendered as a place of beguilement in *Reveries*. Recast as the autodidact despite his schooling, Yeats recalls his first encounters with George Russell, who 'did not paint the model as we tried to do for some other image rose always before his eyes'.[31] Of the teaching at the Royal Hibernian Academy, Yeats reflected in 1906 that 'A student learns more from his fellow-students than he does from his teacher […] there is no teaching worth anything except

[27] Yeats, *Report by Committee*, 60.
[28] *CWIII*, 90. Lily Yeats similarly recalled her disappointment with the DMSA regimen in a letter to Ruth Lane-Poole, dated 28 August 1936: '[We were] expected to spend a month making a careful drawing of the Apollo of the Dancing Faun', quoted in *RF1*, 36.
[29] For examples of John Butler Yeats's portrait sketches - often drawn rapidly in a single sitting, with much of the figure sketched in freely and shaded with loose cross-hatching – see his *Lady Augusta Gregory* (1905) and *John Millington Synge* (1905), both graphite on paper. These freehand sketches did not translate as easily or readily to painted portraits.
[30] *CWIII*, 91.
[31] *CWIII*, 90-91.

the infection from a creative mind'.[32] Yeats is referring to his fellow students, and future sculptors, John Hughes and Oliver Sheppard.

The Dublin South Kensington also lacked the instruction of art history and lectures in theory that were a staple of its progenitor.[33] In the absence of dedicated theory classes, Yeats discussed issues of aesthetics and inter-art aesthetics with his peers Hughes and Sheppard. He would propose that 'poetry or sculpture exist to keep our passions alive', or after speaking to the aspiring sculptors would 'have a week's anxiety over the problem: do the arts make us happier, or more sensitive and therefore more unhappy. And I would say to Hughes or Sheppard, "if I cannot be certain they make us happier I will never write again"'.[34] Yeats's search for panaesthetic truths of 'passion' and 'happiness' across the arts, are a barbed critique of the utilitarian terms and practices of the DMSA. His pairing of poetry and sculpture with 'passion' is rebutted by an anonymous acolyte of the art schools: 'somebody would say, "we would be much better without our passions"'.[35] The caricature is in line with Yeats's renarration of youth throughout *Reveries*, wherein he must teach and train himself in a 'more profound Pre-Raphaelitism'[36] than the practical, anti-theoretical bent of Dublin art institutions. The role of these aspiring sculptors and sculptural practice in Yeats's formulation of an alternative, Celtic Revivalist aesthetic deserves further examination.

It is not the intention of this chapter to reconstruct the early life of W.B. Yeats as that of a would-be sculptor. Yeats acknowledged in a 1901 essay that it was the inspiration of Lady Gregory, filling his head with thoughts of making a whole Celtic literature, that 'plucked me out of the Dublin art schools where I should have stayed drawing from the round, and sent me into a library to read bad translations from the Irish'.[37] If there is a note of regret in Yeats's reflection on his art school years, it is a rare exception to his criticisms and unhappy memories of the Kildare Street art schools. The strict curriculum of 'drawing from the flat', copying the work of other artists at the expense of modelling, was negatively recalled throughout Yeats's life. Yet his near contemporaries Hughes and Sheppard, the rare sources of 'amazement' in Yeats's recollected *Reveries*, would remain in art school to sketch and sculpt in-the-round. Despite being their exact contemporary, Yeats (1865-1939) describes Sheppard (1865-1941) and Hughes

[32] Yeats, *Report by Committee*, 60. Yeats later reiterates that '[t]he students learned from the best student that was there' (61), rather than the Academy teachers.
[33] McCarthy notes that '[t]he nearest Yeats would have come to a kind of history of art was the preparation for a paper called 'technical questions on art and on general principles and execution of the several historic schools of painting", McCarthy, 'Poet in the School of Art', 520.
[34] *CWIII*, 94-95.
[35] *CWIII*, 94-95.
[36] Yeats, 'Art and Ideas' (1913), *CWIV*, 250-256, 256.
[37] Yeats, 'What is Popular Poetry?' (1901), *CWIV*, 5-11, 6.

(1865-1941) as two of the 'elder students who had authority among us'.[38] Each sculptor entered the Kildare Street art schools before Yeats and continued their training at the RHA after the Yeats family departed for Bedford Park in 1887. Both Sheppard and Hughes proceeded to the National Art Training School in South Kensington and later to Paris. Yeats would follow the careers of each sculptor closely, remaining in intermittent contact and recommending them for future teaching positions and sculpture commissions. Yeats appeared to offer the Wolfe Tone monument commission to Hughes in 1896 or early 1897,[39] and in 1900 he would lobby for the Parnell monument commission to be given to Hughes. The first of these monuments would not receive sufficient funds until 1967. Of the latter monument, George Russell spoke to the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, John Redmond, at Yeats's behest but the Parnell commission was ultimately given to Augustus Saint-Gaudens.[40] When Hughes left his role as teacher of modelling at the DMSA in 1901, Yeats wrote to the civil service head of the technical board, T.P. Gill, suggesting Sheppard as a replacement, and later wrote to Sheppard persuading him to return to Ireland and take the position.[41] In subsequent sections, this chapter will examine Yeats and George Russell's neglected articles, essays and lectures on the work of Sheppard and Hughes from the late 1890s – early 1900s, treating these as examples of Revivalist art writing. For the moment, Yeats's early poetry written at the time of his art school enrolment will be reassessed in the light of his exposure to the South Kensington system, its mimetic practice and the comparatively revivifying art of sculpture.

III

The first poems published by Yeats are indelibly marked by his art school education. He completed a draft of *The Island of Statues* in August 1884 while enrolled in his first year at the DMSA, and the lyric drama was later serialised in the *Dublin University Review* (*DUR*) between April and July 1885. The following year Yeats published his first and most orthodox ekphrastic poem, 'On Mr. Nettleship's Picture at the Royal Hibernian Academy', in the April 1886 number of the *DUR*. The subject of the poem was J.T. Nettleship's *Refuge* sketch of a pride of lions

[38] *CW III*, 90. In the annual Department prize lists of 1886 and 1887; Hughes, Russell and Sheppard receive honourable mentions for their 'Elementary modelling', 'Modelling from the Antique', 'Modelling from Life' and 'Drawing from Life'. In each year Yeats also received praise for his work, albeit exclusively in the practice of 'Freehand drawing.' Denson, *John Hughes*, 39-41.
[39] Denson, *John Hughes*, 123.
[40] John Kelly, *CL2*, 269n1.
[41] For a detailed account of this period of Sheppard's life see: Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard*, 18-23. Sheppard later told Herbert White that 'it was a letter from Yeats that was instrumental in his coming back to Dublin to teach'. Quoted in Denson, *John Hughes*, 490.

which was displayed at the RHA's annual summer exhibition of 1886 and reproduced in the *DUR*'s Art Supplement to the exhibition. Yeats was enrolled in the Academy during this period,[42] and what Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux identifies as the poem's strict attention to Nettleship's visual details, 'the sickle of the moon, the soft cub, the dewdrop on the blade of grass', could be aligned with the principles and practices of the DMSA and RHA.[43] Reflecting on a later, 'orthodox' ekphrastic poem, 'In Church' (1889), which took as its subject a painting of the same name by M. Walker, Yeats regretted his 'trite verses' and resolved, 'I shall never do any more I think'.[44] Beyond traditional ekphrases, several of Yeats's earliest poems are saturated in the dry, academic neoclassicism of the *DUR* magazine and his own art schooling.[45] An effete eight-line poem 'In a Drawing-Room' (*DUR*, January 1886) features an 'Attic bust' smiling from the dim 'deep alcoves' of the room, while the speaker of 'Life' (*DUR*, February 1886) laughs 'upon the lips of Sophocles'.[46] In *Yeats and the Visual Arts* (2003), Loizeaux has persuasively demonstrated the young poet's subsequent departure from conventional 'poems on pictures', and his embrace of 'poetry as "vision"', with *The Wanderings of Oisin* unshackled from a singular, received art image.[47] Bernadette McCarthy broadly agrees with Loizeaux when she notes that in Symbolist paintings and the art of Whistler, Yeats found an alternative to 'the passive mimetic orthodoxy promoted by the DMSA'.[48] The poet's admiration for *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1* in 'A Symbolic Artist and the Coming of Symbolic Art' (1898) and again in *Reveries* would appear to supports this assertion.[49] Taking a more formalist approach, Peter McDonald has traced the formation of a symbolist aesthetic specifically to Yeats's revising of 'The Wanderings of Oisin' between 1889 and 1895, where the 'visual difficulty' of the descriptive, narrative poem turns into symbolist verse, 'more clearly (and artfully) delineated' in the mind's eye.[50] While Loizeaux, McDonald and McCarthy's interpretations are convincing, the prioritising of

[42] It is difficult to determine the precise dates of Yeats's enrolment at the RHA as the records of the Academy were destroyed in a fire during the Easter Rising of 1916. McCarthy has noted from the College Registers that Yeats was enrolled at the DMSA from May 1884 to July 1885 with his training at the RHA following this period and preceding the family's abrupt move to Bedford Park in the spring of 1887.
[43] Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux, *Yeats and the Visual Arts* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 38-40.
[44] *CL1*, 160, 162. Yeats letter to Katharine Tynan, 21 April 1889.
[45] The *Dublin University Review* (February 1885 – June 1887) was a Trinity College Dublin periodical and catered to a readership that was principally Protestant, 'elitist, staunchly male and Anglican' in the 1880s (Chaudhry, 49). On Yeats's early exposure to Irish periodicals and print culture see: Yug Mohit Chaudhry, *Yeats, the Irish Literary Revival and the Politics of Print* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001).
[46] *VP*, 685, 686.
[47] Loizeaux, *Yeats and the Visual Arts*, 40-42.
[48] Bernadette McCarthy, 'The "lidless eye": W.B. Yeats, visual practice and modernism', unpublished thesis, Boole Library, University College Cork, 2011, 63.
[49] *CW IX*, 423-429; *CW III*, 92.
[50] Peter McDonald, 'Victorian Yeats', *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, ed. Matthew Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 622-636, 630.

paintings and painterly poems might foreclose alternative accounts of Yeats's early engagement with the visual arts more generally, and particularly his poems on sculpture.

His earliest poem *The Island of Statues* is set in Arcady where the hunter, Almintor, seeks the affection of a shepherdess, Naschina, by travelling to an enchanted island peopled with statues. Almintor discovers too late that the statues are in fact living men 'congealed' into stone, and upon picking the wrong flower becomes one '[w]hose beard a moonlight river is, whose brow / Is stone: old sleeper!'[51] The petrification of man into marble is a common trait in classical mythology, Medusa and the Gorgons being the most famous example. Yet Yeats's own enchantment with statues extends from the art object, to the man represented or metamorphosed, and his early poem is immersed in the many mythic and imaginative associations of sculpture. Inherent in the metaphor of a marble statue '[w]hose beard a moonlight river is, whose brow / Is stone',[52] is an oscillation between the material and fantasy associations. As McDonald writes of the 1889 *Oisin*: 'Yeats wants readers to receive images on top of other images, in turn, which provide not accounts of, or equivalents to, what Oisin can see, but a series of suggestions and impressions which, like moment coming upon moment, weave and unweave the picture.'[53] The statue anchors the images begotten of images in *The Island of Statues*. The marble white beard gives way to the flowing river it resembles while remaining, ineluctably, stone. Unlike *Oisin*, which as McDonald notes, attempts to delineate an image of Oisin and Niamh of its own design, the images on top of images in *The Island of Statues* inhere in the fluid medium of sculpture.

Statues occupy an ontologically variable state in Yeats's lyric drama. The uncanny correspondence of statues to living men is taken literally in the tale where an Enchantress turns would-be lovers to stone. Beyond the mythic conceit of petrified lovers, *The Islands of Statues* elaborates other real-world purposes for statuary; for example, when Naschina wishes to leave Arcady in the latter half of the tale she asks to have a statue erected in her place:

> Antonio, if I return no more,
> Then bid them raise my statue on the shore;
> Here where the round waves come, here let them build,
> Here, facing to the lake, and no name gild;
> A white, dumb thing of tears, here let it stand,
> Between the lonely forest and the sand.[54]

[51] *VP*, 256, 257.
[52] *VP*, 257.
[53] Peter McDonald, 'Victorian Yeats', 628-629.
[54] *VP*, 663.

The memorial function of the statue is intimated in Naschina's request to Antonio and yet her insistence, 'no name gild', frustrates any personal site of mourning. The 'white, dumb thing' erases the particularity of an inscribed funerary monument, instead standing speechless on the shore. Finally, the statue's anachronic intimations of immortality are played with in the poem when Naschina vanquishes the Enchantress and the men awake from their stony sleep, asking in turn 'Was my sleep long?'.[55] One man lived under the reign of Arthur, while another knew the Greek god Pan, and a third fought at Troy. Naschina replies to each in turn that their loved ones, kings and gods are 'long dead', 'gone', or 'long ages dust'.[56] Their anachronic status at the end of the poem mirrors, while preceding, the ending of *Oisin*, where the titular hero returns to Ireland from his century-long journey in Tir na nOg to learn that 'The Fenians a long time are dead […] the gods a long time are dead'.[57] Some of the more heavy-handed fairy tale tropes in *The Island of Statues* anticipate Yeats's imaginative engagement with the medium of sculpture and with Celtic mythic figures that recur across his oeuvre.

Evidently the protean, creative capacity of the statue is distinct from Yeats's earliest, conventional representations of paintings in verse. It is the escape from method and craft that the free-standing, three dimensional statue represents in counterpoise to the paintings by Nettleship and Walker. In a brief account of *The Island of Statues*, Loizeaux contends that, '[d]espite what the title might suggest, this verse play is not a poem "on" works of art, nor is it primarily allied to sculpture'.[58] Loizeaux's first point is probably correct: there is an escapism to the mythic lyric drama that appears to be deliberately disconnected from particular artworks, or indeed from the terminology and procedures of painting and sculpture taught at art school. Yeats would describe the work as Spenserian or Shelleyan in origin.[59] Yet to Loizeaux's second point that *The Island of Statues* is not 'primarily allied to sculpture', I would contend that this is precisely the point of sculpture in Yeats's early poem and indeed in many later poems. The mythic, symbolic and magic qualities associated with statuary in Yeats's earliest poem cannot be dismissed as extraneous to the artwork or medium involved. The three-dimensional statue, unlike the paintings by Nettleship or Walker, might become the thing it represents, escaping the conditions of the reified art object. Admiring the unattributed statues of Mausolus and Artemisia in the British Museum a few years later, Yeats longed for a Pygmalionic mastery of his craft: 'I

[55] *VP*, 678.
[56] *VP*, 678-679.
[57] Yeats, *VP*, 59. In an August 1889 letter to Russell, Yeats mentioned that he wanted to incorporate the entire lyric drama in *The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems* (1889), but the volume would have become too long (*CL1*, 143).
[58] Loizeaux, *Yeats and the Visual Arts*, 53.
[59] Yeats, 'What is Popular Poetry?' (1901), *CWIV*, 5.

wanted to create once more an art where the artist's handiwork would hide as under those half-anonymous chisels[60] […] as we find it in some old Scots ballads, or in some twelfth- or thirteenth-century Arthurian romance'.[61] The mediating frame of the stone could blur almost completely into the thing it represented, just as Arthurian verse might depict immersive myths and stories.[62]

The claim that *The Island of Statues* is not primarily allied to sculpture, and that Yeats's earliest engagement with the visual arts was through unsatisfactory, painterly ekphrases before moving to a more symbolist aesthetic, have contributed to the prevailing narrative of a 'sculptural turn' in the later writing of Yeats.[63] The poet's own claim in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* to 'invite a Marmorean Muse' in 1917,[64] and the abundance of poems about sculpture composed later in his career – 'Byzantium', 'Lapis Lazuli', 'A Bronze Head', 'The Statues' – lend credence to this genealogy. Yet Yeats's early art training, exposure to sculptural practice and to the emerging Irish sculptors informed his idea of the medium. His earliest poem cannot be dismissed or understated in evaluating Yeats's lifelong engagement with the visual arts. Further, by recuperating and reassessing Yeats's early art criticism on the sculptors of his art school years, I will show that the poet was already deeply invested in the art of sculpture and the *realpolitik* of supporting and commissioning works early in his career.

IV

When recalling his own education, George Bernard Shaw quipped, 'My university has three colleges […] Dalkey Hill, the National Gallery of Ireland and Lee's Amateur Musical Society'.[65] In the late nineteenth century, the National Gallery and Museums were effectively 'outpost[s] of the South Kensington system', according to Fintan Cullen, each with an imperial ambition

[60] Compare the description of Pygmalion's Galatea in Book X of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as 'Such art his art concealed / *Ars est osendere artem. Ars celare artem*'. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. E. J. Kenney, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 233, l. 252.
[61] *CWIII*, 138.
[62] Thing theory, with an indebtedness to sculptural aesthetics, has resisted the reifying principles of ekphrastic theory on these grounds. On the influence of Henry Moore and mid-twentieth century writing about sculpture on the later emergence of thing theory, see: Bill Brown, *Other Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 1-15, 5. It might be the ontological ambiguity of statues – material, crafted object, referent – like 'things', that we encounter in Yeats's *Island of Statues*.
[63] Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux, 'Yeats's Sculptural Poetry,' *Yeats and the Visual Arts*, 170-192; Charles Armstrong, 'Ekphrasis and Excess', *Reframing Yeats: Genre, Allusion and History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 111-122; Michael North, *The Final Sculpture: Public Monuments and Modern Poets* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 43-99.
[64] Yeats, 'Per Amica Silentia Lunae' (1917), *CWV*, 1-33, 4.
[65] Quoted in Michael Holroyd, *George Bernard Shaw, Volume 1: The Search for Love, 1856-98*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1988), 42.

to exhibit world cultures 'as opposed to any privileging of the local'.[66] Yet the art sources and resources in each institution granted a reprieve for Yeats from a sparse syllabus and deadening artistic practice. Their proximity to the Kildare Street art schools and Yeats's frequent visits to the gallery from 1884-6 have been extensively documented by Bernadette McCarthy.[67] When free from the routine of the Dublin art schools, Yeats recalls in *Reveries*: 'alone and uninfluenced, I longed for pattern, for Pre-Raphaelitism, for an art allied to poetry, and returned again and again to our National Gallery to gaze at Turner's *Golden Bough*'.[68] J.M.W. Turner's mythic landscape features the Sibyl of Cumae holding a golden branch and sickle. The scene is a translation of the episode in Virgil's *Aeneid* (VI.200-207) where Deiphobe, the Cumaean Sibyl, presents Aeneas with the golden bough he needs to return from the land of the dead. Turner's *Golden Bough* is something of a 'reverse ekphrasis' or 'painted literary experience', a visual representation of a prior verbal representation.[69] Yeats's longing for a visual 'art allied to poetry' perhaps finds its emblem in this painting inspired by an epic poem. Once again however, it is important to acknowledge the distance between Yeats's art school education in the 1880s and his retrospective *Reveries* (1916), and the accumulated significance of the golden bough symbol across the intervening period.

James George Frazer's immense work of comparative mythology, *The Golden Bough*, appeared in twelve volumes between 1890 and 1915, and was subsequently abridged in one volume in 1922. Frazer's study takes its title from Turner's painting, asking in his opening 'Who does not know Turner's picture of the Golden Bough?'[70] before using the painting for an explication of the mythic resonances of the figures and landscape represented. Yeats's choice of an artwork with a diffuse and panaesthetic history is deliberate in the above passage from *Reveries*. His longing 'for an art allied to poetry', implies a visual arts tradition that takes its subject matter from a parallel poetic tradition. And his longing 'for pattern, for Pre-Raphaelitism'

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[66] Cullen, *Ireland on Show*, 32.

[67] Bernadette McCarthy, 'W.B. Yeats, John Ruskin, and the 'lidless eye'', *Irish University Review* (Autumn-Winter, 2011), 25-41.

[68] *CW III*, 91. In the endnotes to *CWIII: Autobiographies*, William O'Donnell and Douglas Archibald incorrectly state that there is no record of Turner's painting travelling to the National Gallery of Ireland (431n165). Yeats probably *did* view J.M.W. Turner's *The Golden Bough* in Dublin. As Bernadette McCarthy notes, '*The Golden Bough* was one among a number of Turner paintings transferred from the National Gallery in London to the National Gallery in Dublin in 1884. They included *Opening of the Walhalla*, *Richmond Bridge*, *The Departure of Regulus from Rome*, and *View of Venice: The Church of the Madonna della Salute*.' McCarthy, 'Yeats, John Ruskin, and the 'lidless eye'', 26. See also: 'List of Pictures &c Lent by Order of the Trustees to the National Gallery of Ireland', National Gallery London Archive. In a letter to Sarah Purser, dated 23 December 1933, John Hughes also recalled viewing Turner's *Golden Bough* in his youth at the National Gallery, Dublin: Denson, *John Hughes*, 168-170.

[69] Garrett Stewart, *The Look of Reading: Book, Painting, Text* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 86. Stewart defines 'reverse ekphrasis' as the visual evocation of a literary work. His discussion is chiefly concerned with 'the painted experience of reading' (82). The phrase is also used by Neil Corcoran to characterise Yeats's 'Municipal Gallery Revisited', see Corcoran, *Poetry and Responsibility*, 107-124, 109.

[70] James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, vol. 1* (London: Macmillan, 1894), 1.

suggests a mutual reciprocity between the visual arts and verbal arts, where each might provide the source and resources for its sister art form *ad infinitum*. A verbal artwork, Virgil's *Aeneid*, might inspire a later visual artwork, Turner's painting, which in turn inspires a written work; just as Frazer's mythography traces a diverse and interconnected history of ancient myths and religions.[71] Indeed many stories or myths have a varied, versatile history across several art forms, and Frazer's comparativism can be seen to inform Yeats's 'Vision of an Archer' section of *The Trembling of the Veil*, and various poems that trace the transmigration and syncretism of mythic archetypes.[72] In Yeats's later poem, 'Sailing to Byzantium', the speaker envisages or transfigures himself into a golden bird 'set upon a golden bough to sing / To lords and ladies of Byzantium / Of what is past, or passing or to come.' It might be asked if Yeats's pun on 'golden bough' alludes to the ancient poem, the nineteenth century painting, the enormous work of comparative mythography, or simply a branch painted or cast in gold? It is one of many occasions in which Yeats deploys 'a characteristically vague reworking of Frazer', in Sinead Garrigan Mattar's words.[73] The pun in the poem symbolically compresses the poetic, philosophic and pictorial associations of the phrase. But what is clear from Yeats's invocation of the *Golden Bough* as a painting at the time of *Reveries* was that it had already acquired or accumulated panaesthetic and syncretic significances as a symbol. The golden bough becomes a perfect embodiment of Yeats's definition of symbols as 'images endowed with symbolic significance by their past use' and indeed – in a retrospective assessment of his youth as we see in *Reveries* – the uses for images past, passing or still to come.[74]

Just as Yeats insisted upon the exhibition of modern art for students of the DMSA and RHA in his 1906 committee deposition, and the later Hugh Lane controversy; Yeats and George Russell proposed the National Gallery as a prime site for the display of contemporary works and loan exhibits – otherwise reserved for London and Paris – in the years following their art school education and at the outset of their cultural revival project. In an orchestrated series of open letters to *The Daily Express* in September 1898, Russell and Yeats argued that the lack of progress in Irish painting and sculpture, when compared to the literary revival, was because 'so

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[71] On Yeats's extensive reading of folkloric theory in the 1890s, see: Warwick Gould, 'Frazer, Yeats and the Reconsecration of Folklore,' *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Robert Fraser (London: Palgrave, 1990), 121-153.

[72] See Sinead Garrigan Mattar's discussion of Yeats and his interest in comparative science and mythology from the 1880s - 1900s: Mattar, *Primitivism, Science and the Irish Revival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 41-82. Yeats's first published reference to Frazer's *Golden Bough* appears in 'The Tribes of Danu' (1897), the first of six long articles on Irish folklore and supernatural experiences. *CW IX*, 352-367.

[73] Mattar, *Primitivism, Science and the Irish Revival*, 62.

[74] Appropriately, *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* was originally entitled *Memory Harbour* after a small watercolour of Sligo Harbour by Jack Yeats. See: *CL InteLex* letter to Lily Yeats 28 July 1914; Warwick Gould, 'Titles of Yeats's *Autobiographies*', *YA* 11, 1995, 205-218.

few great paintings find their way into Irish exhibitions. There is little to awaken public interest in art, or to suggest to our students the immense possibilities of expression which the mastery of a good technique brings with it'.[75] The open letters underscore the degree to which both writers were analogically thinking about their work in an inter-arts community. Russell acknowledges that 'A Celtic Renaissance in literature would be a very incomplete expression of the ideals of the new movement, unless there was a corresponding awakening of Celtic art'.[76] That awakening required a renaissance in technique and teaching as well as the exhibition of modern, international artworks. In a follow-up letter to *The Daily Express*, dated 14 September 1898, Yeats proposed two Oliver Sheppard statuettes of *Oisín and Niamh* and *The Genius of Celtic Art*, and the cast of John Hughes's statue of *Charles Kickham* as potential displays in the National Gallery or suitable alternatives to the 'bad statues in our streets and the bad decorations in our churches'.[77] Yeats particularly praised Hughes's memorial to *Kickham* in Tipperary as a 'distinguished and poetical statue'.[78] Far from a reductive pairing of poetry and sculpture, his phrase alludes to the distinction of 'historical paintings' and 'poetical paintings' suggested by Joshua Reynolds and explicated in John Ruskin's *Modern Painters*.[79] According to Reynolds the great artists 'represent their subjects in a poetical manner, not confined to mere matter of fact […] this is not falsifying any fact; it is taking an allowed poetical licence'.[80] Ruskin in turn designated certain Pre-Raphaelite peers as '*poetical* painters' for their inventiveness, originality and feeling.[81] The 'poetical statue', in Yeats's phrase, might represent a similar resistance to the 'despotism of fact' in the art of sculpture.

In his promotion of Oliver Sheppard, Yeats was perhaps aware that the subject of the *Oisín and Niamh* statuette was taken from his poem 'The Wanderings of Oisin'.[82] As Russell's and Yeats's art writing contributions suggest, the Revival project was concertedly collaborative and panaesthetic even if there was not an explicit, planned collaboration on the part of poet and sculptor. 'The subtlety of modern art has reached a point where it seems able to express things long left to the poet,' writes Russell in his letter to *The Daily Express*: 'it seems almost possible

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[75] George Russell, 'Art in Ireland', *The Daily Express*, 10 September 1898, 3.
[76] George Russell, 'Art in Ireland', 3
[77] *CL2*, 269.
[78] *CL2*, 269.
[79] For more on the formative influence of Ruskin on Yeats upon leaving art school and in resistance to the South Kensington system, see McCarthy, 'Yeats, John Ruskin, and the 'lidless eye'', 25-41.
[80] Joshua Reynolds, 'Discourse IV,' *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (London: Yale University Press, 1997), 59-60.
[81] With reference to Reynolds, Ruskin writes of Holman Hunt and others as '*poetical* painters, some of them taking for subjects events which had actually happened, and others themes from the poets; or, better still, becoming poets themselves in the entire sense, and inventing the story as they painted it'. John Ruskin, 'Part IV, Chp. VII,' *Modern Painters Vol. 3*, ed. Ernest Rhys (London: J.M. Dent, 1907), 87.
[82] Sheppard papers, NCAD. See Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard*, 53.

to suggest through the medium of painting the presence in nature of that spirit whose dwelling is in the 'light of setting suns, and the round ocean and the living air".[83] Citing lines from Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey', Russell proposes that modern art might express the ethereal and intangible, pantheist spirit that was once the exclusive province of the Romantic poet and poem. The figures of the Red Branch cycle and the 'wild mythology of earliest Ireland' that 'rose out of the void'[84] in oral folktales, were rewritten and inscribed in prose and verse at the onset of the Irish Literary Revival. And in turn these written myths might provide the sources for painted or sculpted manifestations of Ireland's earliest mythic figures. Standish O'Grady's enduring lesson to the Revivalist poets, Yeats and Russell included, was that 'To all great nations their history presents itself under the aspect of poetry'.[85] If history is written by the poets in this period, their simultaneous forays into art criticism or art writing enumerated poetic values for contemporary plastic arts in Ireland. Russell and Yeats's campaign in the pages of *The Daily Express* materialised in an 1899 exhibition of one hundred paintings including works by G.F. Watts, Millet, Corot, Manet, Puvis de Chavannes, Millais, and Whistler. Of equal consequence, however, was their realignment with the sculptors Sheppard and Hughes through art writing.

V

In the 1901 essay, 'Ireland and the Arts',[86] Yeats meditates upon an early sculpture in marble by John Hughes. The absence of visual representations of Celtic mythic figures propels the poet into a self-described 'fanatical' critique of contemporary art in Ireland:

> I admit, though in this I am moved by some touch of fanaticism, that even when I see an old subject written of or painted in a new way, I am yet jealous for Cuchulain, and for Baile, and Aillinn, and for those grey mountains that still are lacking their celebration. I sometimes reproach myself because I cannot admire Mr. Hughes' beautiful, piteous *Orpheus and Eurydice* with an unquestioning mind. I say with my lips, 'The Spirit made it, for it is beautiful, and the Spirit bloweth where it listeth,' but I say in my heart,

[83] Russell, 'Art in Ireland', 3.
[84] Yeats, *LNI*, 159.
[85] Standish James O'Grady, *History of Ireland: The Heroic Period, vol. 2* (London: Sampson Low, 1878), 40. See Matthew Campbell, 'Recovering Ancient Ireland,' *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Poetry*, ed. Fran Brearton, Alan Gillis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-19, 5. See also Michael McAteer, 'O'Grady's quest for origins,' *Standish O'Grady, AE and Yeats: History, Politics, Culture* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2002), 14-35.
[86] Yeats, 'Ireland and the Arts,' *CWIV*, 150-155. Printed in the *United Irishman* 31 August 1901 and collected in *Early Essays*.

> 'Aengus and Etain would have served his turn;'[87] but one cannot, perhaps, love or believe at all if one does not love or believe a little too much.[88]

Just three years previously, Hughes's marble sculpture of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, or *The Finding of Eurydice*,[89] was somewhat provocatively described by George Russell as a touchstone of the 'Celtic renaissance' in Ireland. Despite being a 'world-famous myth of ancient Greece', the evocation of 'fragile and subtle emotions' in the 'most concrete of all arts' was a testament to the progress of Irish art in the Revival period. Where Yeats yearned for a representation of national mythic figures, Russell was of the opinion that 'a higher ideal of beauty and perfection' in art was more important than Celtic subject-matter.[90] Speaking in poetical terms more than sculptural terms, Russell asserts a Celtic renaissance that is continental, perhaps transcontinental, and composite. He compares *Orpheus and Eurydice* to lines from Yeats's early poem 'Anashuya and Vijaya', insisting that 'where [Yeats] dallied awhile with Indian tradition' he nevertheless 'betray[ed] his Celtic ancestry continually'.[91]

A curious justification for Hughes's evasion of Irish mythic subjects is also deployed by Russell, namely that the Celts have always lacked vivid representations in either the verbal or visual arts: 'The refinements of an ideal denied earthly fulfilment hangs over almost all the best Celtic art or literature, for we are the inheritors of causes many times defeated'.[92] The absence of Celtic subjects in art is tied to an outmoded Celtic heroism: 'they went forth to the war, but they always fell' is Matthew Arnold's phrasing of a similar sentiment from Macpherson's Ossianic fragments.[93] Russell appears to invoke an Arnoldian model of Romantic Celticism to justify John Hughes's un-Irish subject matter, yet he eagerly awaits certain models in clay in Hughes's studio, including two clay sketches of Cuchulain. These models 'indicate that the spirit of Celtic tradition, having first entered the artist's mind and influenced his sentiment and imagination, is about to claim his heart altogether, and to suggest the subject matter of his art'.[94]

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[87] Yeats's article was concurrent with the writing of *Baile and Aillinn* and a letter to Oliver Sheppard persuading him to return to Ireland to head the DMSA. See John Kelly, *A W.B. Yeats Chronology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 76.
[88] *CWIV*, 154.
[89] John Hughes, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, 1898, marble, Dublin City Gallery, the Hugh Lane. The editors' notes to *CW IV: Early Essays* incorrectly classify the work as a painting (417n15). See Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture*, 213-214. See also Ann M. Stewart, *Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts: Index of Exhibitors 1826-1979, vol. II* (Dublin: Manton Publishing, 1986), 106.
[90] George Russell, 'The Art of John Hughes, ARHA,' *New Ireland Review*, vol. 10, September 1898, 162-165.
[91] Russell, 'The Art of John Hughes', 163.
[92] Russell, 'The Art of John Hughes', 162.
[93] Matthew Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature,' *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold vol. 3*, ed. R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), 291-386, 291. Adapting the line from MacPherson as the epigraph to his Oxford lectures, Arnold writes of 'the shrunken and diminished remains of this great primitive race,' (384).
[94] Russell, 'The Art of John Hughes', 163. The ideal work exhibited by sculptors at that RHA in the mid nineteenth-century were almost entirely classical or biblical subjects. In keeping with the Neoclassical tradition of sculpture

As it transpired, Hughes instead moved to Paris in 1903 and set to work on a monument to Queen Victoria that later occupied Leinster House lawn between the National Library and Museum. Russell, unsurprisingly, regretted Hughes's move from Dublin to Paris and from Celtic ideal sculpture to British monument-making, writing to their mutual friend Sarah Purser: 'I wish the Queen had never died and we might have had another Orpheus and Eurydice'.[95]

If the anticipated Celtic statues of John Hughes were ultimately 'denied earthly fulfilment', his *Orpheus and Eurydice* nevertheless served as a touchstone in Revival art writing.[96] Russell's description of the statue borders on an unsculptural and Pygmalionic vernacular: 'the arms of Eurydice seem as if they would almost be soft to touch'.[97] Indeed Russell frequently elides material with representation in his 1898 article. According to the Greek myth, Orpheus attempted to rescue his wife from the underworld, but was warned that if he looked upon the spirit of Eurydice before escaping the underworld she would be lost forever. The sculpted Eurydice is interpreted by Russell as spiritual, embodying a 'dreamlike tenderness', she is the 'expression of the inward joy of the spirit', and 'contrast[s] exquisitely with the heroic moulding of the Orpheus'.[98] In his distinction between the moulded Orpheus and the dreamlike, tender Eurydice, Russell was perhaps aware of Auguste Rodin's marble sculpture *Orphée et Eurydice* first exhibited in 1893. Rodin's calculated use of *non finito* carving gives the impression of Eurydice emerging from the rough-hewn block of marble, her undefined hair merging with the abraded stone backdrop. The body of Rodin's Orpheus, in contrast, is fully modelled, achieving a visible distinction between the living man and the rescued spirit of Eurydice. Paula Murphy has noted that the exaggerated postures of the two figures in Hughes's work and their attachment to a rough-hewn marble base, suggests an affinity to the *non finito* technique of Michelangelo and Rodin.[99] For the purposes of this chapter however, it is Russell's invocation of the tragic hero in a piece of art criticism, which in turn attempts to catalogue the Celtic characteristics of Irish art, that demands literary interpretation. As mentioned above, Russell subtly invites comparison with Matthew Arnold's Oxford lectures on the Celt and Celtic Literature, while also alluding to the fact that Arnold talks about more than literature in his lecture.

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during the century, Shakespearean subjects also appear and several statues and statuettes were based on the writings of Thomas Moore.

[95] George Russell letter to Sarah Purser, 5 March 1902. Quoted in Alan Denson (ed.), *Letters from AE* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1961), 40.

[96] Paula Murphy accurately notes that Hughes's move from Celtic statuettes in exhibitions to British, Imperial commissions was not an extreme conversion of political leanings but a financial necessity for a professional sculptor at the time. Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture*, 217-219.

[97] Russell, 'The Art of John Hughes', 163.

[98] Russell, 'The Art of John Hughes', 163.

[99] Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture*, 214.

In 'On the Study of Celtic Literature' (1867) Arnold branded 'the Celtic races' 'impotent' and inept in the plastic arts.[100] An essentialist and racial characterisation of the Celt as melancholic, impatient, and impractical is enumerated throughout the lectures. While acknowledging that the Celt's imaginatively gifted nature was conducive to the writing of poetry and music, their flights of fancy were untethered from reality and 'the despotism of fact':

> Every one knows how well the Greek and Latin races, with their direct sense for the visible, palpable world, have succeeded in the plastic arts. […] The Celtic races, on the other hand, have shown a singular inaptitude for the plastic arts; the abstract, severe character of the Druidical religion, its dealing with the eye of the mind rather than the eye of the body, its having no elaborate temples and beautiful idols, all point this way from the first; its sentiment cannot satisfy itself, cannot even find a resting-place for itself, in colour and form; it presses on to the impalpable, the ideal.[101]

The romantic character of the Celt, dreamy, poetical and unworldly, is placed in opposition to a Greek and Roman 'sense of measure' that is deemed necessary to sculptural practice. In addition to lacking measure and precision in a scientific sense, Arnold compounds a distinction of temperaments, wherein 'balance, measure, and patience are just what the Celt has never had', and the Celt, 'never has had steadiness, patience, sanity enough' to excel in the plastic arts.[102] A final provocative distinction is set up between the Celt and the Germanic Anglo-Saxon, or for a contemporary audience; the Irish, Welsh and Scottish versus the English. 'The Celtic races', writes Arnold, 'have been necessarily almost impotent in the higher branches of the plastic arts. Ireland, that has produced so many powerful spirits, has produced no great sculptors or painters. Cross into England. The inaptitude for the plastic art strikingly diminishes, as soon as the German, not the Celtic element, preponderates in the race.'[103] Taken together, Arnold's indictment of the unmeasured Celt and his failure in the plastic arts could be read as a call to arms for modern Irish sculptors.

Critics have extensively documented the extent to which Arnold's essentialist and ethnological characterisation of the Celt was rearticulated as positive properties of a new,

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[100] Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', 354.
[101] Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', 353-354. Ernest Renan constructs a similar, unequal comparison between the Celt and the Greeks: 'We Celts […] shall never build the Parthenon, we have no marble; but we know how to lay hold of the heart and the soul,' quoted in William Barry, *Ernest Renan* (New York: Scribner, 1905), 8.
[102] Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', 344. While there are few markings and no annotations in Yeats's copy of *The Study of Celtic Literatur*e (London: Smith, Elder, 1891) [NLI 40,568/7], this passage on the Greek 'sense of measure' and the Celt 'chafing against the despotism of fact' is the only dog-eared page (86). A passage on the Celt's 'passionate, turbulent, indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact' is underlined several pages later (130). This phrase is repeated frequently by Yeats in 'The Celtic Element in Literature,' *CWIV*, 128-138.
[103] Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', 354.

Revivalist literary aesthetic.[104] Focusing only on matters of poetry and prose, however, risks limiting our critical understanding of the Celtic Revival as a symbiotic and panaesthetic cultural rebirth. Declan Kiberd, Seamus Deane and Margaret Kelleher among others have rightly pointed to the reorientation of the Arnoldian Celt by Irish writers, yet Arnold's prognosis of the Celtic character in the *plastic arts* spurred a parallel response among the Revivalists. Yeats's and George Russell's art writing from the early 1890s to the early 1900s seeks to recuperate Arnold's taxonomy of Celtic qualities as viable properties of modern Ireland's visual and plastic arts. These connections between the Oxford lectures and Revivalist art criticism are subtle but can be recovered through close reading. Russell's description of *Orpheus and Eurydice* as spiritual, ethereal, or dreamlike despite its concreteness and solidity as a statue is just one example of the loose translation of Arnoldian Celtic poetics to sculptural aesthetics. As he writes in 'Art in Ireland' (1898), 'modern art has reached a point where it seems able to express things long left to the poet'.[105] In 'Ireland and the Arts' (1901), Yeats also maintains Arnold's comparison of the Celt with the ancient Greek, encouraging 'writers and craftsmen of many kinds' in Ireland to learn their native myths as the Greeks did, and 'make it all visible again in their arts'.[106]

The 'sense of measure' missing from the Celt and mastered by the Greeks was also adopted and repeatedly adapted by Yeats. Matthew Campbell has noted the addition of the word 'measure' and variants 'measured', 'measurer' and 'unmeasured' six times in Yeats's revisions of 'To Ireland in the Coming Times'.[107] These new measures are deployed for various purposes in the poem, writes Campbell: 'as musical and poetic rhythm, as the patient quality of a brooding Ireland awaiting significant rebirth, and as the conditions of unfolding history in which the labour leading to that birth would take place'.[108] The speaker, reflecting upon the craft of poetry, refers to the monstrous creatures and phantasmagoria that emerge from his *unmeasured* mind:

> For the elemental creatures go
> About my table to and fro,
> That hurry from unmeasured mind
> To rant and rage in flood and wind;
> Yet he who treads in measured ways

[104] See Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Cape, 1995), 115-129; Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 17-27. See also Matthew Campbell, 'Recovering Ancient Ireland', *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-19.
[105] George Russell, 'Art in Ireland', *The Daily Express*, 10 September 1898, 3.
[106] *CWIV*, 152. Brian Arkins has catalogued Yeats's recourse to Greek and Roman models across his oeuvre. Arkins, *Builders of My Soul: Greek and Roman Themes in Yeats* (Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1990).
[107] Compare 1892 and 1924 versions of the poem, *VP* 137-139.
[108] Matthew Campbell, *Irish Poetry under the Union, 1801-1924* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 205-206.

May surely barter gaze for gaze.[109]

The immeasurable 'things discovered in the deep'[110] appear to echo the references Yeats made in his 1892 article with which this chapter began; of the 'art legends and wild mythology of earliest Ireland [that] rose out of the void'.[111] Indeed this unmeasured passage permits only an eye-rhyme between the 'mind' and 'wind'. Both poem and article share an impetus to excavate the subjects or solid objects for poetry out of a primal darkness. When reflecting on his conversations about Celtic myths with Lady Gregory in the late 1890s, he recalls that 'Again and again, she and I felt that we had got down, as it were, into some *fibrous darkness*'.[112] A comparable primitivism is sought in the final stanza of Yeats's late poem 'The Statues':

When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side.
What stalked through the Post Office? What intellect,
What calculation, number, measurement, replied?
We Irish, born into that ancient sect
But thrown upon this filthy modern tide
And by its formless spawning fury wrecked,
Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace
The lineaments of a plummet-measured face.[113]

These repeated Arnoldian 'measures' and 'measurements' in Yeats's writing have a shared plastic arts context.[114] Sinead Garrigan Mattar has noted that the paradoxical phrase 'our *proper dark*' in 'The Statues' underscores Yeats's fascination with primitivism and the art of the dark ages, which his 'ancient sect' or lineage might still claim ownership or access to.[115] The speaker contrasts the planned and 'plummet-measured' statues of the Greeks to a modern-day Ireland in crisis: 'thrown upon this filthy modern tide / And by its formless spawning fury wrecked'. He appeals to a Greek method of 'calculation, number, measurement', that we too may trace 'the lineaments of a plummet-measured face'.[116] This is a much later, more modernist, and decidedly less romantic configuration of primitivism and primitive sculptural practice. The 'proper dark' is more foreboding than the 'void' out of which rose 'earliest Ireland' and 'the

[109] *VP*, 138-139.
[110] *VP*, 138.
[111] Yeats, *LNI*, 159.
[112] Yeats, 'An Indian Monk' (1932), *CWV*, 132 [*italics mine*].
[113] *VP*, 611.
[114] In Yeats's most overtly Arnoldian or *contra*-Arnoldian essay, 'The Celtic Element in Literature', he suggests that the Irish folklorists and bardic poets of old, 'had not our thoughts of weight and measure […] They had imaginative passions because they did not live within our own strait limits, and were nearer to ancient chaos, every man's desire, and had immortal models about them.' *CWIV*, 132.
[115] Sinead Garrigan Mattar, *Primitivism, Science and the Irish Revival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 18-19.
[116] *VP*, 610-611.

stuff that dreams are made on'.[117] Yet the phrase still suggests a primal visual arts source for future art in Ireland, what Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush describe as modernism's appeal to the primitive as a means of contemplating 'the prehistories of its future'.[118]

Of course, Yeats was intimately engaged in the writings of Matthew Arnold as early as 1892, as he sat writing or trying to write in the new National Library.[119] In an article of July 1892, published in *United Ireland*, Yeats borrows Arnold's term 'Philistinism' from *Essays in Criticism* to refer to readers in the library and Trinity students:

> Nobody in this great library is doing any disinterested reading, nobody is poring over any book for the sake of the beauty of its words, for the glory of its thought, but all are reading that they may pass an examination […] 'She has given herself to many causes that have not been my causes, but never to the Philistines,' Matthew Arnold wrote of Oxford. Alas, that we can but invert the sentences when we speak of our own University – 'Never to any cause, but always to the Philistines'[120]

Inverting the same phrase from Arnold to lament Irish education at the time of the Revival, George Russell appears not to recognise his borrowing from Yeats: 'There are despotic hands in politics, in religion, in education […] Of the one institution which might naturally be supposed to be the home of great ideas we can only say, reversing the famous eulogy on Oxford, it has never given itself to any national hero or cause, but always to the Philistine'.[121] Returning to Yeats's article on 'The Irish National Literary Society' (1892) for the *Boston Pilot*, the poet might appear to acknowledge, and respond to, Arnold's critique of the impoverished plastic arts of the Celt. In his turn from the National Library, its 'numberless stone niches, in which there will never be any statues'[122] towards the Celtic relics and decorations in the National Museum that might inspire the new literature and sculpture of the nation, Yeats offers a riposte to Arnold who wrote: 'In the comparatively petty art of ornamentation, in rings, brooches, crosiers, relic-cases, and so on, [the Celt] has done just enough to show his delicacy of taste, his happy

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[117] Yeats, *LNI*, 159.
[118] Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush, *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 19.
[119] Sinead Garrigan Mattar has noted that Yeats's early American letters to the *Boston Herald* and the *Providence Sunday Journal*, many of which he signed 'Your Celt in London', conveyed a 'deeply Arnoldian' model of Celticism. Garrigan Mattar, *Primitivism, Science and the Irish Revival*, 72-73.
[120] Yeats, 'Dublin Scholasticism and Trinity College', *CWIX*, 175.
[121] George Russell, 'Ideals in Ireland: Priest or Hero?' *The Irish Theosophist* 5 (Dublin: May, 1897), 148-152, 152. Arnold's other attack on the Philistines, coming at the conclusion to his Oxford lectures, might have had a contemporary potency and appeal to Yeats and Russell at this time. Arnold offered the renewal of Celtic studies as an alternative to Fenianism: 'and let it be one of our angelic revenges on the Philistines, who among their other sins are the guilty authors of Fenianism, to found at Oxford a chair of Celtic, and to send through the gentle ministration of science, a message of peace to Ireland.' Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', 386.
[122] Yeats, *LNI*, 154.

temperament; but the grand difficulties of painting and sculpture, the prolonged dealings of spirit with matter, he has never had patience for'.[123] Contrarily Yeats writes that 'hid among those spear heads and golden collars' were 'art legends and wild mythology' that arose as if 'out of the void', and that the Celt's imaginative appetite might find 'enough stuff that dreams are made on to keep us busy a thousand years'.[124] To Arnold's charge that in Ireland, 'The forest of trees and the forest of rocks, not hewn timber and carved stones, suit [the Celt's] aspirations for something not to be bounded or expressed',[125] Yeats offers a positive Irish art scene that sees potential instead of impoverishment: 'in Ireland the marble block is waiting for us almost untouched, and the statues will come as soon as we have learned to use the chisel'.[126] Yeats's article, like Arnold's Oxford lectures, uses the plastic art of sculpture as an analogue for Celtic literature, its characteristics and potentiality.

Evidently a language of Celtic Revival sculpture emerges in the writing of Yeats and Russell on the work of their contemporaries Oliver Sheppard and John Hughes. This art writing or language of sculpture interrogates the appropriate subject matter for new Irish art, and in turn ponders the sources and materials in other art forms and ages that might attain 'earthly fulfilment'.[127] The new Irish sculptors, as in Yeats's 'The Statues', might embrace the 'calculation, number, measurement' of the Greeks. In Russell's review of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, it is Hughes's pairing of a Celtic spirit with perfected sculptural technique that the writer celebrates while conceding that the latter is in short supply in Irish art: 'The creation of a good tradition of technique ought to be the aim of all who desire the development of art in Ireland […] The Celtic spirit all along has been very well able to take care of itself, but it may remain only partially uttered if we neglect to perfect our means of expression'.[128] At the same time however, Russell and Yeats are unwilling to accept a concomitant renunciation of Celtic spirituality in modern Irish sculpture. Instead Hughes and – as we will see – Sheppard's sculptures prioritise an ethereal rendering of the human form, representing gods and mythic figures. For Russell, the figures 'denied earthly fulfilment' are given immanence and permanence in modern Irish sculpture: 'It is often characteristic of the passion which finds no means of material expression that it grows into a purely spiritual love; the intimacies it imagines are less bodily and more ethereal; and, as

[123] Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', 344.
[124] Yeats, *LNI*, 159.
[125] Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', 354. George Russell and Patrick Pearse praise the 'spiritual expression' of Sheppard and Hughes's ideal sculpture, as discussed in Chapter Two.
[126] Yeats, *LNI*, 158-159.
[127] Russell, 'The Art of John Hughes', 162.
[128] Russell, 'The Art of John Hughes', 164. On the proximity of Russell's thought to the binary of English materialism and Irish spirituality, elaborated by Arnold and Ernest Renan, see: Geraldine Higgins, *Heroic Revivals: from Carlyle to Yeats* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 41-45.

the object of a hopeless love recedes, its image begins to assume the heart of a divine being'.[129] Ideal sculpture, statues of gods and mythic figures, becomes the proper medium for the unexpressed fancies of a Celtic prehistory.

Russell's and Yeats's quixotic claims for the arts might exemplify Rachel Teukolsky's definition of much nineteenth-century art writing: 'a verbal fantasy of visual exactitude'.[130] And indeed, Russell confessed in a later lecture of 1906 that his grandiose claims for the sculpture of John Hughes drew ire from the sculptor himself.[131] Nevertheless, through the invocation of Arnold's Oxford lectures, Russell's and Yeats's art writing suggest an alternative historiography for modern Irish sculpture, one that is paired more directly with the Celtic Revival poetry of its time. Whether their art criticism forged a synthetic correspondence between the art forms is somewhat beside the point. As Rachel Teukolsky suggests in *The Literate Eye* (2009), nineteenth-century art writing was anticipatory and constitutive of the changes in modernist aesthetics. By the same token, Yeats's and Russell's Revivalist art criticism potentially recodifies twentieth-century Irish sculptural aesthetics. If this could be considered as an example of the *writing of art* it requires us to think more seriously about ideas of collaboration, inter-arts relationships, and the panaesthetic genealogy of myth.

VI

The imbrication of poetry and sculpture *by sculptors* reached an apex in the early years of the Celtic Revival. John Hughes's *L'Ame du Vin* (1898) statuette in bronze was based on lines from Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, with a passage describing man's divine manufacture of wine inscribed on the model's decorative base.[132] Oliver Sheppard's marble sculpture *In Mystery the Soul Abides* (1913) took its title and subject from the opening lines of Matthew Arnold's poem 'Morality': 'We cannot kindle when we will / The fire which in the heart resides. / The spirit bloweth and is still / In mystery our soul abides.'[133] Arnold's lines self-reflexively query the source of poetic inspiration but are reconfigured to serve the sculptor's craft. Yeats's ambition for visual renderings of Irish and Celtic figures was principally realised by Sheppard. His *Training*

[129] Russell, 'The Art of John Hughes', 162.
[130] Rachel Teukolsky, *The Literate Eye* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 47.
[131] George Russell, 'Art and Literature: A Lecture delivered at the Watts Exhibition in the Royal Hibernian Academy', *The Shanachie*, II, Winter 1906, 102-115: 'any intelligence I might have displayed in writing verse did not entitle me to an opinion about modelling […] when I spoke about nationality in sculpture, [Hughes's] righteous anger – I might say, his ferocity – forced me to talk of something else.' (102).
[132] For a general discussion of Hughes's early bronze statuettes and the inspiration for L'Ame du Vin see Sighle Bhreathnach Lynch 'John Hughes: The Italian Connection', *Irish Arts Review*, vol. 10, 1994, 195-201.
[133] Matthew Arnold, *The Poems of Matthew Arnold, 1840-1867*, ed. Arthur Quiller-Couch (London: OUP, 1922), 192.

of Cuchulain (1897) in clay and his masterpiece in bronze, *The Death of Cuchulainn* (1911-12), took their subjects, appearance and poses from a variety of sources including Samuel Ferguson's translations of the Ulster Cycle, Standish O'Grady's two-volume *History of Ireland*, and most directly Lady Gregory's *Cuchulainn of Muirthemne* (1902) in the case of the latter statue.[134] Unlike Hughes, the proximity of Sheppard's practice to the Celtic Revival and Irish verse is clear across his oeuvre. His marble relief *Roisin Dubh* (1909), placed beneath the bronze bust of James Clarence Mangan in St. Stephen's Green, was a visual representation of Mangan's 'My Dark Rosaleen', and one of his earliest plaster statuettes, *The Bard Oisin and Niamh* (1895), was inspired by Yeats's poem *The Wanderings of Oisin* (1887), a fact that pleased the poet.

The interplay of poetic subjects and sculpted subjects did not go unacknowledged by the wider public. A reviewer for the *Irish Times* would write of Sheppard's *In Mystery the Soul Abides* exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1913: 'Nothing could exceed the delicate and expressive beauty of Mr. Oliver Sheppard's poem in marble […] It is an exquisitely modelled girlish figure in an attitude of meditation. To see this alone would make a visit to the Academy a necessity for every art-lover in Dublin'.[135] A reviewer of the RHA in 1899 wrote even more explicitly of Sheppard's Celtic subject sculptures:

> In Mr Oliver Sheppard we have a youthful sculptor whose work seems more beautiful, more perfect, year by year. What Mr Yeats and Mr Standish O'Grady have done for Celtic tale and imagery in literature, Mr Oliver Sheppard has with equal force achieved in the less pliant media of stone and bronze.[136]

What is the nature of this correspondence between poetry and sculpture? And what does it mean for a poem to 'inspire' a statue or vice versa? Interrogating the stability of terms like ekphrasis, the modernist mythical method, and inter-art collaboration, are central to an understanding of the sculptural-poetic exchanges at the apex of the Celtic Revival. To isolate one example, the subject *Oisin and Niamh* (1895) was taken from Yeats's 'The Wanderings of Oisin'. Shortly after Yeats's death, Sheppard would write to Joseph Hone: 'I am enclosing W.B. Yeats letter and also a photograph of Oisin and Niamh in Tir na nOg. This little group which you saw was inspired by the "Wanderings of Oisin" and he was pleased of that fact'.[137] If ekphrastic poetry is 'the verbal representation of visual representation' as James Heffernan defines it, can Oliver Sheppard's sculpture be considered something of a reverse-ekphrasis: a

[134] See Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard*, 60, 136.
[135] Quoted in Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard*, 81.
[136] Sheppard papers, NCAD. Undated press clipping referring to work exhibited at RHA in 1899.
[137] Sheppard papers, NCAD. As John Turpin notes, the Yeats letter is now untraced. Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard*, 55.

visual representation of a former verbal representation?[138] And is there value in reading through Yeats's poems to find descriptions of the mythic figures that were then directly translated into stone or bronze by Oliver Sheppard? I would suggest that Sheppard's sources for sculpted subjects are not the descriptive allegorical poems one might expect. His lifelong privileging of symbolist verse, for example, implies an inter-art aesthetic that is as much affective as conceptual. His loose translations of written source materials about Celtic figures are more akin to the way in which we privilege poets for imaginatively referring to artworks in ekphrastic poems, without sticking rigidly to the precise images on display. As Mark Williams surmises in *Ireland's Immortals* (2016), Revivalist ambitions 'to crystallise an iconography for the indigenous gods', whether in poetry, prose, painting or sculpture, still departed from their source texts and images, repeating a trope of adaptation and change. Contrary to assumptions that the Revival period achieved a coherent compendium of mythic figures, the pantheon of Irish mythology became, indeed remained, a moveable feast.[139]

As this chapter has demonstrated, Sheppard's art school contemporaries repeatedly advocated a more nuanced inter-arts relationship between Revival artists. 'A Celtic Renaissance in literature would be a very incomplete expression of the ideals of the new movement,' writes Russell in 1898, 'unless there was a corresponding awakening of Celtic art'.[140] Or as Yeats would claim retrospectively in 1937: 'I would have all the arts draw together; recover their ancient association, the painter painting what the poet has written, the musician setting the poet's words to simple airs'.[141] Perhaps *pace* Sheppard, a more complicated idea of ekphrasis or panaesthetic collaboration is endorsed by Yeats, for whom the Revival project concerns the transmission of myth from one source and medium to another, a lifelong preoccupation with the 'myth that was itself a reply to a myth', as he writes in his introduction to *The Resurrection* (1934). Appropriately Yeats recalls his own poem *The Wanderings of Oisin* at this point: 'I came upon the story of Oisin in Tir-nan-oge and reshaped it into my *Wanderings of Oisin*'.[142] Myth evidently responds to its antecedents by modifying, modernising, or rebelling against its source material.

In an unpublished essay on Irish sculpture from 1922, Oliver Sheppard proposes Irish poems, speeches and literature as sources of inspiration for modern Irish sculptors.[143] The essay

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[138] James Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 3.
[139] Mark Williams, *Ireland's Immortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 352, 422-423.
[140] George Russell, 'Art in Ireland', 3.
[141] Yeats, 'Introduction to Essays', *CW5*, 217-219, 218.
[142] *CWII*, 722.
[143] The essay is paraphrased in John Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard*, 28-29; a manuscript fair copy of the unpublished text is preserved in 'The Oliver Sheppard papers', National College of Art and Design (NCAD). See Appendix, I. Quotations from the essay are hereafter cited as '[Essay on Irish Sculpture], Appendix I'.

was solicited by William Fitzgerald, probably for *The Voice of Ireland* which carried articles by Thomas Bodkin, Dermod O'Brien and Sean Keating in 1924.[144] 'In the Art of Sculpture', Sheppard writes, 'Ireland has never done anything really great'; he critiques the statumania gripping the nation, and proposes legendary Irish figures as the subjects for future monuments. His essay concludes with lines of verse by Eva Gore-Booth on the malleable, myth-making capacity of sculpture:

> The earth bends to her will, the obdurate marble serves
> Her dream, flowing about her soul in gracious lines.
> Rose white as sunlit waves, a mystery of pale curves
> Flung up in palace towers or dreaming over shrines.[145]

If sculpture is solid, fixed and obdurate, the language of sculpture provides Eva Gore-Booth with a curiously fluid medium, which is metaphoric and metamorphic in the hands of the poet. The marble 'bends to her will', 'serves her dreams', and flows around her soul, more akin to an aura than a static statue. Her pairing of marble with dreaming suggests an ideal sculpture, pictured in the mind's eye before it is carved in stone. This is a common trait in Yeats's later poems, like 'The Statues' where 'boys and girls pale from the *imagined love* / Of solitary beds' engage in a strange moment of midnight congress with Greek statues, pressing 'Live lips upon a plummet-measured face'. Or in 'Long-legged Fly' where the speaker fixates on the ideal beauty of Michelangelo's *David* or Adam preceding their material existence as a statue or fresco: 'That girls at puberty may find / The first Adam in their thought'.[146] The common trait in much poetry *about* sculpture is that the statue becomes the embodiment of an ideal or dreamed of human form.

In his 1922 essay Sheppard suggests written sources and often poetry as the source of inspiration for new public sculpture as he rails against the dull, realistic representation of statesmen in Dublin to date. On memorials and public monuments he states:

> [W]hen one comes to consider our commemorative sculpture as one generally sees it displayed, what pleasure is there in the contemplation of a man in ordinary clothes without a hat stuck up on a pedestal, and when one considers that this man stands for some great or beautiful idea or ideal why not try to represent *that*.[147]

[144] Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard*, 28.
[145] Sheppard, [Essay on Irish Sculpture], Appendix I.
[146] *VP*, 610, 617 [*italics mine*].
[147] Sheppard, [Essay on Irish Sculpture], Appendix I.

Sheppard points to the monument of Charles Stewart Parnell at the northern end of O'Connell Street as an example of one whose inscribed speech suggests an ideal sculptural subject in and of itself, abstracted from the ordinary man represented in ordinary clothes without even a hat:

> Take for instance the inscription over the statue on Parnell monument – a glorious subject for sculpture – the onward march of a nation, an everlasting source of inspiration & joy succeeding generations.[148]

This yearning for a more abstract subject for future public monuments, one articulated in a political speech or lines of verse rather than the man saying them, explains Sheppard's preference for Symbolist and mythic figures. He proposes lines from the ballads of Thomas Moore as another suitable subject for statues, particularly as a memorial *to the* balladeer: '[I]t seems possible to find in Moore's *Melodies* some subject which would do honour to Tom Moore *and* to Ireland.'[149] The words of Moore rather than the man himself, might serve as a fitting tribute in marble or bronze. His choice of Moore alludes to the despised statue erected to his memory in the nineteenth century at the junction of College Street and Westmoreland Street. The *Irish Builder* called it 'a horrible exportation from London', and Moore's biographer called it 'a libel in metal, holding [the poet] up to posterity's ridicule and contempt'.[150] Yeats in turn referred to it as 'that cringing firbolg Tom Moore cast by some ironmonger'.[151]

Sheppard's preference for ideal sculpture and abstraction over realism is indebted to the Literary Revival and the New Sculpture movement of the late nineteenth century. He surveys the streets and parks of Dublin without much to praise:

> We have public parks but no sculpture such as charms one in other cities. Surely we are not an immoral people and could look on a beautiful statue of an Irish Apollo with both pleasure and profit. Those things which are of the highest & the purest it seems are the easiest of perversion.
> Irish legendary lore abounds in subjects for the sculptor and how charming it would be to have a sculptured group from the Cuchulain cycle on a green space in St. Stephen's Green Park.[152]

Evidently the writings of Yeats, Russell and Augusta Gregory – in emulation of Hyde and O'Grady – provided a 'rich visual vocabulary for artists and craftsmen',[153] among whom

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[148] Sheppard, [Essay on Irish Sculpture], Appendix I.
[149] Sheppard, [Essay on Irish Sculpture], Appendix I.
[150] Quoted in Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture*, 93.
[151] Quoted in *CLII*, 491n3.
[152] Sheppard, [Essay on Irish Sculpture], Appendix I.
[153] Nicola Gordon Bowe, 'Preserving the Relics of Heroic Time', *Synge and Edwardian Ireland*, ed. Brian Cliff and Nicholas Grene (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 58-83, 62.

Sheppard can be numbered. The passage is somewhat prescient as Sheppard's own plaster cast statue of *Cuchulain* was completed in 1912, but remained in his studio until the 1930s when de Valera commissioned the piece in bronze to commemorate the Easter Rising. *The Death of Cuchulain* monument, erected in the General Post Office, becomes the ultimate myth replying to former myths in Sheppard's career. Preliminary sketches for the *Cuchulain* statue suggest that Sheppard tried his hand at a similar syncretism of myths and religions, mimicking a Pietà design with Cuchulain held in a foetal position by the wings of an enlarged eagle.[154] And yet the sculptor does not get the last word on the Cuchulain myth. Yeats's *Last Poems* and final play *The Death of Cuchulain* reply in turn, reaching for the language of sculpture.

VII

Yeats wrote eight poems, five plays and one prose drama about Cuchulain across the span of his career. In the 1890s he portrayed Cuchulain as the mythic hero fighting against 'the invulnerable tide'.[155] Yet by 1916 the figure of Cuchulain had been summoned or seized by a Republican cause that was anathema to the poet, and by 1935, with the dedication of the statue to the leaders of the Rising in the General Post Office, Cuchulain had effectively become a vehicle for the official rhetoric of De Valera's emerging Republic. The mutability of the Cuchulain myth for various ideologies and agendas has been documented by Geraldine Higgins, Michael McAteer, and others.[156] As a means of concluding this chapter, the Cuchulain statue in Yeats's final drama of the same name, *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939), will be evaluated as a summation of the poet's model of transmigratory and panaesthetic mythic archetypes.

After the murder of Cuchulain in Yeats's play a harlot sings of the life of the Gaelic hero to a beggarman. The song-poem is a record of Cuchulain's aesthetic afterlives in folksong and sculpture, containing the folksong and the sculpture within it, and appearing to mimic or mediate their distinct properties. Furthermore the poem is contained within the larger play, *The Death of Cuchulain*, exemplifying Yeats's desired panaesthetic compression of drama, sculpture, poetry, music and folktale:

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[154] The Pietà-shaped sketch in which the eagle outstretched wings encompass a dying Cuchulain might be an allusion to sculptures by Albert Ernest Carrier-Belleuse, *Hébé Endormé* (1869), and Alfred Gilbert, *The Enchanted Chair* (1885-6).

[155] *VP*, 111. When turning the 1892 'The Death of Cuchulain' into 'Cuchulain's Fight with the Sea' in November 1924, Yeats wrote to George: 'I am exceedingly lively and have wholly rewritten "The Death of Cuchulain." He does not now die at all. To rewrite an old poem is like dressing up for a fancy dress ball'. *CL InteLex*, 4672.

[156] Higgins, *Heroic Revivals*, 105-139; Michael McAteer, *Yeats and European Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 65-130.

The harlot sang to the beggarman.
I meet them face to face
Conall, Cuchulain, Usna's boys,
All that most ancient race;
Maeve had three in an hour they say;
I adore those clever eyes
Those muscular bodies but can get
No grip upon their thighs.
I meet those long pale faces
Hear their great horses, then
Recall what centuries have passed
Since they were living men.
That there are still some living
That do my limbs unclothe
But that the flesh my flesh has gripped
I both adore and loathe.[157]

The completion of the Red Branch myth is the literal concretion of Cuchulain in the General Post Office. 'Conall, Cuchulain, Usna's boys' are an unwritten legend in the opening stanza, living from mouth to mouth as 'the tale the harlot / Sang to the beggarman'. But this oral tradition is usurped by the sculpted form of Cuchulain in the second and third stanzas:

Are those things that men adore and loathe
Their sole reality?
What stood in the Post Office
With Pearse and Connolly?
What comes out of the mountain
Where men first shed their blood?
Who thought Cuchulain till it seemed
He stood where they had stood.

No body like his body
Has modern woman borne,
But an old man looking back on life
Imagines it in scorn.
A statue's there to mark the place
By Oliver Sheppard done.
So ends the tale that the harlot
Sang to the beggarman.[158]

[157] *CWII*, 553-554.
[158] *CWII*, 554.

There is a deadpan finality with the arrival of the statue of Cuchulain, who is at once engraved and entombed in the final lines of the poem and the final lines of the play. 'What comes out of the mountain', is the quarried stone or mined materials for bronze that will form the statue. The mythical Cuchulain, living for centuries *viva voce*, has hardened into a static sculptural image. The awkward contortion of the syntax, 'By Oliver Sheppard *done*' [emphasis mine], ensures the verb 'done' is the end word in a pattern anticipating a climatic full-rhyme. Instead the final lines close as a break from the harlot's song: 'So ends the tale that the harlot / Sang to the beggarman.' Both the sound and sense of 'done' might be said to end the song *before* the poem and rupture the rhyming pattern: 'done / beggarman'. Yeats's return to the words of the opening line creates a frame around the harlot's song sung within it. Yet the unrhymed closing word 'done' drops like a dead weight on the harlot's tale, cutting off the lyricism, and colloquial speech of the first stanza, as Sheppard's bronze statue commemorating the Rising sends a pang of discord through the former myth of Cuchulain.

Yeats's transmigration of the Cuchulain myth from antiquity and ancient art forms of minstrelsy to modernity and the bronze sculpture in the G.P.O. appears to be the reversal of a Hegelian hierarchy of the arts. The *Aesthetics* charts a movement from the primitive, tangible materiality of sculpture towards the protean immateriality of poetry and music as the hallmarks of modernity. With considerable admiration for the sculpture of Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, Hegel nevertheless establishes sculpture as an art form of antiquity, superseded by painting, music and above all poetry in the romantic age.[159] For Yeats, however, sculpture is the final form in which Cuchulain achieves an iconic solidity and rigidity.

If the poem enacts its own *paragone* of the arts, it is one in which the seemingly antiquated qualities of statuary have won the day over the versatility of song and verse. Walter Pater's lengthy study of the 'Demeter and Persephone' myths provides an appropriate, alternative hierarchy of the art forms that charts the varied representations of the two Greek goddesses from folklore, to poetry, and ultimately sculpture. According to Pater, all Greek myths develop through three successive phases; moving from a diffuse oral tradition known as the 'mystical' phase, 'with details changing as it passes from place to place',[160] to a written, 'literary' phase where the myth is still 'the work of no single author or place or time; the poet […] no single person, but the whole consciousness of an age'.[161] In each of these phases, written and unwritten, the goddess Demeter is contingent upon the storyteller, their time and place: 'The

[159] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, volume II*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998), 702-703.
[160] Walter Pater, *The Works of Walter Pater, Volume 7: Greek Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 91.
[161] Pater, *Greek Studies*, 101.

myth grew up gradually, and at many distant places, in many minds, independent of each other […] They illustrate the indefiniteness which is characteristic of Greek mythology, a theology with no central authority, no link on historic time, liable from the first to an unobserved transformation'.[162] In the fluid medium of poetry, speech or folk-song, the myth is transmutable, transhistorical and multiform. The myth opens itself up to revision and recontextualisation in different times and places. It is liberated by its distinct representations in different art forms: oral tradition, poetry, sculpture, but also prose, painting, and drama.[163] Yeats's own contribution to the Cuchulain myth stretches from the heroic 'Cuchulain's Fight with the Sea' in *The Rose* (1893), to the striking black parallelogram of a severed head in *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939).

Approaching Pater's final phase, the curiously named 'ethical' phase, the diffuse and mutable myth of Demeter slowly solidifies into a definite, refined sculptural figure. At last there is 'a general recognition of a clearly-arrested outline, a tangible embodiment, which has solidified itself in the imagination of the people, they know not how'.[164] In the sculpted form of the Greek god or goddess '[t]here is nothing of the confused outline, the mere shadowiness of mystical dreaming, in this most concrete human figure. No nation, less aesthetically gifted than the Greeks, could have thus lightly thrown its mystical surmise and divination into images so clear and idyllic'.[165] In respect of the figure of Demeter, Pater notes that the formerly grotesque descriptions of Demeter are replaced with an idyllic illustration. The story of Demeter, as it existed in successive unwritten and written phases, 'had its unlovelier side, grotesque, unhellenic, unglorified by art'.[166] What Pater understands as the 'ethical' dimensions of sculptural representation is an elevation and refinement of the figures from Greek myth: 'If, with this gloomy image of our mother the earth, in our minds, we take up one of those coins which bear the image of Kore or Demeter, we shall better understand what the function of sculpture really was, in elevating and refining the religious conceptions of the Greeks'.[167]

Pater's inversion of a Hegelian chronology and hierarchy of the arts can be explained in part by the rise of the New Sculpture at the end of the nineteenth century. A concomitant 'statumania' or 'memorial madness' in Britain and, belatedly, in post-independence Ireland suggest the high stakes in this would-be 'ethical phase'. In *The Death of Cuchulain*, Oliver Sheppard

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[162] Pater, *Greek Studies*, 101.
[163] As Pater asserts in 'The School of Giorgione', this inter-art exchange should not be narrowly construed as a contest or *paragone*. If 'each art may be observed to pass into the condition of some other art', it achieves 'a partial alienation from its own limitations, by which the arts are able, not indeed to supply the place of each other, but reciprocally to lend each other new forces.' Walter Pater, 'The School of Giorgione,' *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, ed. Matthew Beaumont, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 124.
[164] Pater, *Greek Studies*, 102.
[165] Pater, *Greek Studies*, 103.
[166] Pater, *Greek Studies*, 137.
[167] Pater, *Greek Studies*, 137-138.

might be seen to have the last word in the form of a bronze statue. The original myth becomes rigid, monumental, unequivocal, but there is a wistful longing for the lost art of Irish minstrelsy, and the old story of 'Conall, Cuchulain, Usna's boys'. Yeats's song-poem records some of the distinctions between these art forms. Existing as an oral tale at the beginning of the poem, the ethereal, immaterial bodies cannot be touched. The harlot, try as she might, 'can get / No grip upon their thighs', and yearns for those palpable 'muscular bodies' that cannot exist in, or as, music. The sinuous statue by Oliver Sheppard is at least tangible, tactile, a stimulant to touch. But of course, the harlot has in mind the musculature of a living body, not the unsettling and imposing bronze figure erected in the Post Office: 'No body like his body / Has modern woman borne'.[168] Yeats is playing with a Paterian inter-art aesthetic and hierarchy or distinction of art forms in the poem that closes *The Death of Cuchulain*.

The harlot's unanswerable rhetorical questions, 'What stood in the Post Office / With Pearse and Connolly? / What comes out of the mountain / Where men first shed their blood?', appear to echo the foreboding questions raised in 'The Statues': 'When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side, / What stalked through the Post Office? What intellect, / What calculation, number, measurement, replied?'. That myth, *replying* to another myth has taken on a darker, atavistic aspect in the lobby of the GPO. Yeats made his dislike of the statue clear in a letter to William Rothenstein, dated 29 December 1928: 'Some of the best known of the young men who got themselves killed in 1916 had the Irish legendary hero Cuchulain so much in their minds that the Government has celebrated the event with a bad statue'.[169] And Geraldine Higgins proposes that Yeats's Cuchulain and Sheppard's sculpted form remain utterly distinct in 'The Statues': 'The idealized Cuchulain of invisible but precise numbers remains the property of the aristocratic Yeatsian 'sect' while the realized statue […] belongs to the 'cult' of Pearse and his followers'.[170] In this context, the final question 'What calculation, number, measurement, replied?' is answered by an alternative community of poets, sculptors and thinkers, and another manifestation of the mythic figure founded by returning to that void out of which rose earliest Ireland: 'Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace / The lineaments of a plummet-measured face.' In *The Death of Cuchulain*, however, the question of 'What comes out of the mountain / Where men first shed their blood?' recalls with a dark irony Yeats's wish in 'Ireland and the Arts' (1901) that John Hughes had chosen the native myths of Ireland and not *Orpheus and Eurydice*: 'I am yet jealous for Cuchulain, and for Baile, and Aillinn, and for those grey mountains

[168] *CWII*, 554. Compare Ovid's lines in the Pygmalion myth on Galatea's 'perfect shape, more beautiful / Than ever woman born.' Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 232, l. 247-8.
[169] *CL InteLex*, 7359.
[170] Higgins, *Heroic Revivals*, 120.

that still are lacking their celebration'.[171] The extracted materials that will mould the undesirable Cuchulain statue have usurped the fabled figure on the Sligo mountaintop.[172] As we will see in Chapter Two, this is a far-cry from the 'art allied to poetry' that Yeats intended in his early Revival art writing. Confronting the *Cuchulain* statue in the GPO, an old man in a new Ireland looks back on his hero, and 'Imagines it in scorn.'[173]

[171] *CWIV*, 154.
[172] According to Sligo folklore, these mythic figures resided in the nearby mountains. Under Ben Bulben', written around the time of Yeats's final play, similarly imagines the quarrying of materials from the Sligo mountainside for sculptural purposes: 'No marble, no conventional phrase, / On limestone quarried near the spot / By his command these words are cut' (*VP*, 640).
[173] *CWII*, 554.

Chapter 2: W.B. Yeats and Irish Public Monuments – 1898-1925

I

In 1967, a three-quarter-of-a-ton monument to Theobald Wolfe Tone in patinated and variegated bronze was unveiled at the north-eastern corner of St Stephen's Green, Dublin. An *Irish Times* art critic at the time described the statue as 'a massive, lumpy rough-hewn affair'. The sculptor was Edward Delaney (1930-2009), who came to prominence with his relief-work *Land of Music* (1957) inspired by *The Wanderings of Oisin*, and his statue of *Thomas Davis* (1966) in College Green, with bronze reliefs illustrating passages of Davis's poetry. What was odd about Delaney's *Wolfe Tone* commission was that the foundation stone was laid by John O'Leary, W.B. Yeats and Maud Gonne more than thirty years before the sculptor was born and nearly seventy years before a statue was finally erected.[1] James Joyce wryly referred to the foundation stone at the corner of Stephen's Green as the place 'where Wolfe Tone's statue was not',[2] an absent presence that seemed to exemplify the grandiose delusions of Dublin's late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century 'statumania'.

W.B. Yeats experienced the fraught politics of monument-making at first-hand in the late 1890s when he became president of the '98 Centennial Committee for Great Britain and France. The committee, charged with commemorating the United Irishmen Rebellion of 1798, was made up of an uneasy coalition of the IRB, members of the now fragmented Irish Parliamentary Party, the Irish National Alliance (INA) and traditional Fenians like O'Leary. The committee's central objective was to erect a statue to Theobald Wolfe Tone in Stephen's Green. Not unlike Delaney's massive and lumpy bronze, Yeats and the centennial committee had hoped to erect a monument that 'might exceed in bulk and in height that of the too compromised and compromising Daniel O'Connell'.[3] His criticism of O'Connell wittily conflates the man and the disappointing monument commission of the 1860s. The O'Connell monument committee faced heavy criticism as it tried to balance international or non-resident sculptors with sculptors living in Ireland. An open competition was held in Dublin for sculptors to design the secondary figures for the monument's base, but ultimately the sculptor John Henry Foley, born in Ireland but living in London, was given the entire commission.[4] 'We have had great artists – we have not

[1] On Delaney's *Wolfe Tone* monument see Peter Murray, 'Refiguring Delaney', *Irish Arts Review* 21, 4 (2004), 80–85; Róisín Kennedy, 'Searching for the vital form', *Edward Delaney RHA: Bronzes from the Sixties* (Dublin: RHA, 2004), 7-13; Eamon Delaney, *Breaking the Mould. A Story of Art and Ireland* (Dublin: New Island, 2009).
[2] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1961), 229.
[3] *CWIII*, 267.
[4] Judith Hill. *Irish Public Sculpture: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998) 94.

their works', Thomas Davis wrote as early as 1843, 'we own the nativity of great living artists – they live on the Tiber and the Thames'.[5] 'Let an Irish sculptor chisel it' became the rallying call of the *Dublin University Magazine* before the O'Connell commission was given to Foley, while the *Irish Builder* opted for a more politically charged remark when the commission was underway: 'Wanted, Works of Art, No Irish need apply'.[6] The Wolfe Tone commission was expected to avoid the monumental mistakes of the past. Yet Yeats was not entirely beholden to nativist sculptural creeds, putting forward the name of John Hughes, 'the best Irish sculptor', but also Rodin, 'the best sculptor in the world', for the commission.[7] Neither sculptor would get the chance nor the cash to undertake the project. Yeats and Maud Gonne failed to raise sufficient funds and the fracturing of conflicting groups within the committee led to the project's untimely demise. R.F. Foster calculates that Yeats and Gonne raised only £561 of the £14,000 needed to commission the Wolfe Tone memorial, and Judith Hill notes that constitutionalists' support for the project 'dwindled once they had conceived their own memorial project (a monument to Parnell)'.[8] According to Yeats, the ungovernable committee had to content themselves, 'with a foundation-stone and an iron rail to protect it, for there could never be a statue'.[9]

From our discussion in Chapter One, W.B. Yeats's early engagement with Irish sculpture could be summarised as a series of commissions and ambitions for statues that did not materialise. His allusion in an 1892 article to the failed Farrell commission for the new National Library – with its 'numberless stone niches, in which there will never be any statues'[10] – underscored the poet's early awareness of the practical and financial constraints upon public sculpture projects during the period. His hope, shared by George Russell, that the sculptor John Hughes would turn from Greek myths like Orpheus and Eurydice, to 'Cuchulain […] Baile, and Aillinn,' or 'Aengus and Etain', was also 'denied earthly fulfilment'.[11] And from the place 'where Wolfe Tone's statue *was not*', the signal failure of the centennial committee encapsulates the issues of sculpture in the public sphere that would haunt Yeats's later art writing and poetry. In the first years of his self-styled 'active Irish life',[12] the attempt to commission the Wolfe Tone statue deepened his understanding of the diverse factions that could gather around a

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[5] Thomas Davis, 'National Art', *Sources of Irish Art: A Reader*, ed. Fintan Cullen (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000), 69.
[6] *Dublin University Magazine*, vol. 41 (1853), 140. *Irish Builder*, (1 April 1874).
[7] *CL2*, 706. In a letter to Sarah Purser from late 1896 or early 1897, John Hughes stated his willingness to take up the 'chance of doing the big monument' and asked Purser to relay his willingness to Yeats. Denson, *John Hughes*, 123.
[8] *RF1*, 191. See also Judith Hill, *Irish Public Sculpture: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), 119.
[9] *CWIII*, 274.
[10] *LNI*, 154.
[11] Yeats, 'Ireland and the Arts', *CWIII*, 154; George Russell, 'The Art of John Hughes', *New Ireland Review*, vol. 10, September 1898, 162.
[12] Yeats, 'Samhain: 1908 – First Principles,' *CWVIII*, 118.

commemoration project and yet maintain contradictory interpretations of the figure to be represented and their legacy. The simultaneous claims of constitutional nationalists, insurrectionist Republicans, and many groupings in-between, to Theobald Wolfe Tone as their intellectual forefather ultimately unravelled the project to erect a memorial. Yet the entire affair could be viewed as teaching Yeats precisely this lesson about the public artwork; its contingency upon various and opposing audiences, its susceptibility to contrary interpretations and appropriations.

This chapter will consider the politics of public monuments in Dublin and Yeats's contributions, complicity and resistances to Irish political aesthetics in a period of 'statumania'.[13] I will begin by tracing the pervasive influence of Yeats and Russell's model of Celtic Revival sculpture on the revolutionary generation in politically-inflected writings on sculpture and public monuments. I will survey several periodical contributions in which Patrick Pearse entrenched sculpture as the main art form of Ireland in the pursuit of independence. Pearse's underexamined art reviews in the Gaelic League newspaper *An Claidheamh Soluis* will be shown to promote Oliver Sheppard as the foundation of a Revivalist sculptural poetics, one that becomes explicitly political and revolutionary in character. I will also propose Sheppard's Mangan memorial as an ekphrastic source for Thomas MacDonagh's sonnet 'To James Clarence Mangan', which appeared in another Gaelic League-aligned paper, *An Macaomh*. Taken together, MacDonagh and Pearse articulate a radical interpretation of public monuments as the exemplars for revolutionary men in the present and future. Crucially, this chapter will consider Yeats's complicity in these models of Irish 'statumania' and not solely his post-Easter Rising resistances and political revisionism. Yeats's early discussion of Irish public monuments as non-mimetic and didactic, and his elevation in verse of the 'Great Men' and Celtic folk heroes of Ireland's history and prehistory, informed an Irish revolutionary aesthetic across disciplines.

In subsequent sections, I will trace the reception history and Yeats's own changing opinions about the Parnell monument on O'Connell Street. I contend that the placement of Parnell and his statue in a number of poems and prose writings across Yeats's career underscore a renegotiation of Irish politics through visual art interpretation. The appropriation of Parnell

[13] Maurice Agulhon uses the term 'statuomania' to characterise the frenzy of monument building that began in 1870s Paris. Various phases of an Irish 'statumania' or 'memorial madness' have been described by R.F. Foster and Yvonne Whelan. On the increased production of memorials to Irish nationalist in the 1890s see R.F. Foster, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making It Up in Ireland* (London: Penguin, 2001). For an account of competing monument-making in Dublin from the late-nineteenth century to post-independence Ireland in the early-twentieth century, see Yvonne Whelan, 'Monuments, power and contested space – the iconography of Sackville Street (O'Connell Street) before Independence (1922)' *Irish Geography,* Volume 34:1 (2001), 11-33; and Whelan, 'Symbolising the State – the iconography of O'Connell Street and environs after independence (1922)' *Irish Geography,* Volume 34:2 (2001), 135-156.

by the revolutionary generation, not unlike the seizure of Cuchulain, is negotiated by Yeats in sculptural terms and by visiting and revisiting his statue. Finally, Yeats's later poetry on public statuary will be read alongside the tempestuous debates surrounding statues in the aftermath of Irish independence. From the 1890s to the 1930s, Ireland underwent a period of frenzied monument-making, counterbalancing the regal and imperial symbolism of Dublin in particular with the first statues to Irish nationalists, republicans and revolutionaries. Statues of O'Connell, Parnell, and even the mythic Cuchulain, were commissioned and later occupied the same public spaces as statues of Lord Nelson, Queen Victoria and various British statesmen, whose presence in a post-independence Ireland seemed more anomalous than ever. If the Wolfe Tone monument could not be erected because of factional political disagreements over his legacy, monuments to various British statesmen in post-independence Ireland faced attack or erasure because of their obsolescence or the hostile ideology they appeared to represent. Yeats's later poetry and prose substantiate the claim that he conceived of public monuments in Dublin, many of which were erected with an unambiguous political purpose, as unfixed, mutable and changed by the perception and perspective of the individual. Public statues are politically or historically contingent as well as, and by virtue of, being time-bound or temporally contingent. Building upon the premise of Chapter One, I will contend that Yeats's understanding of mythic figures like Cuchulain as mutable and multiform through their diffuse aesthetic afterlives, informed his understanding of public monuments to statesmen, and their myriad appropriations in changing political circumstances. Memorials and monuments, I argue drawing on Rothberg's observations, assume a 'multidirectionality' that is premised upon their apparent openness to varied visual interpretations.[14] The adaptability of monument and message is predicated upon the idea that statues are changeable, subject to ageing, or materially degrading in the *longue durée* of Irish history.

II

Chairing a '98 centenary dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on 13 April 1898, Yeats boldly declared 'The Union of the Gael', in what R.F. Foster considers to be 'the most Fenian of his

[14] Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory* considers public squares, parks and streets, with their memorials and monuments, 'as a malleable discursive space in which groups do not simply articulate established positions but actually come into being through their dialogical interactions with others' (5). Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

public utterances', and yet one that is 'counterpointed by the weariness of his private references':[15]

> Ireland is coming to her own and better self. She is turning to the great men of her past—to Emmet and Wolfe Tone, to Grattan and to Burke, to Davis and to Mitchel, and asking their guidance. She is turning, too, to subtler sources of national feeling than are in politics. […] We are building up a nation which shall be moved by noble purposes and to noble ends. A day will come for her, though not, perhaps, in our day. There is an old story that tells how sometimes when a ship is beaten by storm and almost upon the rocks, a mysterious figure appears and lays its hand upon the tiller. It is Mannanan, the son of Lir, the old god of the waters. So it is with nations, a flaming hand is laid suddenly upon the tiller.[16]

In *Heroic Revivals* (2012), Geraldine Higgins has noted that the litany of great men of Ireland's past – Emmet, Wolfe Tone, Grattan, Burke, Davis and Mitchel – provide a pantheon of figures who were literally being monumentalised in Dublin's parks and thoroughfares from the late-nineteenth century.[17] Grattan and Burke were sculpted by John Henry Foley, electrocast in copper, and unveiled in College Green in 1868 and 1880, respectively. However, unlike the Anglo-Irish parliamentarians, monuments to the United Irishmen Emmet and Wolfe Tone, and the Young Irelanders Davis and Mitchel, would not be unveiled in marble or bronze until the middle of the twentieth century.[18] Yeats's pairings are a deliberate recognition of the 'great men' still in need of public subscriptions and financial support, if they are to be memorialised as guides for the nation's future.

Higgins connects Yeats's litany of 'great men' to Thomas Carlyle's influential 'Great Man theory', made across a series of lectures that proposed the history of the world was the biography of Great Men. They were, 'the modellers, the patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or attain'.[19] The implication for public monuments in the nineteenth century was a renewed emphasis on portrait sculpture over architectural form, idealised figures occasionally in Greco-Roman garb, and raised on pedestals in the centre of towns or cities. Higgins's study convincingly charts a historiography of Revivalist hero-worship from Carlyle's 1840 lectures *via* Standish O'Grady to George Russell, J.M. Synge

[15] *RF1*, 193. For example, in a letter to Lady Gregory, dated 3 October 1897, Yeats complained about his unenviable position as committee chairman: 'I find the infinite triviality of politics more trying than ever. We tare [*sic*] each others [*sic*] character in peices [*sic*] for things that don't matter to anybody.' *CL2*, 135.
[16] Quoted in *CL2*, 702-703. See also *RF1*, 572n124.
[17] Higgins, *Heroic Revivals*, 114.
[18] See Hill, *Irish Public Sculpture*, 173, 202.
[19] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840), 3.

and Yeats.[20] The extent to which the revolutionary generation and wider segments of Irish culture were in thrall to a flawed, Carlyle-inspired model of chivalry has been developed in Joseph Valente's *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture* (2011).[21] Through literature and public sculpture the great men of Ireland's past might offer guidance in the stormy present. The second half of Yeats's 'Union of the Gael' speech turns to the 'subtler sources of national feeling than are in politics', and the heroic figures of Irish mythology that were yet to be the major subjects of public monuments. In a speech that precedes and informs his call for visual representations of Cuchulain, Baile, and Aillinn in 'Ireland and the Arts' (1901), it is Mannanan, the son of Lir, and not necessarily the real men of Ireland's past that might emerge in turbulent times to lay a flaming hand upon the tiller and correct the nation's course. It is this collaborative and panaesthetic revival of Celtic mythic figures intimated in 'The Union of the Gael' that I want to trace in the subsequent writings of Patrick Pearse. The ideal Celtic sculptures of Oliver Sheppard began to be aired as public monuments in the 1900s. If Yeats considered these figures to be 'subtler sources of national feeling than are in politics' in 1898,[22] the same mythic figures provided Pearse and the revolutionary generation with a somewhat unsubtle narrative of violent revolutionary action, while the real men of Ireland's rebellions and revolutions were yet to be immortalised in marble or bronze.

The newspaper of the Gaelic League, *An Claidheamh Soluis* (*The Sword of Light*), first issued in 1899 and edited by Patrick Pearse from 1903–8, was established to further the revival of the Irish language.[23] However, the bilingual weekly turned its attention to the art revival and particularly sculpture under the editorship of Pearse, whose father James Pearse was an ecclesiastical sculptor, and younger brother William an aspiring sculptor. In a series of exhibition reviews, the paper championed Oliver Sheppard's Celtic and Symbolist sculpture to overtly political ends. On viewing the RHA annual summer exhibition 1906, Patrick Pearse writes that the League, 'were in search of […] that indefinable something about the sentiment or handling of a piece of work which would enable us to say unhesitatingly and with confidence: "This is of Ireland;" which would enable us to recognise it as Irish if we were to meet it in Paris or in Timbuctoo'.[24] Sculpture is positioned as the primary medium for this revivified, albeit ill-defined, Irish aesthetic: 'We seem to see (in proportion) more of Irishism in the rather meagre

[20] Higgins, *Heroic Revivals*, *passim*. On the influence of Carlyle's cult of the hero on nineteenth-century monuments in Ireland, see Hill, *Irish Public Sculpture*, 84-89, 87.
[21] Joseph Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011).
[22] *CL2*, 702.
[23] See Tom Clyde, *Irish Literary Magazines: An Outline History and Descriptive Bibliography* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003).
[24] Unsigned [Pearse], 'The Art Revival', *An Claidheamh Soluis*, May 5, 1906, 6-7, 7.

sculpture section than amongst the pictures'.[25] Pearse identifies Sheppard's marble head of Roisin Dubh, which formed part of the James Clarence Mangan memorial, as the embodiment of this Irish ideal:

> We think we found such things. And first amongst them we would place the allegorical head in marble by Mr. Oliver Sheppard which is to form portion of the memorial to Clarence Mangan. That face is an expression of the soul of Ireland if ever the soul of Ireland has been expressed in art. […] Only in Ireland could such a face have been seen or imagined. We must cease talking of the sculptor of this beautiful dream-face, of the exquisite "La Jeunesse" also on show in Abbey Street, and of the masculine '98 Memorial in Wexford as "a *clever* Irish sculptor"; he is a great Irish sculptor.[26]

Pearse, who knew Sheppard personally, promotes the sculptor's ideal statuette, *La Jeunesse* (1904), and public commissions above the Academy's paintings. Despite Sheppard's early art school training, his new Celtic sculpture is distinct 'from South Kensington, with its cold and uninspiring creed of formalism', and equally distinct from 'the mixture of impressionism and exaggerated realism which marks the incipient decline of French sculpture'. Instead, an emerging Irish school of sculpture 'will have originality, without eccentricity; vigour, with nevertheless a due sense of reserve'.[27]

The marble relief of *Roisin Dubh* upon the St. Stephen's Green memorial to James Clarence Mangan (1909) would become Sheppard's symbolist sculpture *par excellence*. Unlike the idealised heroic bust of the poet cast in bronze and placed on top of the pedestal, Mangan's muse emerges from within the upper half of the limestone pedestal, carved in high relief. Her hair in flowing tresses creates a frame for the piece with carved roses entwined with the hair. Within the layers of flowing hair are two further figures carved in low relief, one is a woman with a harp and the other a woman with a child, achieving a symbolist *mise en abyme* effect. It is a sculpture within a sculpture set into the pedestal of a sculpture. The use of background low relief figures within a higher relief carving would become a favourite trope of Sheppard – in his *Adolescence* marble relief (1918), for example – and serves as an allegory of the life of the primary figure.[28] Pearse picks up on the allegorical figures in a review of the Gaelic League's Oireachtas art exhibition in 1907, interpreting them as he sees fit: 'This head in the Mangan memorial into whose ears music and the motherland are whispering is a thing of sheer beauty, wonderfully fascinating.' The high-relief 'dream-face' is, in Pearse's view, 'the finest embodiment of the

[25] Pearse, 'The Art Revival', 7.
[26] Pearse, 'The Art Revival', 7.
[27] Pearse, 'The Art Revival', 7.
[28] See John Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard*, 84-85, 114-116.

wistful sweetness of Caitlin Ni Uallachain that has yet been carved in marble or painted on canvas'.[29]

In a review of the summer 1906 Oireachtas exhibition, Pearse praised Sheppard's smaller *Inis Fail* (Isle of Destiny) statuette in plaster, first exhibited in 1901.[30] It is difficult to miss Pearse's political, revolutionary reading of the Woman of Sorrows figure:

> Mark the form and above all the face of the Woman of Sorrows who stands erect above the prostrate shape of one who has died for her: mark in her eyes, in her brow, in the rigidity of her lips, the steadfastness of awful Fate. Though the world run red with blood, the cause of that Woman shall triumph. Mark next him who lies prone – the victorious vanquished, crowned in death.[31]

Pearse is alluding to James Clarence Mangan's most notorious nation-as-woman poem, 'Dark Rosaleen', in 'the world run red with blood': "O! the Erne shall run red / With redundance of blood, / The earth shall rock beneath our tread'.[32] Mangan's militant and gory translation of 'Roisin Dubh' was admired by Pearse, yet the blood-letting is anything but redundant in his reading of the *Inis Fail* statuette and the cause of contemporary Ireland.[33] The Woman of Sorrows, seemingly conflated with Rosaleen and Kathleen Ni Houlihan, expects blood sacrifice. Her static, steadfast pose endures through the ages, watching generations of men 'go serenely to […] death' for her cause. Pearse concludes the article by suggesting Sheppard's icon will inspire men to action in the present and future, reciting four lines of Mangan's verse in Irish. The political aesthetic of *An Claidheamh Soluis* is clearest in Pearse's exhibition reviews and in his idiosyncratic interpretation of particular artworks. Sheppard's allegorical woman and child have been read by contemporary art historians as a vision of 'a new Ireland transcending the heroic suffering of the past', symbolised by the fallen figure draped across the base.[34] Yet for Pearse these were figures embracing and perpetuating that same history of martyrdom into the future.

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[29] Unsigned [Pearse], 'The Oireactas Salon', *An Claidheamh Soluis*, August 10, 1907, 7-8.
[30] Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard*, 68-72.
[31] Unsigned [Pearse], 'The National Salon', *An Claidheamh Soluis*, August 11, 1906, 7-8, 7. The Dublin solicitor, John Leo Burke, would quote from Pearse's Oireactas review in a 1937 leaflet, as part of a successful campaign to purchase *Inis Fail* for the nation and have the statuette cast in bronze. See Robert Tracy, "A statue's there to mark the place': Cuchulain in the GPO', *Field Day Review* 4, ed. Seamus Deane (Dublin: Field Day Publications, 2008), 202-215, 208.
[32] See Matthew Campbell's close reading of the phrase from Mangan and the self-reflexive allusion to past 'Roisin Dubh' songs in 'Dark Rosaleen': Campbell, *Irish Poetry under the Union*, 123-131.
[33] See its inclusion in Padraic Pearse, *Collected Works of Padraic H. Pearse: Songs of Irish Rebels and Specimens from an Irish Anthology* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1918), 25.
[34] Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard*, 72; Anne Crookshank, *Irish Sculpture from 1600 to the Present Day* (Dublin: Department of Foreign Affairs, 1984), 53.

Beyond quoting Mangan's verse, the Oireachtas review articulates an intertwining of poetry and sculpture in the work of Oliver Sheppard. Pearse frequently uses the term 'poet' and the compound 'poet-sculptor' to distinguish Sheppard's imaginative and visionary works from other, more technically accomplished contemporaries such as John Hughes, whom Pearse accepts has a superior 'learned mastery over anatomy'. Yet Sheppard's poetical work has 'much more of imagination, of inspiration, – has he not caught more clear and frequent glimpses of divine vision?' than Hughes, 'the only Irishman that can be compared to him'.[35] Comingling poetry and sculpture in his reveries over *Inis Fail*, Pearse announces:

> Oliver Sheppard is the greatest poet and one of the most creative minds in Ireland to-day: he dreams beautiful dreams of Eire, he has tender reveries of her past, ambitions mighty things for her future: and all these dreams, and reveries, and ambitions he has the power of fixing in bronze or marble, giving enduring expression as well to the most evanescent fancies of a singularly emotional and changeful temperament as to the deeper and stronger yearnings of an earnest man's heart.[36]

Sheppard's gift of incarnating in marble or bronze the transient spirit-images and dreams of Eire, is another renegotiation and part-refutation of Matthew Arnold's description of the Celtic character and the Celt's 'inaptitude for the plastic arts'.[37] The Celtic element in sculpture means giving expression in durable forms to the figures borne of the Arnoldian Celt's flighty, 'abstract, severe character […] its perpetual straining after mere emotion,'[38] figured more forgivingly by Pearse as the 'evanescent fancies of a singularly emotional and changeful temperament'. Implicitly agreeing with Arnold's claim in the nineteenth century that the Celtic idols had yet to 'find a resting-place […] in colour and form; it presses on to the impalpable, the ideal',[39] Pearse marks Sheppard as an effective turning point, his sculpture bearing 'that indefinable something about the sentiment or handling' which modern-day Irishmen could declare with confidence, 'is of Ireland'.[40] Pearse does not convincingly elaborate a clear Irish sculptural aesthetics in his Gaelic League art writing, as the art historian Paula Murphy has noted.[41] It is nevertheless the contention of this chapter that Pearse's deliberate pairing of poetry and sculpture delineates a politically-charged Irish sculptural poetics that is deserving of further examination.

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[35] Pearse, 'The National Salon', 8.
[36] Pearse, 'The National Salon', 7.
[37] Matthew Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', 354.
[38] Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', 344.
[39] Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', 354.
[40] Pearse, 'The Art Revival', 1906, 7.
[41] See Paula Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture*, 5-6, 220-222; Murphy (ed.), *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume III: Sculpture 1600-2000* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), 16-20.

The art writing in *An Claidheamh Soluis* appropriates a language of sculpture articulated by George Russell, and to a lesser degree Yeats, in their early admiration of John Hughes and Oliver Sheppard. There are echoes of Russell's sentiment about the *Orpheus and Eurydice* of John Hughes, where, '[t]he refinements of an ideal denied earthly fulfilment hangs over almost all the best Celtic art and literature, for we are the inheritors of causes many times defeated'.[42] Despite Orpheus and Eurydice being part of a 'world-famous myth of ancient Greece', Russell's 1898 article contended that it was Hughes's evocation of 'fragile and subtle emotions' in the 'most concrete of all arts' that marked the work as distinctly Irish.[43] In turn, Pearse promotes an emerging school of Irish sculpture that might include Sheppard, Hughes, Willie Pearse, Albert Power and Michael Shortall, for whom the expression of an Irish soul in artworks lies beneath the actual sculpted bodies.[44]

According to Pearse, it was not the subject matter that marked their works as particularly Irish: 'That there is already an Irish School of Sculpture no one who walks through these rooms [the National Salon] can deny: it is not merely that Irish subjects are being treated of (that is altogether a minor point) but that an Irish mode of expression in sculpture is being evolved.'[45] While this 'Irish mode' in sculpture is not clearly delineated, it is differentiated from the British and French schools where several of these sculptors trained. The inter-arts and collaborative ambition of the revival towards overtly political ends is also stated in *An Claidheamh Soluis*. A brief article on 'The Future of Irish Art', insists upon Irish Republicanism's panaesthetic practice during the acquisition of artworks for Dublin by Hugh Lane: 'Mr. Lane and the Gaelic League are allies. We are bringing back the poet and the seanch-aidhe: he the sculptor and the painter'.[46]

The refinement of a sculptural-poetic pairing in the campaign for Irish independence extended far beyond Pearse's editorship of *An Claidheamh Soluis*. In *Vivid Faces* (2014), R.F. Foster has noted that many of the revolutionary generation were art school students, enrolled for a time at the DMSA, the RHA and above all St Enda's school, set up by Pearse in 1908 in Ranelagh and later Rathfarnham. The visual arts education of the rebels has too often been conflated or elided with the better known literary and theatrical interests of the rebel leaders. Connections in art schools and artistic circles brought together Maud Gonne, Constance Markievicz, Ella Young, Dora Sigerson, Patrick Tuohy, Seán Keating, Willie Pearse, Cesca Trench and Oliver Sheppard. Over thirty of the revolutionaries in the GPO attended or worked

[42] George Russell, 'The Art of John Hughes', 162.
[43] Russell, 'The Art of John Hughes', 163.
[44] Shortall, Power and Willie Pearse all studied at the DMSA under the tutelage of Hughes (1894-1902) or Sheppard (1902-1937).
[45] Pearse, 'The National Salon', 8.
[46] [Unsigned], 'The Future of Irish Art', *An Claidheamh Soluis*, January 25, 1908, 9.

at some stage in St Enda's, 'the nursery of the revolutionary generation', while five of the fifteen executed leaders of the Rising taught there.[47]

In December 1909 *An Macaomh*,[48] the St Enda's school magazine, featured a sonnet by Thomas MacDonagh 'To James Clarence Mangan' shortly after the unveiling of Sheppard's memorial:

> Poor splendid Poet of the burning eyes
> And withered hair and godly pallid brow,
> Low-voiced and shrinking and apart wert thou,
> And little men thy dreaming could despise.
> How vain, how vain the laughter of the wise!
> Before thy Folly's throne their children bow–
> For lo! thy deathless spirit triumphs now,
> And mortal wrongs and envious Time defies,
>
> And all their prate of frailty: thou didst stand
> The barren virtue of their lives above,
> And above lures of fame; – though to thy hand
> All strings of music throbbed, thy single love
> Was, in high trust, to hymn thy Gaelic land
> And passionate proud woes of Roisin Dubh.[49]

Mangan's defiance of 'Time' alludes to the Mangan memorial in St Stephen's Green, recently unveiled in its entirety by George Sigerson.[50] The 'Poor splendid Poet' was now immortalised in bronze, his Dark Rosaleen in white marble. MacDonagh nods to Sheppard's idealised bust with 'burning eyes', 'withered hair' and 'godly pallid brow' in the octave, while the sestet turns to the poet's 'single love', 'Roisin Dubh', set into the limestone pedestal. MacDonagh's tribute is a regular Petrarchan sonnet, yet the bifurcated form of the sonnet playfully mimics the shape of the Mangan memorial by placing the address to the 'Poor splendid Poet' in the first, or top, line of the octave and the naming of Roisin Dubh in the final, bottom line of the sestet.[51] The

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[47] R.F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890-1923* (London: Penguin, 2014), 43-45, 69. On St Enda's School see Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots: St. Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2004).

[48] *An Macaomh* (1909–10) was edited by Patrick Pearse and ran for just four issues. See Tom Clyde, *Irish Literary Magazines: An Outline History and Descriptive Bibliography* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003).

[49] Thomas MacDonagh, 'To James Clarence Mangan', *An Macaomh* (Nollaig, 1909), 19. Page 25 of the same magazine featured a reproduction of a statue to the Virgin Mary – *Mater Dolorosa* – by William Pearse.

[50] On the unveiling of the Mangan memorial see Turpin, *Oliver Sheppard*, 113-118.

[51] MacDonagh compared the emergence of the Irish *aisling* to the Elizabethan sonnet in England in the sixteenth century: 'Like the Elizabethan sonnet in England, of which many thousands were published between Sidney and Shakespeare, the Irish *aisling* became a craze.' Thomas MacDonagh, *Literature in Ireland (1916)* (Nenagh: Relay, 1996), 169.

sonnet is an example of MacDonagh's Irish mode of variable metre in an inherited English form, done badly.

In his posthumously published *Literature in Ireland* (1916) MacDonagh defines the 'Irish mode' in English-language poetry as 'more clear', 'direct', 'gem-like', and 'hard'.[52] MacDonagh is echoing one of Walter Pater's best-known sentences from *The Renaissance*: 'To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life', and Pater's most direct analogy between sculpting and writing verse: 'For in truth all art does but consist in the removal of surplusage, from the last finish of the gem-engraver blowing away the last particle of invisible dust, back to the earliest divination of the finished work to be lying somewhere, according to Michelangelo's fancy, in the rough-hewn block of stone'.[53] The sonnet has long been interpreted as the most sculptural of poetic forms because of its fixed shape and fourteen-line length, to which nothing can be added.[54] Michelangelo's notoriously intricate sonnets drove several translators to desperation, including Wordsworth who struggled to discern the fundamental matter from the surplusage: 'so much meaning has been put by Michael Angelo into so little room, and that meaning so excellent in itself that I find the difficulty of translating him insurmountable. I attempted at least fifteen of the sonnets but could not anywhere succeed.'[55] For all MacDonagh's discussions of an Irish rhythm and metre that were free or irregular, and proximate to the caricatured Arnoldian Celt, his use of the Petrarchan sonnet, so often chosen by Mangan, implies an embrace of measure in the modern Irish mode.[56] The articulation of verse as direct, clear, hard and gem-like, is acknowledged by MacDonagh in *Literature and Ireland* as a taxonomy of properties that laid to rest the myth of Irish verse 'as vague, mysterious, obscure.'[57]

Returning to the content of MacDonagh's sonnet 'To James Clarence Mangan', it is clear that Mangan is wholly conflated with his idealised sculptural likeness, and lives on *as* this

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[52] MacDonagh, *Literature in Ireland (1916)*, 79-80.

[53] Walter Pater, 'Style', *The Works of Walter Pater, Volume 5, Appreciations: with an Essay on Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 19-20. Pater is drawing on Michelangelo's own pared down definition of sculpture as 'an art which operates by taking away superfluous material'. See letter to Benedetto Varchi, *The Letters of Michelangelo*, trans. and ed. E. H. Ramsden (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 280.

[54] The sonnet is the form of choice for several of the most renowned nineteenth-century poems on sculpture: Shelley's 'Ozymandias' (1817), Keats's 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles for the First Time' (1817), Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'Greek Slave' (1850), Swinburne's 'Hermaphroditus' (1866), and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Sonnet on the Sonnet' (1881).

[55] Wordsworth letter to Sir George Beaumont, 17 October 1805, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: 1787–1805*, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 628-629.

[56] On MacDonagh's *Literature in Ireland* following an Arnoldian Celticism, see Matthew Campbell, *Irish Poetry under the Union*, 26-31. On the history of the modern Irish sonnet, see Alan Gillis, 'The Modern Irish Sonnet', *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Poetry*, ed. Fran Brearton and Alan Gillis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 568-587.

[57] Thomas MacDonagh, *Literature in Ireland (1916)*, 79.

monument turned 'throne' or shrine, where 'children bow'. It is perhaps for this reason that the poem's proximity and subtle reference to the unveiling of Sheppard's memorial has gone unacknowledged. There is a seamless and seemingly unproblematic verisimilitude underpinning MacDonagh's sonnet to Mangan and the Mangan memorial. It is consistent with a radical political strain of aesthetic contemplation wherein representations elide with the things or persons they represent. Further, the enduring monument will instruct succeeding generations, the public of frail 'little men' and children bowing before the 'deathless' bust. According to MacDonagh and Pearse, when Celtic sculpture enters the public sphere it assumes an unambiguous political purpose. The looming presence of a monumental statue, a vertical form larger than life, imposes itself upon everyday life in the city. Sculptural representations are interpreted by MacDonagh and Pearse as eternal and unchanging icons, and yet synonymous with the figure they represent. They provide an unequivocal account of what is past, passing or to come. In the case of Ireland campaigning for independence, they provide a live record of blood sacrifice and revolutionary violence.

As early as 1843, Thomas Davis articulated a model of Irish statuary as non-mimetic and radically didactic. Borrowing a phrase from Joshua Reynolds, 'the effect of the capital works of Michael Angelo is that the observer feels his whole frame enlarged',[58] Davis turned this idea to the founding of Irish national character through national art:

> Were all men cast in a divine mould of strength and straightness and gallant bearing, and all women proportioned, graceful, and fair, the artist would need no gallery […] Even then, as art creates greater and simpler combinations than ever exist in fact, he should finally study before the superhuman works of his predecessors. […] To give him a multitude of fine natural models, to say nothing of ideal works, it is necessary to make a gallery of statues or casts. The statues will come in good time, and we hope, and are sure, that Ireland, a nation, will have a national gallery, combining the greatest works of the Celtic and Teutonic races.[59]

The Davisite tradition in literature compounded in *The Nation*, forged an 'indissoluble link between literature and nationalism, and strengthened the idea that Davis promoted, while never fully adhering to, that literature and violent revolutions were inseparable.'[60] If Irish literary studies has long acknowledged Davis as its lodestar, Gary Owens and Geraldine Higgins have suggested a parallel 'Davisism in stone and bronze', where sculpture became the handmaiden

[58] Joshua Reynolds, 'Discourse V,' *Discourses on Art*, 83.
[59] Thomas Davis, 'National Art', *Sources in Irish Art: A Reader*, 65-70, 69-70.
[60] See David George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 3rd edn. (London: Routledge, 1995), 228-258, 231.

of politics in a belated period of Irish statumania, half a century after Davis's death.[61] The sculpture writing of the revolutionary generation in *An Claidheamh Soluis* and *An Macaomh* might be the clearest articulation of this Davis-inspired monumentalizing impulse.

This would become troubling sculptural-poetic territory for Yeats in the mid-1910s, and in the aftermath of the Easter Rising. This was a period in which the poet recalled, 'the dissolution of a school of patriotism that held sway over my youth'.[62] The frictionless verisimilitude of man and public monument was later parodied by Yeats in 'The Three Monuments', where statues to O'Connell, Parnell and Lord Nelson undermine the Free State's claims of 'purity', as timely reminders of marital infidelity immortalised in marble and bronze in Dublin's main thoroughfare. In 'The Statues', the speaker questions Pearse's appropriation of Cuchulain, later incarnated in bronze, for the revolutionary cause: 'When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side, / What stalked through the Post Office? What intellect, / What calculation, number, measurement, replied?'. In subsequent sections I want to propose Yeats's resistance to the didactic, immortal and reposeful public monument. In the concluding verse fragment of *The Death of Cuchulain*, discussed in Chapter One, Yeats complicates the view of statues as body doubles for the figures they represent. Instead public monuments are just one form in the diffuse transmigrations of a statesman's legacy or a mythic figure's many tales.

Pearse can help us to grasp what is at stake here, for what underpins this debate are two competing conceptions of public sculpture. According to Pearse, Irish sculptors have 'the power of fixing in bronze or marble, giving enduring expression' to the soul of Ireland and the cause of revolutionaries in the past, present and future. Sculpture's power is predicated on its historical endurance. Public monuments are unageing, their message unchanging with the passage of time. Yeats's 'subtler sources of national feeling than are in politics', similarly served as charged emblems or incarnations of Irish martyrdom, their subsequent statue as an eternal moral guide to posterity. Indeed in 1913 Pearse reiterated the need to rear 'the stateliest monument' to Wolfe Tone 'in the streets of his city' at a graveside tribute to the United Irishman.[63] By this stage, however, Yeats was beginning to disavow an Irish 'statumania' premised on the unageing and unidirectional monument.

Yeats's 'Easter, 1916' is a poem that questions, even as it embraces, the impulse to monumentalise and idealise Ireland's latest generation of martyrs. The Easter Rising

[61] Gary Owens, 'Nationalist Monuments in Ireland, c1870-1914: Symbolism and Ritual,' *Ireland: Art into History*, ed. Brian P. Kennedy and Raymond Gillespie (Dublin: Town House, 1994), 103-117, 117. Higgins, *Heroic Revivals*, 113.
[62] Yeats, 'Synge and the Ireland of his Time', *CWIV*, 227.
[63] Patrick Pearse, *Collected Works of Pádraic H. Pearse: Political writings and Speeches* (Dublin: Phoenix, 1916), 56

revolutionaries, after 'too long a sacrifice', are abstracted into stone amidst the abrasive 'living stream':

> Hearts with one purpose alone
> Through summer and winter seem
> Enchanted to a stone
> To trouble the living stream.[64]

The stone is utterly apart from the cycles of nature. The effects of light and the movement of sun and clouds are reflected in the stream but do not change the appearance of the stone. The flurry of animals around the static stone and plashing through the stream, do not alter the Republican icon either. The stone amidst the 'living stream', as Elizabeth Cullingford has noted, is the unrefined younger sibling of Yeats's 'weather-worn, marble triton / Among the streams', in 'Men Improve with the Years' (1916).[65] Yet it is not the sculptural suggestiveness of the stone in 'Easter, 1916', but its rough-hewn, abstract nature that is cause for closer examination. The petrifaction of the fanatic's heart is counter-poised by a recognition that its reception 'changes minute by minute'. The Republican ideal enacts a reverse-Pygmalion origin myth, solidifying into dead stone. As well as disclosing an ambivalent reaction to Republican politics, the poem indirectly addresses a Republican-Pearsian sculptural aesthetics, wherein revolutionaries aspire to the condition of sculpture. In 'Easter, 1916' this monumentalizing impulse, to be immortalised for posterity is embraced even as the speaker voices uncertainty about the fixity of Rising leaders' legacy. As the speaker in 'Meditations in Time of Civil War' intimates, 'only an aching heart / Conceives a changeless work of art'.[66]

Yeats's view of the later militants as 'hearts with one purpose alone […] enchanted to a stone', was not only inspired by Pearse and the Gaelic League's sculpture writing. However, in this section I have documented the fact that MacDonagh and Pearse were already employing a sculptural vernacular for a Republican *idée fixe* before the Easter Rising. There is an ambition to forge a revolutionary art practice that would anticipate but also participate in the making of an independent Irish state. In a letter to Elizabeth Corbet Yeats shortly after the Rising, Yeats reflected that he had long viewed Pearse, 'as a man made dangerous by the Vertigo of self sacrifice. He has *moulded* himself on Emmett.'[67]

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[64] *VP*, 393.
[65] Elizabeth Cullingford, *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 127-128.
[66] *VP*, 421.
[67] *CL InteLex*, 2935 [*italics mine*]: WBY to Elizabeth Corbet Yeats, 30 April 1916.

In a 1904 U.S. lecture, Yeats included Robert Emmet in his idiosyncratic great man theory of Irish history. Emmet embodied the 'ecstasy of self-sacrifice' found wanting in the constitutionalist meanderings of O'Connell and Parnell.[68] The speech to Irish Americans in New York closes by enumerating the advances of an Irish Revival across art forms and everyday life: poetry, the work of Douglas Hyde, the National Theatre, and Irish industries. Finally Yeats turns to the revival in stained-glass and sculpture, proposing that their practitioners should look to the example of Emmet as a 'saint of nationality', and not merely Catholic saints and biblical figures for their subjects: 'Beautiful windows are being made; young Irish sculptors are at work; and surely the people of Ireland will not be less devout because the windows of their cathedrals celebrate in beautiful colours saints who lived their lives in Ireland and for the people of Ireland and because the artists of Ireland sculptured for them St. Patrick or St. Brendan with Irish hands.'[69] This is an implicit call to represent in marble, bronze and coloured glass, the living men of Ireland's rebellions. Appropriately it would be the Irish American sculptor Jerome Connor who moulded the first statues to Robert Emmet from 1912 to 1917, at a time when a succeeding generation embraced the 'ecstasy', now 'vertigo', of self-sacrifice.[70]

Yeats was evidently complicit in a less nuanced and more explicitly political and nativist manifestation of monumentalism from the late 1890s to early 1910s. As I have shown, a 'Davisism in stone and bronze' can be traced to Davis's own writings on 'National Art', one that sets the foundations for a didactic and nationalist model of the public monument. When Yeats intimated that monuments to great men of the past offered 'guidance' to posterity in his 'Union of the Gael' speech, he was adhering to the view that the power of public monuments was predicated on their historical endurance and political inflexibility. In later years, this complicity motivated a complex negotiation of the mutability of Celtic mythic figures, statesmen's legacies, and the public monuments that represented each. In the next section, I will consider Parnell's monument as an exemplary instance of Yeats's shifting political stances and the ways in which these positions are retrospectively accommodated in the interpretation of icons or complex visual artworks over an extended period of time.

III

[68] Yeats, 'Emmet the Apostle of Irish Liberty', *CW X*, 101-115, 106. R.F. Foster has noted that the radical Fenian tone of Yeats's New York speech, like the 1898 'Union of the Gael' speech was undercut by his private uncertainties and unease. In a letter to Lady Gregory at the time of writing the speech, Yeats said 'I had no idea until I started on it how completely I have thought myself out of the whole stream of traditional Irish feeling on such subjects'. Quoted in *RF1*, 312-314.
[69] *CW X*, 113-114.
[70] Two of Connor's bronze Emmet statues were erected in the US, one in Stephen's Green, Dublin.

Yeats had something to say about almost every statue in Dublin, across his letters, prose and poems, but his multiple criticisms of the Parnell monument commission and finished statue are deserving of closer critical attention. A close reading of the reception history of the Parnell monument can recover the divergent political interpretations and appropriations of the man represented and his legacy, as well as the underacknowledged aesthetic and practical critiques of public statues that inform such diffuse responses. Before the Parnell monument was completed, a *United Irishman* editorial of 1903 took aim at the 'Parnell Commemoration Association' and 'procession mongers' for placing a plaster of Paris bust of Parnell beside his grave at Glasnevin cemetery. Arthur Griffith proposes a more minimalist and less monumental recognition of Parnell's grave: 'There is no statue over his grave. He needs none. The man who put his spirit into the slaves of the landlords and taught them they were men, can afford to leave his immortality more to history than to sculpture'.[71] Joseph Valente has noted that Sinn Fein's repeated denunciations of the commemoration group and plans for a funerary statue in the 1900s, betray their unease with lionizing Parnell, the former leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party.[72] When the sculptor Augustus Saint Gaudens immortalised Parnell in bronze a few years later, competing political parties and organisations turned to newspaper columns and magazine articles to interrogate the statesman's life and legacy.

From 1899 to 1900, Yeats and Russell attempted to persuade John Redmond and the Parnell monument committee to consider John Hughes for the Sackville Street commission. In an open letter to the *United Irishman*, printed 20 January 1900, Yeats criticised 'the disgraceful statues, erected to the memory of distinguished Irishmen in recent years', and proposed that 'the usual Dublin method for choosing a Sculptor must be changed'.[73] Yeats's writing assumes the vocabulary of several periodicals of the time in its advocacy of native artists. '[T]he matter should be in the hands of an expert Committee' as opposed to the tastes of the Lord Mayor of Dublin who reportedly visited the studios of several American sculptors to commission the statue of Parnell on O'Connell Street. As an alternative, '[t]he Committee might be asked to choose three or four Sculptors among whom Mr [John] Redmond and his Committee could pick out <whatever> a man <was most> to their mind should they not care to leave the matter wholly to the experts'. Yeats suggested that the sculptor, once chosen, should have free rein over the making of his monument, a method which 'produces better work than any competition

[71] Arthur Griffith, *United Irishman*, 3 June 1903, 2. Quoted in Joseph Valente, *Myth of Manliness*, 73.
[72] Valente, *Myth of Manliness*, 70-73.
[73] *CL2*, 490-492, 491

of designs'.[74] Despite Yeats and Russell's lobbying for Hughes, the committee opted for a sculptor with an international reputation; Augustus Saint-Gaudens, an Irishman who lived and worked for most of his life in America.

The Parnell monument was displayed at the Royal Hibernian Academy in August 1907, prior to its erection on Sackville Street, later renamed O'Connell Street. The *Freeman's Journal* praised the monument as something utterly distinct from the traditional monuments in Dublin, it was 'impressionist, vividly, daringly realistic'.[75] In *An Claidheamh Soluis*, however, Pearse compared Saint-Gauden's monument unfavourably to Sheppard's Revival sculpture: 'I think [Sheppard's] work gains by its proximity to the Parnell statue. There is a daemonic fire about the work of St. Gaudens that throws into admirable relief the best qualities of Sheppard's pieces. […] they will find the elusive qualities of grace and delicacy'.[76] Sheppard's sympathy for poetical sculpture, which he shared with Pearse, the Gaelic Leaguers and the St Enda's school group can be seen in his much later essay on Irish sculpture (1922). Sheppard similarly draws an unfavourable comparison between the Dublin monuments to men 'in ordinary clothes without a hat stuck up on a pedestal' and the idea, or ideal, that the figure stands for. Turning to the Parnell monument, Sheppard isolates the inscription, rather than its author, as 'a glorious subject for sculpture – the onward march of a nation, an everlasting source of inspiration & joy succeeding generations.'[77] These imaginative and poetical approaches to public sculpture projects, and not just a nativist strain in negative responses to monument commissions, must be appreciated in light of the historiography of Irish art writing. It is not Gaudens' residence in America during the execution of the monument that Pearse or Sheppard take umbrage to, but the daringly realistic representation of Parnell, when a more poetic, mythic monument to Irish nationalism might be erected in its place. There is a degree of abstraction both in political ambition and in terms of the visual arts, in the rejection of figural representations of real Irishmen in favour of sculpted 'dream-faces', and 'giving enduring expression […] to the most evanescent fancies'.[78]

Pearse's characterisation of the Parnell monument as comparatively graceless, indelicate and 'daemonic' in its monumental scale, speaks to another underappreciated aspect of aesthetic and practical critiques of public art: its obstructiveness. If the regal and imperial symbolism of

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[74] *CL2*, 491.
[75] Quoted in Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture*, 210.
[76] Pearse, 'The Oireactas Salon', 8.
[77] Sheppard, [Essay on Irish Sculpture], Appendix I.
[78] Pearse, 'The National Salon', 7. Compare, for example, the *Freeman's Journal* praise of the Parnell monument as 'impressionist, vividly, daringly realistic', with Pearse's earlier insistence that the new Irish sculpture would refute 'the mixture of impressionism and exaggerated realism which marks the incipient decline of French sculpture'. Quoted Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture*, 210.

monuments to British statesmen were anathema to Ireland in the campaign for independence and in the immediate aftermath, many statues were also undesirable for more mundane reasons like traffic congestion. Sculpture occupies or intervenes in real space, as Henry Moore insisted, it is a body defined by its 'displacement of space in the air'.[79] The Parnell monument, the O'Connell monument, and particularly Nelson's Pillar caused congestion along O'Connell Street. The obtrusiveness of Nelson's Pillar was cited repeatedly in later Free State Senate debates proposing its removal. Osmond T.G. Esmonde complained of the obstruction caused by John Hughes's monument to Queen Victoria outside the Irish Parliament buildings.[80] While it is a banal point compared to debates about sovereignty and the presence of imperial statesmen in post-independence or post-colonial nations, it is important to remember that statues are obstructive and obdurate material objects existing in three-dimensional space. And that this is an important qualification to more abstract debates about memorials.[81] In late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century Dublin there was a high premium on the real-estate of public squares, greens and streets.

Following the placement of Parnell monument's on Upper Sackville Street, *The Irish Builder and Engineer* dedicated several columns to an aesthetic and practical critique of the statue. The looming granite obelisk caused disruption to traffic at the junction of Sackville and Britain Streets and Saville Row: 'The site is singularly ill-chosen, and the monument now constitutes a very serious and wholly unnecessary obstruction to traffic in one of the most congested quarters of the city'.[82] A weekly illustrated comic, *The Lepracaun*, anticipated the traffic problems in a June 1908 cartoon featuring horses and carts colliding with one another and goods spilling everywhere around the monument to Parnell. The base of the statue reads 'Made in America' and advertisements are attached to each decoration of the statue. In its aesthetic assessment of the monument the *Irish Builder* defers to the former cartoon: 'On the whole, the statue is a fine piece of work and a good likeness of Parnell, but in treatment it verges somewhat upon the

[79] Henry Moore, 'The Sculptor Speaks', *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations*, 194.
[80] Oireactas Debates, 'Debate of 20 April 1934,' accessed 21 March 2017.
[81] In his introductory survey of the memorials and museums of Washington D.C. in *Multidirectional Memory*, Rothberg censures Walter Benn Michaels who complained that there was a federally funded Holocaust Museum on the Mall yet no memorials or means of commemorating African American slavery and segregation. Rothberg retorts by asking if 'Holocaust memory must literally be crowding the memory of African American history out of the public sphere of American collective consciousness […] Does collective memory really work like real-estate development?' Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 2. While Rothberg makes a compelling case for dynamic, non-competitive memory in the abstract, it is important to note that actual memorials and public sculptures really do take up space, exude a physical presence and often compete for the same prominent spaces.
[82] *Irish Builder*, 19 August 1911, 546. The journal contributor proceeds to propose rearranging all three of the major monuments on Sackville Street, O'Connell; Nelson's Pillar and Parnell, each of which was situated at an intersection and each of which caused congestion. The *Irish Builder* gave a lukewarm appraisal of the Parnell monument upon its early display in the RHA's Arts and Crafts exhibition, summer 1907. See [Anon], 'The Oireactas', *The Irish Builder and Engineer*, 24 August 1907, 586, 589.

grotesque. Our contemporary, *The Leprechaun*, admirably summed up the criticism in a capital cartoon, the shade of Parnell being made to say reflectively: 'Well, I never pretended to be the best dressed man in the House of Commons of my day; but great heavens! Surely I never wore trousers like those!'".[83]

The shade of Parnell assessing his own sculpted likeness, somewhat unfavourably, would be treated in verse by Yeats two years later. In 'To A Shade' (1913) the speaker addresses Parnell, more than twenty years after his death, to ask if he has returned to Dublin and seen Saint-Gaudens' monumental sculpture in bronze and granite:

> If you have revisited the town, thin Shade,
> Whether to look upon your monument
> (I wonder if the builder has been paid)
> Or happier-thoughted when the day is spent
> To drink of that salt breath out of the sea[84]

The poem is dated '*September 29, 1913*' while the monument was completed in 1907 and unveiled in 1911. The passing, parenthetical swipe at the lack of funds for Irish sculptural projects might echo Yeats's own discontent with the failed effort to commission the Wolfe Tone monument. The sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens died in August 1907, long before the monument was unveiled on Sackville Street, making the question, 'I wonder if the builder has been paid', an even more futile one by 1913. Crucially, Parnell is figured in both spectral and sculptural terms. The ghost or shade serves as a useful anachronism deployed in poetry and fiction to comment upon or challenge present-day social and political issues. The use of ghosts in fiction to provide subversive political and cultural commentary, has received extensive critical attention in recent 'spectralities studies'.[85] Just as a ghost or spectre enables anachronistc interventions, a statue animated or activated in verse *as* the person it represents, enables a contemporary critique by certain statesmen from beyond the dead. An even more polemical example is the intervention of 'the three old rascals' in Yeats's 'The Three Monuments' to undermine the Free State divorce debate, of which more later. In 'To a Shade', the shade of Parnell is paired with Hugh Lane in present-day Dublin through their mutual antagonist, the journalist William Martin Murphy: 'Your enemy, an old foul mouth, had set / The pack upon him'.[86] In a 1912 essay, 'The Shade of Parnell', written for a Trieste newspaper, James Joyce recounted the betrayal of Parnell by

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[83] *Irish Builder*, 19 August 1911, 546.
[84] *VP*, 292.
[85] See *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, ed. Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).
[86] *VP*, 292.

his kin in similar, predatory terms: 'In his final desperate appeal to his countrymen, he begged them not to throw him as a sop to the English wolves howling around them. It redounds to their honour that they did not fail this appeal. They did not throw him to the English wolves; they tore him to pieces themselves.'[87] Yeats's invocation of Parnell and shady historical parallels, did not end with his 1913 poem. By 1935, taking in a broader sweep of Irish political upheaval, Yeats could afford a more audacious tribute in 'Parnell's Funeral', which will be discussed in Chapter Three.

The various representations of Parnell as a statue and a ghost, had entered the popular imagination through illustrated magazines even before his death. During the Kitty O'Shea controversy, a *United Ireland* cartoon depicted Parnell as a white statue vandalised by the British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury and his nephew Arthur Balfour wielding buckets of black paint.[88] After his death, but still long before the Parnell monument was erected on Sackville Street, several cartoons repeated a trope of hero worship, depicting a marble bust of Parnell with Eire either despairing or roused to action beside it,[89] as a ghost directing Ireland towards independence,[90] and as a Romanesque conqueror in full garb.[91] Some of these caricatures might feed into Yeats's earliest unease with the reconfiguration of Parnell as blood sacrifice and hero to be worshipped, which he felt preceded and influenced the actions of the Easter Rising leaders.[92]

Yeats also changed his opinion about Parnell and the Parnell monument. Upon returning to the statue one day he discovered the gold embossed harp was 'transfigured […] a most beautiful symbol; it had ascended out of sentimentality, out of insincere rhetoric, out of mob emotion'.[93] In an address to American audiences, repeated from 1932 to 1933, Yeats returned once again to issues surrounding Saint-Gauden's monument, the cementing of Parnell as Ireland's tragic hero figure and the subsequent inauguration of Ireland's 'tragic phase':

> Everywhere I saw the change take place, young men turning away from politics altogether, taking to Gaelic, taking to literature, or remaining in politics that they might substitute for violent speech more violent action. Ten years later when St. Gaudens designed the memorial that stands now in O'Connell Street, he set round its base the ox heads and wreaths that commemorate the sacrificial victims of classical Rome. From that national humiliation, from the resolution to destroy all that made the humiliation

[87] James Joyce, 'The Shade of Parnell', *The Critical Writings of James Joyce* (London: Faber, 1959), 228.
[88] *United Ireland*, 11 January 1890.
[89] *United Ireland*, 17 October 1891; *United Ireland*, 9 January 1892, respectively.
[90] *Lepacaun*, May 1909, and *Lepracaun*, December 1910.
[91] *United Ireland*, 18 October 1892.
[92] For a detailed account of Parnell's political, cultural and literary afterlives see Valente, *Myth of Manliness*.
[93] Yeats, 'Ireland, 1921 – 1931', *CWX*, 230-233, 230.

> possible, from that sacrificial victim I derive almost all that is living in the imagination of Ireland today.[94]

The granite base of the Parnell statue features a series of ox-skulls and swags carved in bas-relief. The art historian Judith Hill has noted that the garlanded bucrania were derived from a decorative pattern on the upper wall of the nearby Rotunda building. If the classical motif was merely decorative on the Rotunda its placement on a statue to the 'uncrowned king of Ireland' revivifies the origins of the decorative style in Greco-Roman ritual sacrifice.[95] Acknowledging the embedded sacrificial elements of the sculpted ornaments and the sculpted orator, Yeats proceeds to consider a tragic phase of Irish history, one which would re-enact and re-appropriate Parnell's perceived martyrdom. The instigators of the Easter Rising had turned from the diplomacy of Parnell to violent action while re-narrating the character of Parnell as martyr above diplomat. In his commentary on 'A Parnellite at Parnell's Funeral' (1934), Yeats would write, 'the national character changed, O'Connell, the great comedian, left the scene the tragedian Parnell took his place […] his hands were full of blood because he had torn them with his nails'.[96] Yeats detects a myth of blood sacrifice encoded in the Parnell monument, just as literature and language after the event of Parnell's death might reemplot an independent Ireland achieved by self-sacrifice. Parnell's passionate, 'violent speech' could be co-opted as violent actions by the revolutionary generation, and the rise of Sinn Fein at the expense of the IPP could be a manifestation of violence *as* politics. Yeats contends that this counter-narrative was latent in visual art but unrealised until the onset of the Easter Rising.

In 'A General Introduction for My Work' (1937), written two years before his death, Yeats constructs a retrospective *ars poetica* for his life's work. The essay is ambitious in scale, '[v]irtually a prose poem in itself',[97] modulating between 'personal memoir, review of Irish political and cultural history, and exercise in speculative poetics'.[98] In an act of considerable revisionism, he reflects on his early arts movement that 'perished under the firing squads of 1916', his alienation from a revival project of his own design – 'Gaelic is my national language,

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[94] Yeats, 'Modern Ireland: An address to American audiences 1932-1933,' *Irish Renaissance: a gathering of essays, memoirs, letters and dramatic poetry from the 'Massachusetts review'*, ed. Robin Skelton and David R. Clark (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 13-25, 15.

[95] Hill, *Irish Public Sculpture*, 142. While the ox-skulls pattern attests to Saint-Gauden's efforts to integrate figure and surrounding architecture, Hill accepts that the skulls have 'an unexpectedly sinister aspect seen at close quarters on the Parnell monument'. See the biography of Augustus Saint-Gaudens in: Paula Murphy (ed.) *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume III: Sculpture 1600-2000*, 306-308. See also George Hersey, 'Architecture and Sacrifice' in *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture: Speculations on Ornament from Vitruvius to Venturi* (Michigan: MIT Press, 1988), 11-46.

[96] Yeats, 'A Parnellite at Parnell's Funeral', *VP*, 832-835, 835.

[97] Michael O'Neill. *A Routledge Literary Sourcebook on the Poems of W.B. Yeats* (London: Routledge, 2004), 30.

[98] Hugh Haughton. 'The Irish Poet as Critic', *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Poetry*, ed. Fran Brearton, Alan Gillis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 516.

but it is not my mother tongue' – and on those 'executed men' who usurped 'in Gaelic what we did or attempted in English'.[99] Borrowing a favourite formula from *A Vision*, Yeats's history of Ireland is recounted as an idiosyncratic art history, in this case revolving around the central conceit of a woven tapestry. All Irish life is concentrated in the ever-expanding and multi-layered textile: 'Behind all Irish history hangs a great tapestry, even Christianity had to accept it and be itself pictured there. Nobody looking at its dim folds can say where Christianity begins and Druidism ends'.[100] The palimpsestic tapestry of Irish history is not merely a record of past civilizations, characters and myths, it also anticipates alternative histories and serviceable models for hitherto inconceivable futures:

> I am told […] that my movement perished under the firing squads of 1916; sometimes that those firing squads made our realistic movement possible. If that statement is true, and it is only so in part, for romance was everywhere receding, it is because in the imagination of Pearse and his fellow soldiers *the Sacrifice of the Mass had found the Red Branch in the tapestry*; they went out to die calling upon Cuchulain[101]

If the Easter Rising and the subsequent shooting of its leaders gave rise to a cult of heroic sacrifice, Yeats insists that the archetypes were already latent and immanent in visual artworks. It took the imaginative phantasy of Patrick Pearse to find the red branch threaded and embedded in the rich tapestry that depicted the Eucharist on its surface. The artwork that Yeats's elaborate conceit hinges upon is thus subject to change through the passage of time, events and viewers. Yeats regrets that 'certain great political predecessors,' his Anglo-Irish heroes, 'Parnell, Swift, Lord Edward, have stepped back into the tapestry', where other figures of 'Irishry' have grown in importance and prominence upon the tapestry.[102] The strangeness of Yeats's tapestry analogy might be aligned with comparable recourses to the visual arts that occur in his work. The ornamental 'ox heads and wreaths' on the Parnell monument are changed utterly after the Easter Rising. Yeats's negotiation of competing political orthodoxies in Ireland, even when anathema to his own, are occasionally placed in a non-competitive relation through these curious verbal interpretations of visual artworks. The scale and scope of Yeats's 'General Introduction' has cemented the piece as his single most influential essay and one that has shaped our later readings of the poet. The impossible tapestry, I suggest, corresponds to Yeats's idiosyncratic interpretation of monumental public sculptures in Dublin, particularly the statue representing Parnell which the poet returned to and reinterpreted throughout his career.

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[99] Yeats, 'A General Introduction for my Work', *CWV*, 204-216, 208, 212.
[100] *CWV*, 207.
[101] *CWV*, 208, [*italics mine*].
[102] *CWV*, 209.

If the history of Ireland is configured as an impossible history painting in the 'General Introduction', it is necessary to explore the syncretic and ekphrastic ingenuity Yeats assumes on the part of the Rising rebels. His assertion that Pearse synthesized a Christian model of sacrifice with a Celtic, primordial archetype of blood sacrifice – deciphering the red branch in the Sacrifice of the Mass – is treated as predetermined in the underlying imagery and symbolism of the tapestry and Ireland's history. Indeed the great tapestry is a stratified depiction of Ireland from its Druidic origins, through its Christianization in the middle ages and then the syncretising of the two in modern Ireland: 'That tapestry filled the scene at the birth of modern Irish literature, it is there in the Synge of *The Well of the Saints*, in James Stephens, and in Lady Gregory throughout, in all of George Russell that did not come from the Upanishads'.[103] Yeats's tapestry is a veritable arboretum of rich foliage, including the red branch, the golden bough,[104] and a reference to 'The Gaelic League, made timid by a modern popularisation of Catholicism sprung from the aspidistra and not from the root of Jesse'.[105] This botanical imagery serves Yeats's description of an organic and ongoing undergrowth of different myths and histories, at times intertwining, while other divergent strands are rooted to the same source. The layering of history upon history has recently added to its stock the entry of Charles Stewart Parnell and Jonathan Swift, receding into the woods of the tapestry.[106]

By 1937, Yeats had 'hammered his thoughts into unity',[107] producing an ekphrastic contemplation of the *longue durée* of Irish history woven in his own image. I want to propose the palimpsest as an appropriate metaphor and mode of thinking about the ways in which 'multidirectionality' or non-competitive past and present interpretative frames can be accommodated in a single Yeatsian tapestry, memorial or public monument. In *Palimpsestic Memory* (2013) Max Silverman uses the trope of the palimpsest to adapt Michael Rothberg's model of multidirectional memory to Francophone literary and cinematic representations of the Holocaust and colonialism.[108] According to Silverman 'the poetics of palimpsestic memory can be the basis of a new politics of memory'.[109] In film, the overlay of ostensibly discrete images of

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[103] *CWV*, 208.
[104] Yeats's wordplay on 'Red Branch' and 'Golden Bough', disguises two highly charged symbols in both the popular and Yeatsian imaginations. The mythic tales of the Ulster Red Branch Knights in *The Táin*, and Frazer's transcultural, syncretic work *The Golden Bough*.
[105] *CWV*, 208.
[106] Similarly, at the close of 'Parnell's Funeral' the Cretan myth, as model for ritual blood sacrifice, is exchanged for a modern equivalent: 'Had even O'Duffy […] his master solitude; / Through Jonathan Swift's dark grove he passed, and there / Plucked bitter wisdom that enriched his blood' *VP*, 543. 'Parnell's Funeral' will be discussed at length in Chapter Three.
[107] Yeats, 'If I Were Four-and-Twenty', *CWV*, 34.
[108] Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 20-21.
[109] Silverman, *Palimspestic Memory*, 28.

violence, such as the Second World War and colonial atrocities in Algeria, do not suggest the exceptionalism of one or the other, nor do they chart a deterministic or linear trajectory. Rather, the multidirectional inscription of one scene of violence over the other challenges claims to a monopoly on suffering and haunts each historical act with a past and future of violence and concomitant guilt. The palimpsest is a particularly useful critical tool for understanding the dynamics of memory, and the multi-layered, interpretative contingencies of an artwork. In this model it is a non-linear and non-antagonistic temporal stratification of messages. A palimpsestic tapestry open to multiple interpretative frames would appear to be compatible with Rothberg's model of memory as something 'subject to ongoing negotiation, crossreferencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative'.[110]

In *Modernism, Ireland and the Erotics of Memory* (2002), Nicholas Miller uses the term 'counter-memorial' to describe the function of Cuchulain in Yeats's later poetry; as an ever-present figure raging against the model of Irish identity and the tradition into which he has been placed.[111] An appropriate analogy might be Geraldine Higgins's description of the proliferation of Irish sculpture in the late nineteenth century in response to the statues of British monarchs and statesmen occupying Dublin as 'a form of mimicry, counter chess pieces to the […] monuments of Victoria's reign'.[112] In this account, Yeats sets up statues in his poetry as counter chess pieces or photo-negatives of their original, resembling but resisting the monument's purpose in a particular time or place. This might be understood as a de-monumentalizing or even anti-monumentalizing impulse if the 'monument' is assumed to be the immortalization of a singular political ideology or agenda. However, this account requires qualification in the light of memory studies and recent reassessments of public and private memory as potentially non-competitive. While memorials and statues were erected to contrary identities in Ireland – British, Irish, Anglo-Irish, Imperialist, Unionist, Nationalist, Republican etc. – and indeed monuments competed for the same spaces in public squares, streets and parks, the statues and sculptures in Yeats's poetry can be understood as multiform, dynamic and contingent upon time and audience. As the tapestry metaphor in 'A General Introduction' suggests, the visual art objects in Yeats's poetry and prose are stratified with layers of meaning, inviting alternative interpretations and ideological frames with the passage of time. In turn, the Parnell monument, or Yeats's phantasy of the monument, is a site of multidimensional and multidirectional remembrance of the statesman and his legacy.

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[110] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 3.
[111] Nicholas Miller, *Modernism, Ireland, and the Erotics of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 138-147.
[112] Higgins, *Heroic Revivals*, 111-112.

IV

Statues are riven between permanence and transience in Yeats's later political poems. 'Easter, 1916' constructs and effaces, in equal measure, a new iconography of Republican sacrifice. Beyond meditations on the *realpolitik* of post-Easter Rising Ireland, it is the poem's 'anomalous third stanza',[113] depicting the cycles of nature that turn to material durability and duration:

> Hearts with one purpose alone
> Through summer and winter seem
> Enchanted to a stone
> To trouble the living stream.
> The horse that comes from the road,
> The rider, the birds that range
> From cloud to tumbling cloud,
> Minute by minute they change;
> A shadow of cloud on the stream
> Changes minute by minute;
> A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
> And a horse plashes within it;
> The long-legged moor-hens dive,
> And hens to moor-cocks call;
> Minute by minute they live:
> The stone's in the midst of all.[114]

In *The Living Stream* (1994), Edna Longley writes that the '[s]tone, for Yeats, signifies monistic fixity […] He contrasts the stone with another image, 'the living stream', which signifies the flux of life and history'. Longley goes on to state that in 'Easter, 1916', 'the fluidity of Yeats's own medium, its metaphoric and metamorphic powers, suggests that the Nationalist icon may stand still, while 'the living stream' moves on'.[115] This has proved to be an influential reading of Yeats's poetry, whereby the self-reflexive poem operates like the living stream, flowing against the rigidity of its subject matter, in this case the 'Nationalist icon'. The poem intimates retrospective and reflexive considerations of the historical events it records, through the passage of time. Longley's reading of 'Easter, 1916' suggests a peculiar Irish *paragone* in the dichotomy of fluid words and static image: 'It might also be said that words argue with symbol by proving

[113] Helen Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 198.
[114] *VP*, 393.
[115] Edna Longley, *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1994), 83.

themselves more flexible'.[116] It is out of the quarrel between word and image that Yeats's most iconic and iconoclastic poem emerges. According to Longley, in stanza three, 'The pulse of the lines breaks out of the *mausoleum* imposed by Pearse's belief that 'life springs from death".[117] By embodying the flux of the living stream, Yeats's poem at-large 'subverts the stony predetermined repetitions of the Davisite ballad', and the natural life-cycles are set utterly apart from the rebels' petrifaction.[118] In Longley's view, the poem enacts political revisionism as the verbal fracture of Republican icons. This chapter has suggested that stones and statues in Yeats's poetry often do not signify monistic fixity or stillness, even when this is the express wish of their sculptors or the intent behind their presentation in public squares and historically significant sites. Rather, Yeats's resistance to monumentality invites a reading of public monuments as historically contingent; subject to time and audience. It is not a rebuttal to Longley, whose revisionist perspective on 'Easter, 1916' encourages a nuanced approach to Yeats's divided loyalties and his pursuance of dialectical conflict through poetry, particularly after the Easter Rising. In accordance with Longley's formulation of 'Easter, 1916' it might be said that the stone troubles the living stream, but it does not remain fixed and unchanging, it too is shaped, perhaps even eroded, *by* the living stream.

The stone of 'Easter, 1916' bears a familial resemblance to another poem composed by Yeats in the summer of 1916, 'Men Improve with the Years'. In the eighteen-line poem from *The Wild Swans at Coole* the poet twice refers to himself as a living statue:

> I am worn out with dreams;
> A weather-worn, marble triton
> Among the streams;
> And all day long I look
> Upon this lady's beauty
> […]
> O would that we had met
> When I had my burning youth!
> But I grow old among dreams,
> A weather-worn, marble triton
> Among the streams.[119]

The poem begins and ends with the speaker's self-depiction as a crumbling statue of the Greek god Triton. Written in July 1916, the poem is typically interpreted in relation to Yeats's failed

[116] Longley, *The Living Stream*, 84.
[117] Longley, *The Living Stream*, 83, [*italics mine*].
[118] Longley, *The Living Stream*, 83.
[119] *VP*, 329.

courting and multiple proposals to the twenty-one-year-old Iseult Gonne; Yeats was fifty-one at the time of the poem's composition. Given the poem's proximity to the composition of 'Easter, 1916', the image of a marble statue in the midst of a stream also corresponds with Yeats's metaphor of the 'stone' that troubles 'the *living* stream'. In *Gender and History*, Elizabeth Cullingford suggests that the speaker's depiction of himself petrified within a stream means that he, like the leaders of the Easter Rising, has been 'enchanted to a stone' because of his dreaming.[120] The speaker's growing old or worn out in dreams is metaphorized as an erosion or material degrading, 'weather-worn […] among the streams', yet the image is somewhat distinct from the stone of 'Easter, 1916'. It might be misleading to presuppose the monumental fixity and unchangeable quality of the stone statue of Triton, or to equate the ideological fixity of the Easter Rising rebels after death in 'Easter, 1916' with the speaker's dejection and dreaming in 'Men Improve with the Years'. Yet the speaker's dreaming cannot stave off decay and ageing, just as the rebels' dreams and abstractions are known well 'enough / To know they dreamed and are dead'.[121]

The speaker of 'Men Improve with the Years' is 'worn out with dreams', and 'grow[s] old among dreams', in a process of ageing or deterioration that is made analogous with the sculpture's weather-worn quality; the process of erosion or material degrading that the statue experiences 'among the streams'. If the poet-speaker has aged because of his own dreaming there is the suggestion that the marble triton has been weathered and eroded by its own streams. That is to say, 'the weather-worn marble triton *among the streams*' might be a fountain rather than a stand-alone statue.[122] Bernini's famous *Fontana del Tritone* in Rome, which jets water from its mouth through a sculpted sea-shell, inspired multiple reproductions and imitations. In the nineteenth century Triton fountains were sculpted in the gardens of Powerscourt House in County Wicklow and Regent's Park in London. Another possible touchstone for the 'weather-worn *marble* triton' of Yeats's poem might be Bernini's marble statue *Neptune and Triton*, depicting Triton, the son of Neptune, beneath his father carrying a conch. While this Bernini sculpture became a permanent fixture of the Victoria & Albert Museum[123] after 1786, it was originally part of an elaborate, outdoor water feature in the gardens of the Villa Montalto in Rome. A drawing of the large oval-basin fountain, showing its various jets of water and a waterfall in the centre,

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[120] Cullingford, *Gender and History*, 127-128.
[121] *VP*, 394.
[122] In *Gnomon* (1958), Hugh Kenner contends that the weather worn triton is 'amid the fountains of Major Gregory's mother's garden'. Hugh Kenner, *Gnomon: Essays on Contemporary Literature* (New York: Obolensky, 1958), 16. Kenner does not provide a reference to a particular fountain formerly on Lady Gregory's estate. However, another Anglo-Irish 'big house', and one of the few to survive the Irish Civil War; Powerscourt estate in County Wicklow, features a nineteenth-century imitation of Bernini's Triton fountain.
[123] The sculpture was purchased by Joshua Reynolds in 1786 and moved to the V&A in London.

depicts Bernini's *Neptune and Triton* statue as the centrepiece of the pool, placed on top of the waterfall. The qualification that Yeats's 'weather-worn, marble triton / Among the streams' might refer to a fountain rather than a stand-alone sculpture is an important one. The speaker's self-portrait in the poem consequently reads as an inversion of the fountain of youth myth where the elements are set in opposition; the speaker's '*burning* youth' is extinguished by the streams in old age.[124]

The fountain is a particularly magnetic subject across Yeats's poetry and prose. 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' and Yeats's recollection of Innisfree were supposedly inspired by seeing and hearing a fountain in a shop-window on Fleet Street. In *Discoveries* (1906) Yeats likened art to a fountain, advocating its appeal to the senses: 'Art bids us touch and taste and hear and see the world, and shrinks from what Blake calls mathematical form, from every abstract thing, from all that is of the brain only, from all that is not a fountain jetting from the entire hopes, memories, and sensations of the body'.[125] Yeats stresses a need for palpability or tactility in art. However, in 'Men Improve with the Years' the speaker's self-portrait is less elevated. Nicholas Grene considers the poem to be foremost among a distinguished list of 'male menopause poems' in Yeats's *oeuvre*.[126] In the 'Dove or Swan' chapter of *A Vision* (1925) Yeats notes, perhaps with dismay, the multitude of Neptune and Triton fountains emerging in the Christian world. He writes that, with the arrival of Christianity, 'Classical mythology has become an artificial ornament […] Christendom keeps a kind of spectral unity for a while, now with one, now with the other element of synthesis dominant; declamatory statues deface old Churches, innumerable Tritons and Neptunes pour water from their mouths'.[127] The ornamental fountain sculpture is a feature of decadent art in Renaissance Italy, far removed from the ideal sculpture of Ancient Rome. Similarly, the speaker's self-portrait as a fountain feature in 'Men Improve with the Years' is far from self-aggrandizing.

The ageing and destruction of sculpture in poetry have long been employed for political commentaries as well as personal commentary. In Shakespeare's Sonnet LV, 'the gilded monuments / Of princes' are 'besmear'd with sluttish time', while the speaker's beloved 'shall shine more bright in these contents' and in 'this powerful rhyme'.[128] Politically subversive readings of the monument typically oscillate between material and representation in an account that undercuts the figure's intimations of immortality. Shelley's 'Ozymandias' asserts the multi-

[124] *VP*, 329.
[125] *CW IV*, 212.
[126] Nicholas Grene, *Yeats's Poetic Codes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 67.
[127] Yeats, *AVA*, 170.
[128] William Shakespeare, 'Sonnet 55', *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2010), 221.

faceted and politically protean nature of the statue through its incremental disintegration. As James Heffernan notes of the statue in Shelley's poem, 'the standing legs recall the self-assertive majesty of the original monument while the shattered, half-sunk visage looks ahead to its final oblivion – its ultimate levelling – in 'the lone and level sands".[129] If the statue's political power is predicated on its historical endurance as a looming, intimidating monument, it is the *longue durée* of the statue's afterlife as decaying sandstone and ultimately sand that undercuts the hubris behind its erection.

In Yeats's 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', a comparable contemplation of monuments and their inevitable ruin operates as a metaphor for the political idealism of a former age. The first stanza of part I refers to a series of Greek monuments including the image of Athena carved in olivewood that stood in the Acropolis of Athens, and more obliquely Phidias' famed chryselephantine *Athena Parthenos*, carved in ivory and adorned with elaborate gold ornaments.[130] In a characteristic Yeatsian move, the poem imagines ancient monuments, the *Athena Parthenos* or Callimachus' handiwork in 'Lapis Lazuli', that have been destroyed and exist only in written records and ostensive reproductions:

> Many ingenious lovely things are gone
> That seemed sheer miracle to the multitude,
> Protected from the circle of the moon
> That pitches common things about. There stood
> Amid the ornamental bronze and stone
> An ancient image made of olive wood –
> And gone are Phidias' famous ivories
> And all the golden grasshoppers and bees.[131]

The reposeful sculptures in bronze, stone, olive wood, gold and ivory are set against the perpetual revolutions of the moon 'that pitches common things about'. Despite the apparent fixity and durability of these monuments, each *ottava rima* stanza of part I records the inevitable destruction of many fixed structures and institutions. The 'ancient image made of olive wood' and 'Phidias' famous ivories' are imperilled by revolutionaries, and in the sixth stanza the speaker fears the 'Incendiary or bigot', willing 'To burn that stump on the Acropolis / Or break in bits the famous ivories.'[132] In these lines the iconoclasts' attention to the materiality of the object, and an evacuation of any higher symbolic significance possessed by the object, precipitates its

[129] Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 117.
[130] Catherine Paul and Margaret Harper note the Athena Parthenos allusion in 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' in their annotations to *AVB*, 439n13.
[131] *VP*, 428.
[132] *VP*, 430.

destruction. The 'ancient image made of olive wood' in the opening stanza becomes merely a 'stump' burnt on the Acropolis in the final stanza. Without fealty or fidelity to the political or spiritual figure represented by the monument, the revolutionary turns to the material composition of the object and the means of its destruction. Wood can be burned, ivory can be broken and one can trade or 'traffic in the grasshoppers or bees' made of gold.[133] Yeats was perhaps aware that the *Athena Parthenos* actually functioned as a gold reserve for the city of Athens; her golden drapery and ornaments were removable and could be melted down into bullion in times of crisis.[134]

In the second stanza, Yeats frames established laws, conventions and constitutions as analogous to the monuments of past civilisations. There is a similar anxiety that the wisdom of the ancients has been effaced or erased by 'the worst rogues and rascals' in the midst of civil strife:

> We too had many pretty toys when young;
> A law indifferent to blame or praise,
> To bribe or threat; habits that made old wrong
> Melt down, as it were wax in the sun's rays;
> Public opinion ripening for so long
> We thought it would outlive all future days.
> O what fine thought we had because we thought
> That the worst rogues and rascals had died out.[135]

Long-established laws, habits and public opinions, which the speaker thought 'would outlive all future days', are remembered as inadequate 'pretty toys' of youth, not unlike the ephemeral, 'ingenious lovely things' of the opening stanza. In *The Political Aesthetic* (1991), Michael North interprets the second stanza as a nostalgic recollection of peace-time democracy, faith in 'enlightened public opinion', and the consequent recognition in time of civil war that this democratic polity contained the seeds of its own destruction: 'civil war appears as the actual outcome of democracy, its discord just the reflex of a uniformity of mind more coercive, more complete, than that of any other system'.[136] The sculptural analogy that underlies these impulses to nation-building is premised on the impermanence and vulnerability of the sculpted object to acts of vandalism, violence and iconoclasm. In the second stanza, Phidias' durable white ivories

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[133] Early drafts of the opening stanza are clearer that the golden grasshoppers and bees are part of Phidias' *Athena Parthenos*: 'And gone are Phideas' carven ivories / And all his golden grasshoppers and bees'. *The Tower (1928) Manuscript Materials*, ed. Richard Finneran (London: Cornell University Press, 2007), 217.
[134] See Richard T. Neer, *The Emergence of the Classical Style in Greek Sculpture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 101.
[135] *VP*, 428.
[136] Michael North, *The Political Aesthetic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 58-59.

are replaced with melting wax in the speaker's undesirable alchemy. Solid objects are recast in fluid states to underscore their transience and mutability, melting 'in the sun's rays' or trafficked as goods or currency by 'incendiary or bigot'. Similarly, in Part I of 'Meditations in Time of Civil War', an ascendancy class living in ancestral houses are mocked for their delusions of an eternal lineage aligned to material fetishes: 'some powerful man / Called architect and artist in, that they, […] might rear in stone / The sweetness that all longed for night and day / […] maybe the great-grandson of that house, / For all its bronze and marble, 's but a mouse'.[137]

These meditations on sculptural materials, the decline and destruction of former monuments can be connected to Walter Benjamin's definition of 'the ruin' in architecture and the plastic arts. In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 'ruins' provide the shock of vanishing materiality before our eyes that lays waste to grandiose ideas and utopian designs. 'Whereas romanticism inspired by its belief in the infinite, intensified the perfected creation of form and idea in critical terms', Benjamin sees in fragments of sculpture and ruins of architecture an 'irresistible decay' in which, '[t]he false appearance of totality is extinguished. For the *eidos* disappears, the simile ceases to exist, and the cosmos it contained shrivels up'.[138] Benjamin cites Johann Joachim Winckelmann on the fragmented Belvedere Torso in Rome, where the art historian trades high-minded, academic criticism for close-looking and longing at ruins: 'it is evident in the un-classical way he goes over it, part by part and limb by limb. […] the image is a fragment, a rune. Its beauty as a symbol evaporates'.[139] In political terms, ruins alert us to the material and a grounded, imperfect *realpolitik*, in place of abstractions and metaphorical lofty things.

Returning to 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', the poem might be understood as a simultaneous paean to and mocker of aestheticized nation-building. The immense, and potentially inconceivable, changes in time of civil war or revolution can be apprehended as the destruction of monuments and fine artworks. The 'monument' serves as an appropriate analogy for the political ideas that built up the state. But under the infirm foundations of 'ingenious lovely things' all that is solid melts into air:

> He who can read the signs nor sink unmanned
> Into the half-deceit of some intoxicant

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[137] *VP*, 418.
[138] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977), 176. On the application of Benjamin's theory of ruins to the plastic arts and architecture see Douglas Murphy, *The Architecture of Failure*, London: Zero Books, 2012, 41-42; James Boaden, 'Peculiar pleasure in the ruined Crystal Palace', *After 1851: The Material and Visual Cultures of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham*, eds. Kate Nichols and Sarah Victoria Turner, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017, 143-158.
[139] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 176.

From shallow wits; who knows no work can stand,
Whether health, wealth or peace of mind were spent
On master-work of intellect or hand,
No honour leave its mighty monument,
Has but one comfort left: all triumph would
But break upon his ghostly solitude.[140]

Part I of 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' consists of six stanzas of eight lines, marshalled in rhyme and metre into the *ottava rima*. It is Yeats's first experiment in *ottava rima* stanzas, despite the poem's placement after 'Sailing to Byzantium', 'The Tower', and 'Meditations in Time of Civil War' in *The Tower* collection.[141] Helen Vendler notes that the eight-line stanza is 'formally linked, by its pentameter width, to other substantial blocks of rhymed pentameter. Its closest relative is the octave of the courtly Italian sonnet, its next-closest the seven-line "aristocratic" rhyme royal'. Vendler suggests that the 'rhymed pentameters' of Yeats's *ottava rima* poems brings them into the tradition of the 'sacred song: ode, choral commentary, public hymn', and adds that the *ottava rima*, far from being in the mock-heroic vein of Lord Byron, is 'Yeats's senatorial form'.[142] I want to query the sustainability of this contention by closely examining 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen'. What Vendler and others consider to be Yeats's innovations in *ottava rima*, departing from its recent history as a parodic, mock-heroic form and revivifying its elevated 'senatorial' status will be challenged by attending to Yeats's earliest deployment of the stanza form.

In *Yeats and Violence* (2010), Michael Wood suggests that the *ottava rima* section of 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' achieves a closure of sound and sense, rounding out part I with repeated words and recurring end rhymes: 'with *found* and *found* Yeats offers us what Paul Muldoon calls 'perfect rhyme', i.e. repetition. Going one step further Yeats ends this whole part not only with the same rhyme as in his opening stanza but with the same words: *ivories, bees*. We are back where we started'.[143] That might be true in terms of the poem's form, but its contents; the social lives of the materials and sculptures within the poem have moved on. The perfect rhymes of 'found' occur in contrary contexts. In the midst of civil strife the speaker asks 'But is there any comfort to be *found*?' only to give up on the folly of being comforted in the final four lines because:

Incendiary or bigot could be *found*

[140] *VP*, 429.
[141] For a comprehensive list of Yeats's *ottava rima* poems see Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 290.
[142] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 263.
[143] Michael Wood, *Yeats and Violence*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 112.

To burn that stump on the Acropolis,
Or break in bits the famous ivories
Or traffic in the grasshoppers or bees[144]

The ivories and bees end rhyme from the opening stanza does indeed recur. However, as noted above, the objects have changed from hallowed sculpture to exchangeable currency. I want to suggest that the critical assumption that Yeats uses *ottava rima* exclusively for its 'Renaissance Aura' of order and unity,[145] and not for its post-Byronic mockery of those same virtues, owes much to a disregard for the material objects within the poems, and what they do in and *to* the strictures of the form.

'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' is not *ottava rima* through and through. Each of the six parts adopts a different form. In part V, just as 'the sea-wind' destroys the 'handiwork of Callimachus' in 'Lapis Lazuli', Yeats acknowledges that the winds of change level all monuments erected by the great, the wise and the good. The lavish pentameters, prosodic symmetries, and *ottava rima* masonry of part I are stripped bare:

Come let us mock at the great
That had such burdens on the mind
And toiled so hard and late
To leave some monument behind,
Nor thought of the levelling wind.[146]

The *ababb* rhyme scheme is disrupted by the 'levelling wind' of the final line. Following 'mind' and 'behind', 'wind' provides merely an eye-rhyme. In *Our Secret Discipline*, Vendler remarks that the whole of part V of 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' is a very peculiar form, adding an extra fifth line to stanzas that would otherwise appear to be a ballad form rhyming *abab*. The four-line single stanza of part IV assumes the *abab* ballad form that part V immediately contorts. Vendler notes that 'the "extra" fifth line serves as commentary, undoing what the first four lines have established: the great toiled, but they never "thought of the levelling wind"'.[147] The line 'Nor thought of the levelling wind' unravels the stanza's claims to immortality or imparting wisdom to posterity through monument-making. An asymmetric rhyme scheme and aslant rhymes underscore the fragility of the monument. And nation-building by sculptural metaphors is ruefully undercut by the forces of nature.

144 *VP*, 430 [*italics mine*].
145 Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 262.
146 *VP*, 432.
147 Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 74.

At this stage, the internal rhymes and repetitions of words or images that Michael Wood suggests send us back to the beginning, deserve further examination:

> Mock mockers after that
> That would not lift a hand maybe
> To help good, wise or great
> To bar that foul storm out, for we
> Traffic in mockery.[148]

The metanarrative structurally implied by the repetitions of 'mock' across part V returns us to the opening of 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', and to the grandiose delusions that raised and repurposed a new monument from the '*mock*-heroic' octave form. In Part V, heroic virtues are made a mockery of, one after another: 'Come let us mock at the great', 'Come let us mock at the wise', 'Come let us mock at the good', 'Mock mockers after that'.[149] 'Trafficking in mockery' recalls the incendiaries and bigots in part I who melted down and trafficked in the golden grasshoppers and bees. Far from a simple sculptural analogy to poetic form emerging in 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen', the repetitions of 'mock' in a passage recounting a litany of heroic virtues, acknowledges as it deflates the advent of a heroic *ottava rima* form, insisting upon its recent mock-heroic past. Yeats's first experiment in *ottava rima* is arguably his most self-reflexive and meta-structural.

As Andrew Wynn Owen has noted of Romantic period experiments in the eight-line form, 'Ottava rima proved itself adaptable both to Shelley's ideas of orderly theorisation and to Byron's disorderly antisystematising impulse'.[150] For the second-generation Romantics, the opposition of interlocking sestet rhymes *ababab* and an abrupt resolution in a rhyming couplet *cc* offered a range of possibilities, both comic and serious. For Yeats, in turn, the *ottava rima* cannot be singularly defined as heroic or mock-heroic, 'senatorial' or thoroughly undiplomatic. The rhyming couplets can affix an aural closure as we see in 'The Statues' after the 'filthy modern tide', where the Irish, 'Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace / The lineaments of a plummet-measured face'.[151] Contrarily the closing couplets in 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' can bely the pretentions that preceded them: 'And planned to bring the world under a rule, / Who are but weasels fighting in a hole.'[152] The ottava-rimic cadences can be 'hammered into unity' or hastily unravelled.

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[148] *VP*, 432.
[149] *VP*, 432.
[150] Andrew Wynn Owen, 'Order and Disorder in the Ottava Rima of Shelley and Byron', *Essays in Criticism* 67:1, (2017), 1-19, 8.
[151] *VP*, 611.
[152] *VP*, 429.

Peter McDonald's discussion of 'Yeats's Poetic Structures' in *Serious Poetry* (2002) provides an illuminating model for the ambivalent relationship between Yeats's poems and the material objects they seek to represent. Considering the Coole Park poems as works that meditate on, and take the place of, architectural forms, McDonald raises the possibility that 'ruin is a necessary condition of Yeats's specifically poetic structure, so that poems do not imitate the forms of building and order, but rather replace these forms with their own ideal and rhetorical shapes'.[153] These poetic forms win out by departing from the architecture or sculpture's apparent fixity, adapting its decomposition both thematically and formally.[154] McDonald acknowledges that the parallel between architectural structures and poetic form 'puts an immediate metaphorical strain on the vocabulary of poetic structure', as his *reductio ad absurdum* demonstrates: 'houses don't (or shouldn't) have impulses towards disintegration'. Yet McDonald accepts that these parallels are both appealing and potentially fruitful when understood as bearing a unique relation to the destabilising capacity of poetic form. For Yeats 'any disintegrative impulse […] is part of a drive towards some more enduring structure'.[155] In McDonald's account, the more enduring structure is invariably poetic form. Parts I and V of 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' might validate this assertion as the poem provides a living record of the decomposing or destroyed monuments. However the departure from fixed, traditional forms such as the *ottava rima* (Part I) and ballad (Part IV-V) that transpires with the destruction or erosion of sculpture in 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen' demonstrates a clear parallel, bordering on symbiosis, between the sculptural form and poetic form that does not necessarily afford poetry a more enduring or immortalising capacity.

V

Others in Ireland were comparably engaged in reflections on sculpture at this time of political turbulence and transformation. There was a fascination with fragmented and out-of-place statues in the aftermath of Irish independence and civil war. In an article of 1927 for the *Irish Statesman*, C.P. Curran writes of Dublin's 'Statues of the air', which were, 'etherealised by the nibbling of the incessant winds, these frail, fine-drawn beings grow daily more diaphanous'.[156] The weather-worn statues atop the Four Courts dome are admired because they have endured

[153] Peter McDonald, *Serious Poetry: Form and Authority from Yeats to Hill* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 53.
[154] In 'Lapis Lazuli' the transience of the sculpture, and all sculptures, is synecdochical of the inevitable collapse of various civilizations: '*All* things fall and are built again, / And those that build them again are gay' *VP*, 566 [*italics mine*].
[155] McDonald, *Serious Poetry*, 53-54.
[156] C.P. Curran. 'On Statues in the Air', *Irish Statesman*, 24 September 1927, 55-56, 56.

'the shell fire and mines which reduced unbending judges beneath them to cheese'. Curran is referring to the bombing of Four Courts during the Irish Civil War which reduced much of the court house and several statues of judges to rubble. The fragile statues that survived, albeit fractured and fragmented, are a live record of the vicissitudes the place endured. Or rather, the bombardment is recorded *through* their more diaphanous features, it is part of the event-history of the statues in the air. Their delicate balance between permanence and transience is emphasised by the destruction of their surroundings and the changes to, or loss of, their original settings. According to Curran, the choice of allegorical figures of 'Justice' and 'Valour' atop Dublin Castle now seems slightly anachronistic, while the statue of 'Fortitude' on the roof of the old Anglo-Irish parliament turned Bank of Ireland bears an unwanted irony in the newly independent Ireland.[157] Statues on the ground face an even more precarious existence as Curran acknowledges. After the vicissitudes of the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War on the streets of the capital, 'only statues of martyrs might endure there. Statues of the milder saints and figures of the less heroic virtues had to seek another sphere'.[158]

The monuments to monarchs and British statesmen became fugitive objects in the Irish Free State.[159] Equestrian statues to William III on College Green, and George II in Stephen's Green were destroyed by bombs in 1928 and 1937, respectively.[160] In a December 1931 issue of *The Evening Herald*, a contributor writes, 'Nelson, Queen Victoria and other British statues are ancient monuments, trophies left behind by a civilisation which has lost the eight centuries battle. The hand that touches one of them is the hand of an ignoramus and a vandal'.[161] In a short, perambulatory poem, 'Dublin', Louis MacNeice notes the out of place 'Nelson on his pillar / Watching his world collapse'.[162] MacNeice's Lord Nelson in the late 1940s is cursed to eternal life like the Cumaean Sibyl; man and monument persist through centuries and countries beyond their own. Nelson would eventually be toppled from his pillar when a bomb was

[157] Curran. 'On Statues in the Air', 55.
[158] Curran. 'On Statues in the Air', 55.
[159] On the classification of sculptures as 'fugitive objects' see Catriona Macleod, *Fugitive Objects: Sculpture and Literature in the German Nineteenth Century* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2013); see also Michael Hatt, 'In Search of Lost Time: Greek Sculpture and Display in Late Nineteenth-Century England', *Art History*, 36, 4, September 2013, 768-783.
[160] In a letter to the *Irish Times* on 13 May 1937, Yeats bemoaned the destruction of the equestrian statue to George II: 'I would go into mourning but the suit I kept for funerals is worn out. Our tom fools have blown up the equestrian statue of George II in St. Stephen's Green, the only Dublin statue that has delighted me by beauty and elegance. Had they blown up any other statue in St. Stephen's Green I would have rejoiced.' Yeats, 'To the Editor of the Irish Times', 13 May 1937, *CL IntelLex* 6929. He wrote to Dorothy Wellesley the following day, hoping his letter to the *Times* 'may insure the re-erection of the statue. I am I beleive its sole admirer but I have always delighted in it.' Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley, 14 May [1937], *CL IntelLex*, 6931.
[161] *The Evening Herald*, 12 December 1931.
[162] Louis MacNeice, *The Collected Poems of Louis MacNeice*, ed. E.R. Dodds (London: Faber, 1979), 163.

detonated at the site by a Republican splinter group, Saor Uladh, in 1966.[163] Thomas MacGreevy's poem 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' turns to sculptural renderings of pagan gods on the eighteenth century Custom House in Dublin. The slow decay and destruction of an old dispensation is imagined as the erosion of statues that were sculpted by the Anglo-Irish stone-cutter Edward Smyth: 'Wrecks wetly mouldering under rain, / Everywhere. […] How the gods crumble wetly! / Said enthusing Gaulish Gandon / To Anglo-Irish Smyth'.[164] These fugitive objects persist like Benjamin's ruins in a dialectical space of permanence and transience. They are never fully erased but they are never truly safe from the elements, political opponents or iconoclasts.

The anachronism of enduring monuments to British and Anglo-Irish statesmen, often with imperfect legacies, was embraced in Yeats's later poems to lampoon the fluctuating political circumstances and inconsistencies of the Free State government. In a short, satirical poem of 1925 entitled 'The Three Monuments', Yeats's dissenting political convictions are embodied in an idiosyncratic interpretation of the three main monuments on O'Connell Street. The statues of O'Connell, Parnell and Lord Nelson undermine the agendas of 'popular statesmen' in the recently established Irish Free State:

> They hold their public meetings where
> Our most renowned patriots stand,
> One among the birds of the air,
> A stumpier on either hand;
> And all the popular statesmen say
> That purity built up the State
> And after kept it from decay;
> And let all base ambition be,
> For intellect would make us proud
> And pride bring in impurity:
> The three old rascals laugh aloud.[165]

It is not the achievements of the three statesmen but their affairs, sexual impropriety or 'impurity' that Yeats highlights in the poem. Unsurprisingly this runs contrary to the intentions of the sculptors, benefactors and politicians who were involved in erecting the public

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[163] See Yvonne Whelan, 'Symbolising the State – the iconography of O'Connell Street and environs after independence (1922)' *Irish Geography,* Volume 34 (2), 2001, 135-156.
[164] Thomas MacGreevy, *Collected Poems*, ed. Thomas Dillon Redshaw (Dublin: New Writers' Press, 1971), 25, 28. 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' is an Irish equivalent for the German word 'Götterdämmerung', the title of Wagner's opera on the war between the ancient gods. James Gandon was the architect of the Custom House, Smyth executed the allegorical figures and statue groups for the building.
[165] *VP*, 460.

monuments in O'Connell Street.[166] In the final line the three men respond with laughter and derision to the claim by popular statesmen that 'purity built up the state', their own private lives apparently refute this. The eleven-line poem was written prior to the Irish Senate debate on banning divorce which took place on 11 June 1925. As a senator in the Irish Free State Yeats opposed the bill in a famous speech that made reference to the three statues on O'Connell Street, articulating his own view of what these men represent and how this informs the political debate in 1920s Ireland:

> The monuments are on the whole encouraging. I am thinking of O'Connell, Parnell, and Nelson. We never had any trouble about O'Connell. It was said about O'Connell, in his own day, that you could not throw a stick over a workhouse wall without hitting one of his children, but he believed in the indissolubility of marriage [...] We had a good deal of trouble about Parnell when he married a woman who became thereby Mrs. Parnell [...] The Bishop of Meath would not, like his predecessors in Ireland eighty years ago, have given Nelson a Pillar. He would have preferred to give him a gallows, because Nelson should have been either hanged or transported.[167]

In 'The Three Monuments', the statues bear their infidelities and failings in life rather than projecting a singular, reposeful image worthy of emulation. Indeed the monuments in verse are decidedly *un*sculptural, appearing as the three men themselves. The men are not described as unageing but as 'three *old* rascals', even though Nelson died at the age of 47 and Parnell at 45, and even though the three men were represented in their prime in their respective monuments. There is the suggestion that the statues are synonymous with the men they represent and are therefore non-static, multi-faceted, and subject to processes of ageing. Consequently, each poetic statue refuses to serve the ideology of the established government, and resists a unidirectional model of their own identity and political legacy.

In the eighth line the speaker puns on the word 'base' in the imperative voiced by modern-day popular statesmen, to 'let all base ambition be'. The adjective 'base' meaning baseness or bad character, might also refer to the base of the public statues around which the people were expected to throng, admiring and emulating the better characters raised on pedestals. The statues of O'Connell, Parnell and Nelson, are raised on large, ornate columns or bases, to be 'among the birds of the air'. Though Parnell and O'Connell are stumpy compared to Nelson's enormous pillar. To 'let all base ambition be', to abandon the baser instincts and ambitions of men gathered around the base of the monument could mean 'to become like a

[166] From the late 1700s to 1924, the main thoroughfare in Dublin was named Sackville Street after the eighteenth-century Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lionel Sackville. It was officially renamed O'Connell Street in 1924.
[167] Yeats, *The Senate Speeches of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Donald Pearce (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 97-98.

statue', aspiring to the condition of idealised monuments, rising above the 'base' both figuratively and literally. Yeats is mocking an imperative he formerly embraced, to turn to public statues for guidance and moral improvement. In Yeats's satirical poem of 1925, adultery supersedes idolatry.

If statues, and particularly public monuments, are traditionally understood to be monolithic, immortal and advancing a specific political agenda or unequivocal message, Yeats's statues in verse become their antithesis. The three monuments, by virtue of being kinetic, outspoken and seemingly organic, perform a contrarian political function in the poem. Yeats's divorce speech expands upon this non-competitive and non-hostile invocation of the three monuments:

> I did not intend my speech to be an attack on the three great men whose statues are in our principle thoroughfare […] I do not think the memories of these great men of genius were swept away by their sexual immoralities. I still regard them as men of genius who conferred great gifts on their country. They do not cease to be men of genius because of these irregularities […] Genius has its virtue, and it is only a *small blot on its escutcheon* if it is sexually irregular.[168]

The impropriety of each man is described in sculptural terms as merely, 'a small blot on its escutcheon'. This is a simultaneous defence of man and monument that provides an insight into Senator Yeats's pluralist, revisionist understanding of public sculpture and the 'great men' represented at the time. 'Every discolouration of the stone' and '[e]very accidental crack or dent' is a visual record of the faults and imperfections of the figure himself.[169] These stains and blots trouble a seamless verisimilitude of man and monument that might mobilise a simplified legacy of the statesman in present-day Ireland. Yet the stone statue is also a 'stratified accumulation of material over time',[170] its changing visual appearance accommodating contrary interpretations and understandings of the statesman. The small blots on the escutcheon, the Romanesque ox heads and wreaths on Parnell's granite base, the Red branch in the Eucharistic tapestry, attest to the adaptability of the visual arts, and particularly public monuments, to changing political circumstances.

In the Free State Senate, Yeats spoke frequently on the importance of inspecting and preserving ancient monuments and their surrounding land.[171] When the Irish Parliament

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[168] Yeats, *Senate Speeches*, 102.
[169] *VP*, 567.
[170] Lene Østermark-Johansen, *Walter Pater and the Language of Sculpture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 4.
[171] See, for example, Senate speeches on 'Ancient monuments' 3 August 1923, and 'Historic Monuments' 10 June 1925. Yeats, *Senate Speeches*, 56, 88-89.

debated the removal of Nelson's Pillar from O'Connell Street in 1923, Yeats defended the statue on the grounds that it commemorated Protestant heritage, while conceding its ugliness and obstruction of traffic at the intersection of Dublin's main thoroughfare: 'Nelson's Pillar should not be broken up. It represents the feeling of Protestant Ireland for a man who helped break the power of Napoleon. The life and work of the people who erected it is a part of our tradition. I think we should accept the whole past of this nation, and not pick and choose. However, it is not a beautiful object'.[172] Yeats articulates a hospitality of commemoration by preserving the monument to Lord Nelson on the same street that memorialised O'Connell and Parnell. The hands that laboured at its making or raised funds for its erection are represented in the finished statue. Their culture and tradition, however marginalised in modern Ireland, could be preserved through the city's public monuments.

In 1931 councillors of the Dublin Corporation balked at the monument to 'Nelson in the middle of the Capital city, while such Irishmen as Red Hugh O'Neill, Patrick Sarsfield, Brian Boru, and Wolfe Tone had no memorials. The deeds of such heroes should not be concealed from the youth of Ireland!'.[173] Yet in post-independence Ireland, Yeats was creating his own Anglo-Irish pantheon of great men who stood against the living stream of popular opinion. In his Senate speech on the divorce bill he declared, in a statement tinged with eugenic thinking: 'We are one of the great stocks of Europe. We are the people of Burke; we are the people of Grattan; we are the people of Swift, the people of Emmet, the people of Parnell'.[174] Threaded through this litany of Anglo-Irishmen, for the most part monumentalised in Dublin, is a deliberate parallel with Henry Grattan's famous declaration to the old Irish Parliament: 'Spirit of Swift! Spirit of Molyneux! your genius has prevailed! Ireland is now a nation! in that new character I hail her! and bowing to her august presence, I say, *Esto perpetua*!'[175]

If Yeats was wary of claiming with hubris the perpetual endurance of his ancient sect, he nevertheless envisaged monumental figures who climbed, though weather-worn, against the turbulence of the living stream. In 'The Tower' he would declare:

> It is time that I wrote my will;
> I choose upstanding men

[172] Yeats quoted in Patrick Henchy, 'Nelson's Pillar', *Dublin Historical Record* 10, 1948, 53-63, 62.
[173] *Irish Press*, 9 December 1931. Quoted in Whelan, 'Symbolising the State', *Irish Geography,* Volume 34 (2), 2001, 142.
[174] Yeats, *Senate Speeches*, 99.
[175] Henry Grattan, 'Speech on Legislative Independence before the House of Commons, Dublin (16 April 1782),' *Irish Literature, The Eighteenth Century: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares and Peter Van de Kamp (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005), 315. John Henry Foley's electrocast copper statues of Grattan, Oliver Goldsmith and Edmund Burke form a triangle of Anglo-Irish statesmen in College Green, outside the old Irish Parliament building.

That climb the streams until
The fountain leap, and at dawn
Drop their cast at the side
Of dripping stone; I declare
They shall inherit my pride,
The pride of people that were
Bound neither to Cause nor to State,
Neither to slaves that were spat on,
Nor to the tyrants that spat,
The people of Burke and of Grattan[176]

Yeats admires 'outstanding men' who climb against the currents and cascades, until they '[d]rop their cast at the side / Of dripping stone'. The word 'cast' suggests the statuesque figure, hollowed out or eroded by its climb against the stream. Yet the pun on 'caste' becomes apparent in his naming of an exclusively Anglo-Irish sect. Rebuilding his tower as pantheon, it is '[t]he people of Burke and of Grattan' who resist the currents in modern Ireland, eroded but enduring, amidst the living stream.

[176] *VP*, 414.

Chapter 3: 'Some master of design': Yeats and the Free State Coinage – 1926-1928

I

Coins are low relief sculptures. Leading sculptors, painters and art curators joined the committee charged with soliciting and selecting designs for the first Irish coins produced since 1822.[1] The competing designs for the new coinage of the Free State were made by world-renowned sculptors and medallists including Ivan Meštrović, Publio Morbiducci, Paul Manship and Carl Milles. Distinct from colossal statuary, coins could circulate from person to person, around countries and continents. At the height of the British Empire, coins featuring the profile of Queen Victoria were the most reproduced and widely circulated images in any artistic medium. Miniscule, tactile and mercantile, coins served as images of the Empire and Empress that could be incorporated into the rituals of everyday life. According to Michael Hatt, the consistent image of the monarch on the obverse side of the coin, and the indication of its value alongside images and insignia from the particular colony on the reverse side, operated as 'a material metaphor for colonialism itself and for the economic imperatives that drove imperialism' encompassed on a single coin.[2] In Ireland, Patrick Pearse wrote that British coins symbolised 'the foreign tyranny that holds us. A good Irishman should blush every time he sees a penny.'[3]

In the Irish Free State, the minting of a new Irish coinage was therefore a necessary and expedient means to dethrone and demonumentalize British rule. On the other side of the coin however, post-independence Ireland faced a significant dilemma: whichever statesman, hero or mythic figure from Irish history was chosen to replace the image of king or queen on the national mint would be subject to the same apotheosis. In a belated phase of 'statumania' or 'memorial madness', the redesign of Irish currency could precipitate another, greater dissemination of Irish hero worship via sculpture. As chairman of the coinage committee, W.B. Yeats spearheaded the search for appropriate sculptors and designs for the new Irish coinage. When Yeats described coins as 'the silent ambassadors of national taste' in an address to the Senate before being offered the chairmanship of the committee, he was no doubt aware of the considerable undertaking. His statement suggests a commitment to making a mute and politically uncontroversial mint, but it is also an acknowledgement that coins silently disseminate

[1] Nineteenth-century British coins were designed by renowned sculptors including Benedetto Pistrucci, Joseph Edgar Boehm, Thomas Brock and Leonard Charles Wyon. Ans Sir Frederic Leighton joined the committee charged with re-designing the British coinage in 1893. See Michael Hatt, *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837-1901*, ed. Martina Droth, Jason Edwards, Michael Hatt (London: Yale University Press, 2014), 98-99.
[2] Hatt, *Sculpture Victorious*, 98.
[3] Patrick Pearse, *Collected Works of Pádraic H. Pearse: Political writings and Speeches* (Dublin: Phoenix, 1916), 151.

an iconography of power across the entire population of a nation or empire. The coinage deliberations from 1926 to 1928 were an important aspect of Yeats's enduring interest in sculpture and what might be tentatively defined as a 'sculptural poetics'. In this chapter I will argue that his work on coins, for the most part neglected in critical studies of the poet, marks one of the most pointed moments in Yeats's diplomatic negotiation of a political aesthetic in the 1920s.

At the outset, it is difficult to determine the precise responsibilities and contributions of Yeats as chairman of the coinage committee, with little information on the details of each meeting and the different opinions of its members.[4] In the absence of evidence Yeats's role can be overstated in critical studies of the poet. Brian Cleeve occasionally resorts to hyperbole in his introduction to *W.B. Yeats and the Designing of Irish Coinage* (1972): 'What government in the world has ever placed so great and permanent a responsibility in the hands of a poet? And what poet has ever achieved so greatly for his country outside of his own field of poetry?' Cleeve adds that the coinage belongs to Yeats 'as much as the Sistine Chapel is Pope Julius the Second's'.[5] R.F. Foster has challenged the ostensibly authoritative accounts of committee proceedings given by Yeats and other members in their report, *Coinage of Saorsáit Éireann* (1928), which masks many of the disagreements between the committee and the government. Yet Foster also praises Yeats's genius as committee chairman without specifying the singular achievements or actions taken by the poet. He contends that despite the expertise of the various committee members, '[n]one was a match for W.B. Yeats', who steered the committee towards his own interests and choice of sculptors.[6] With reference to the papers of the Departments of Finance and the Taoiseach in the National Archives of Ireland, the committee minutes, and recent scholarship on the political context of the Free State coin designs, this chapter will reassess the singular and significant contributions of Yeats in order to ascertain his ambitions for the coinage, his thwarted ambitions, and the implications of each for his aesthetics of coins. Ultimately, this chapter will connect the Free State coinage deliberations to Yeats's sculptural aesthetics, and propose that the coins in Yeats's poems can be re-examined as durable, portable relief sculptures.

[4] Leo T. McCauley kept handwritten minutes of committee meetings but R.F. Foster and Thomas Mohr have identified some of the striking omissions in these minutes, and the difficulty to discern disagreements or divergent opinions between committee members. I am grateful to John Kelly for providing me with a copy of the committee minutes.

[5] Brian Cleeve, 'The Yeats Coinage,' *W.B. Yeats and the Designing of Ireland's Coinage* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1972), 7.

[6] *RF2*, 332.

In an article on 'The political significance of the coinage of the Irish Free State' (2015), Thomas Mohr has documented the extensive deliberations of the finance department prior to the formation of the coinage committee.[7] Mohr notes that President Cosgrave's minister for Finance, Ernest Blythe, took the decision to veto 'effigies of living persons' on the new Irish coins.[8] It was the Department of Finance's instruction that any inscriptions should be in Irish and an Irish harp should be shown on one side of most or all of the coins.[9] Each of these decisions preceded the formation of the committee and the offer of the chairmanship to Yeats.[10] Furthermore, the earliest correspondence between the Irish Finance department, the Royal Mint Advisory Committee and the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art on artistic designs and practical issues of materials and values, preceded the introduction of draft legislation to the Dáil or Senate, and predated Yeats's first contributions to the debate as a Senator by several months.[11] Mohr acknowledges that the Free State government adhered to Dominion precedent in most respects by ensuring that formal communications with the Royal Mint were made throughout the process. The Coinage Act 1926 maintained the link with sterling and retained the existing British denominations.[12] And the deputy master of the Royal Mint, Robert Johnson, played a considerable role in the change of coinage through sustained correspondence with ministers in the finance department.

Although several of the key decisions on the new coinage were made in advance by the Department of Finance, the deliberations of the committee were nevertheless significant and, in light of Mohr's recent scholarship, their singular decisions deserve further examination. The decision to vest control of artistic designs in a committee of artists and experts, largely independent of the government, was not clearly defined until the coinage bill reached the Dáil and Senate, and specifically, Senator W.B. Yeats. When the bill was before the Dáil Éireann in February 1926, deputies Michael Heffernan and Osmond Grattan Esmonde asked the Minister for Finance if he intended to set up a special committee, not of the Dáil but perhaps of 'outsiders

[7] Mohr makes reference to a veritable mine of government papers on the Free State coinage designs held at the National Archives that have been largely unacknowledged in studies of W.B. Yeats. From the Department of the Taoiseach, NAI DT S6244A; and from the Department of Finance, NAI DF F17/23/29. I will show the relevance of these papers to a reassessment of Yeats's role in designing the Free State coinage.
[8] Thomas Mohr. 'The political significance of the coinage of the Irish Free State,' *Irish Studies Review*, 23:4 (London: Routledge, 2015), 451-479, 458.
[9] See NAI DT S6244 A, lecture by Thomas Bodkin, November 30, 1928; NAI DF F17/23/29, J. Brennan to E. Blythe, October 1925.
[10] NAI DF F17/23/29, the first Department of Finance document to propose the six committee members is dated 18 May 1926, and Yeats was asked in a formal letter to chair the committee on 19 May 1926. Ernest Blythe ruled out the use of portraits of Irishmen on coins as early as 5 October 1925 in a letter from the department of Finance to the director of the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art discussing coin designs.
[11] NAI DF F17/23/29. The Royal Mint offered its services in the selection of designs for the Free State as early as 31 August 1925, see report on 'Proposed Coinage for the Irish Free State'.
[12] Mohr, 'The political significance of the coinage', 456.

with artistic knowledge'. Yeats followed the government's coinage bill closely and when Blythe appeared before the Senate the following month he thanked the minister for agreeing to form an artistic committee, making a passing reference to the unsuccessful Free State stamps, which were produced without the oversight of an independent committee of artists: 'Two days ago I had a letter from an exceedingly famous decorative artist, in which he described the postage stamps of this country as at once the humblest and ugliest in the world. At any rate, our coinage design will, I hope, be such that even the humblest citizen will be proud of it'.[13] Yeats was formally offered the chairmanship of the committee in a letter from the Department of Finance dated 19 May, and accepted 'with pleasure' on 21 May while requesting that 'the meetings of the committee could, if possible, be on the mornings of days on which the Seanad meets that the same journey to Dublin might serve for Seanad & committee'.[14]

The coinage committee set to work on 17 June 1926 and completed its task in April 1928, meeting seventeen times to deliberate on the designs.[15] The committee consisted of the director of the National Gallery, Lucius O'Callaghan; the curator and successive director of the Gallery, Thomas Bodkin; Barry Egan TD and goldsmith; the painter and president of the Royal Hibernian Academy, Dermod O'Brien; and Leo McCauley from the Department of Finance who served as a secretary and intermediary.[16] According to Yeats, the members were 'left quite free to find our designs anywhere in Europe so it will be our fault if we do not get a good coinage'.[17] The committee's membership and the method of soliciting coin designs bear significant resemblances to Yeats's recommendations for commissioning public sculptures, elaborated in an open letter two decades previous. In his letter to the *United Irishman*, printed 20 January 1900, Yeats criticised 'the disgraceful statues, erected to the memory of distinguished Irishmen in recent years', and proposed that 'the usual Dublin method for choosing a Sculptor must be changed'. '[T]he matter should be in the hands of an expert Committee' as opposed to the tastes of the Lord Mayor of Dublin who reportedly visited the studios of several American sculptors to commission the statue of Charles Stewart Parnell on O'Connell Street. As an alternative, '[t]he Committee might be asked to choose three or four Sculptors among whom Mr [John] Redmond and his Committee could pick out <whatever> a man <was most> to their mind should they not care to leave the matter wholly to the experts'. Yeats suggested that the

[13] NAI DF F17/23/29, extracts from Dáil debates 4 February 1926 and 23 February 1926. Extract from Seanad debates 3 March 1926. See *The Senate Speeches of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Donald R. Pearce, 95. See also Leo T. McCauley, 'The Summary of the Proceedings of the Committee,' in *W.B. Yeats and the Designing of Ireland's Coinage*, 25-39, 25.
[14] NAI DF F17/23/29, Yeats to McCauley, 21 May 1926. This letter is not collected or published on *CL InteLex*. I am grateful to John Kelly for assisting my transcription of the letter.
[15] Donald Pearce (ed.) *The Senate Speeches of W.B. Yeats* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 105-106.
[16] Mohr, 'The political significance of the coinage', 458. See also *RF2*, 332.
[17] WBY to the Marchioness of Londonderry, 19 June 1926, *CL InteLex*, 4882.

sculptor, once chosen, should have free rein over the making of his monument, a method which 'produces better work than any competition of designs'.[18] Twenty-six years later when the coinage committee was formed it did request plaster casts of the designs from its prospective artists,[19] but Yeats's preferred method of forming a committee of experts with considerable autonomy from politicians was effectively realised. The decision to choose the design through a limited competition between selected sculptors, instead of an open competition or a closed coronation of one individual, was admired by the Royal Mint which later recommended the method for the designing of new coins in Australia.[20]

The cultivation of Irish sculptors was also integral to the coinage committee's selection process. As noted in Chapter Two, Yeats backed the resident sculptor John Hughes to design the Parnell monument in Dublin in 1900, but the committee opted instead for a sculptor with an international reputation; Augustus Saint-Gaudens, an Irishman who lived and worked in America.[21] In the 1860s the committee charged with commissioning the principal monument to Daniel O'Connell encountered similar problems of balancing international or non-resident sculptors with sculptors living in Ireland. An open competition was held in Dublin for sculptors to design the secondary figures for the monument's base, but ultimately the sculptor John Henry Foley, born in Ireland but living in London, was given the entire commission.[22] If an open competition risked putting off renowned sculptors, and the automatic selection of a renowned sculptor from abroad stirred controversy from Irish periodicals, as the reactions to the Parnell and O'Connell commissions demonstrated, the coinage committee's model of a limited competition with a quota of Irish sculptors was deftly handled.[23] How Yeats actually felt about the compulsory inclusion of Irish sculptors by the 1920s was subject to the audience he was writing to. In a letter to Edmund Dulac, dated July 1926, he attempted to persuade the French-born British painter to submit a design, insisting that 'we are not limited to Irishmen. We shall probably arrange for a competition of 5 - 2 Irish to satisfy patriotic feeling'.[24] And in a later letter to Dulac, from September 1926 he acknowledged that 'it would help […] with public opinion if some were Irish'.[25] Conversely, in his introduction to the Government report on coinage, Yeats recommended the inclusion of Irish sculptors for future public art commissions:

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[18] *CL2*, 491.
[19] Mohr, 'The political significance of the coinage', 461.
[20] Mohr, 'The political significance of the coinage', 475 n.95.
[21] *CL2*, 485.
[22] Judith Hill, *Irish Public Sculpture*, 94.
[23] The competition for the coins design was much closer to Yeats's method of soliciting public sculpture than the much-criticised selection process for the Free State stamps.
[24] *CL InteLex*, 4889.
[25] *CL InteLex*, 4928.

> But how should the Government choose its artist? What advice should we give? It should reject a competition open to everybody. No good artist would spend day after day designing, and perhaps get nothing by it. There should be but a few competitors […] We thought seven would be enough, and that of these three should be Irish […] Before choosing the other four we collected examples of modern coinage with the help of various Embassies or of our friends.[26]

As will be seen with the invitation to Carl Milles, Yeats spoke for the committee as a whole when advocating its selection process to the Government, but during the committee's selection process and its correspondence with potential sculptors, Yeats often shirked collective responsibility. The three Irish sculptors eventually chosen by the committee were Albert Power, Oliver Sheppard, and the Irish-American Jerome Connor, alongside the Swedish sculptor Carl Milles, the Italian artist Publio Morbiducci, Paul Manship from New York, and a young and relatively unknown sculptor from Yorkshire, Percy Metcalfe, who eventually received the commission. The work of a further candidate, the Croatian medallist and sculptor Ivan Meštrović, was admired by the committee but his letter of invitation was sent to the wrong address and he missed the deadline.[27]

Although Ernest Blythe directed the committee to select animals and avoid portraits in their choice of designs, it was the committee's choice of ancient coins as models sent to the prospective sculptors that dictated several of the chosen animals and their pose. 'As the most beautiful coins are the coins of the Greek colonies, especially of those in Sicily', Yeats writes in his report, 'we decided to send photographs of some of these, and one coin of Carthage, to our selected artists, and to ask them, as far as possible, to take them as a model'. According to secretary Leo McCauley, Yeats persuaded the committee to consider the animal designs of Sicilian coins and the arrangement of the new coinage as a unified set that would 'tell one story'.[28] The Greek coins proposed as models to the artists included coins of Larissa, Thurium, Carthage and Messana, representing horses, a bull, and a hare.[29] These animals would be reproduced in the coin designs by the seven prospective sculptors, with each sculptor following the shape and

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[26] Yeats, 'What we did or tried to do,' *W.B. Yeats & the Designing of Ireland's Coinage*, ed. Brian Cleeve (Dublin: The Dolmen Press, 1972), 11.

[27] Yeats, 'What we did or tried to do', 11. According to committee minutes, a supplementary list of prospective sculptors included James E. Fraser, René Letourneur and Adolfo Wildt. Mestrovic's design of Erin with a harp, which he donated to the Irish Free State, would eventually be used on the seal of the Irish Central Bank after 1965. In 1928, Bodkin discussed the use of Mestrovic's Erin for the new Irish bank notes, however it was deemed unsuitable and John Lavery's *Kathleen Ni Houlihan* portrait was chosen instead. Thomas Bodkin Papers: TCD MS 6963/17-45.

[28] Leo T. McCauley 'The Summary of the Proceedings of the Committee,' *W.B. Yeats & the Designing of Ireland's Coinage*, ed. Brian Cleeve (Dublin: The Dolmen Press, 1972), 27-28. McCauley notes that Yeats took the advice of Oliver Gogarty and William Orpen in these decisions.

[29] Yeats, 'What we did or tried to do', 9-10.

stance of the model animals to varying degrees. The salmon appeared to be chosen at Yeats's behest because it alluded to the Ossianic salmon of knowledge.[30] The committee later recommended a pig, a woodcock, a hen and a wolfhound to complete the set. Each animal was considered representative of the natural products of Ireland. For the sixpence coin, the committee resisted Yeats's preference for a greyhound over a wolfhound,[31] however the decision to give the wolfhound a smooth coat in place of a shaggy one in the final design meant that it was often confused with a greyhound. To Yeats's pleasure, it might be said that a greyhound is a wolfhound designed by a committee.

Nevertheless, Yeats was generally dismayed by the intervention of government ministers and departments in the final designs of the Free State coinage. 'The horse, as first drawn' by Percy Metcalfe, writes Yeats, 'was more alive than the later version, for when the hind legs were brought more under the body and the head lowered, in obedience to technical opinion, it lost muscular tension; we passed from the open country to the show-ground'.[32] The original bull and pig designs also fell foul of 'the eugenics of the farm-yard', becoming 'querulous and harassed animals, better merchandise but less living'.[33] The title of Yeats's 1928 essay on the coinage designs sounds a more wistful note in light of the committee's disagreements with seemingly obtuse and inartistic government ministers; 'What We Did *or Tried to Do*'.[34]

Among the sculptors whose work was rejected by the committee, despite Yeats's admiration for the designs, was the Swedish sculptor Carl Milles. Yeats became aware of the sculptor's work in 1923 when he visited Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize. Milles studied at Rodin's studio in Paris from 1897 to 1904 and worked almost exclusively in monumental statuary, making him a curious choice for coin designs. Milles was the only sculptor of the shortlisted seven who Yeats contacted directly rather than through the government at the

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[30] *RF2*, 333. WBY to Dulac, 1 August 1926, *CL InteLex*, 4905.

[31] Mohr, 'The political significance of the coinage', 458-459, 474n.72-73.

[32] Yeats, 'What we did or tried to do', 19. NAI DT S6244A: The Department of Finance requested that Metcalfe 're-design his model on the basis of an actual photograph of an approved type of horse. The Minister for Lands and Agriculture should be asked to advise as to the photograph.' The bull design was similarly blocked for its unrealistic portrayal of a bull: 'The selection of a design for this denomination was postponed in order that the Minister for Lands and Agriculture might be consulted as to the type of animal to serve as model.' What emerges from these comical interventions by the departments of finance and agriculture was effectively a rejection of the Sicilian coin models that had dictated the portrayal of the horse and the bull.

[33] Yeats, 'What we did or tried to do', 19. The minister for Agriculture, Patrick Hogan, complained about the meagre size of the sow's farrow which suggested that it was a poor breeder. NAI DF F17/23/29, Hogan to McElligott, December 14, 1927.

[34] Foster and Mohr note that the entire committee, with the single exception of Barry Egan, offered their resignations in October 1927 when the Minister for Finance decided to depart from their recommendations on the pig, wolfhound and woodcock designs. A significant moment in the committee's lifetime that is curiously absent from Yeats, Bodkin, and other members' published recollections of their time on the committee. To avoid a resignation *en masse* the government finally acquiesced to the committee. See *RF2*, 333; Mohr, 'The political significance of the coinage', 459.

beginning of the competition.[35] I want to isolate Milles's designs as a singular and significant intervention by Yeats in the coinage committee's deliberations, and one which elucidates the poet's thwarted ambitions for the coins. In a letter to Lady Gregory, sent from Cannes and dated 10 January 1928, Yeats recounts a meeting with their mutual friend Lucy Phillimore who had taken an interest in a Milles horse sculpture: 'She is trying to get a fine piece of sculpture of Milles bought for Dublin — a big horse & wants it put up outside the R.D.S.'. Yeats makes a tongue-in-cheek gesture towards the bureaucratic barriers the committee encountered with animal designs: 'they will be certain to get it judged & rejected by their horse experts for it [is] a magniscent [*sic*] extravagant thing'.[36] Several of Milles's coin designs were high-relief miniatures of his monumental statues. His horse design bears a striking resemblance to the bronze *Flygande Hästen / The Flying Horse* (1923-25).[37] And his bull and pig designs loosely resemble his *Europa and the Bull* fountain sculpture (1923-24). The intimacy of animal and myth in Milles's statuary explains Yeats's interpretation of a supernatural quality in the Swede's coin designs: 'I tell myself that they have been dug out of Sicilian earth, that they passed to and fro in the Mediterranean traffic two thousand years and more ago, and thereupon I discover that his strange bull, his two horses, that angry woodcock, have a supernatural energy'[38]. Yeats's praise of Milles alludes to a deeper, mythic history in the rejected designs which was unamenable to the government's expectations for merchandisable, 'querulous and harassed' animals. Milles's animal designs were notable for their perceived motion and sinuous muscular frames, the qualities that were rejected by the government in several of Percy Metcalfe's models. Yet Milles's coins were also entirely impractical. As Yeats acknowledged in 'What We Did or Tried to Do', the coins were cut in high relief like ancient Greek coins and could not pitch or pack like modern symmetrical coins, 'to please the gambler' or the banker.[39]

In a lecture to the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art on 'The Irish Coinage Designs' (1928), Thomas Bodkin confessed that he and several committee members had their own preferred sculptor in mind before reaching a collective decision: 'I freely admit that I thought the palm was likely to be awarded to Professor Morbiducci'. In turn, Bodkin claims that, 'The Senator made no secret of his hope that that brilliant sculptor, Professor Carl Milles, would be

[35] *CL InteLex*, 4888. Leo McCauley's minutes to the second committee meeting, 30 June 1926, indicate that Yeats proposed the sculptor: 'Dr Yeats reported that he was endeavouring to obtain particulars as to Swedish and Austrian medalists.' There are two photographs of Milles's Stockholm statues, dated 1926 by the photographer Charles Gustaf Rosenburg, among the miscellaneous photographs of the Yeats Library Manuscript materials, NLI MS 40,588: 'Photographs of sculpture'.
[36] *CL InteLex*, 5061.
[37] An unsigned photograph of Milles's *Flying Horse* sculpture is among the miscellaneous photographs of the Yeats Library Manuscript materials, NLI MS 40,588: Photographs of sculpture.
[38] Yeats, 'What we did or tried to do', 16.
[39] Yeats, 'What we did or tried to do', 9, 16.

successful', insinuating that Yeats had a predilection for the Swede because 'Sweden […] has done him great honour'. Adding credence to Bodkin's claim, is his reference to an 'ephemeral publication' which 'published a long article declaring, under the compelling influence of the Senator, the Committee had decided to anticipate the result of the competition by recommending that the designs for the coinage should be entrusted to "a Frenchman called Milles"'.[40] Bodkin refers to a short-lived newspaper called the *Irish Truth*, which reported on 4 December 1926 that the committee had already 'arranged to give the work to […] one of the two Continental artists'.[41] While the committee was quick to deny the claims made in the *Irish Truth* and picked up by the *Irish Independent*, Bodkin's anecdote about Yeats lobbying hard for Milles's inclusion is supported by the correspondence and committee minutes. Nevertheless, the fact that the committee did not ultimately choose the *Swede* called Milles, but unanimously endorsed the designs of Percy Metcalfe, reinforces the contention that Yeats's influence upon the committee has been overstated in the absence of evidence.

Some of the most pointed political criticisms of the new coinage as 'designed by an Englishman, minted in England, representative of English values, paid for by the Irish people', are also in need of revision.[42] For example, in unpublished correspondence with the Department of Finance, Yeats was quick to despatch with the recommendation of coin designs by Eric Gill put forward by the Royal Mint Advisory Committee. Gill's designs were considered 'mediaeval' or 'Anglo-Saxon' in appearance by the representative of the Royal Mint. However, in his reply on behalf of the committee, but also pre-empting a collective decision, Yeats maintained that the designs in the Interim Report modelled on Greek Sicilian coins were a better fit.[43] Yeats's commitment to an ancient Sicilian model, although undermined by government

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[40] Thomas Bodkin, 'The Irish Coinage Designs', *W.B. Yeats & the Designing of Ireland's Coinage* ed. Brian Cleeve (Dublin: The Dolmen Press, 1972), 7. An article on 'Carl Milles, Yeats and the Irish Coinage' by Dorothy Tyler printed in the *Michigan Quarterly Review* (October, 1963) speculated that Milles himself expected the competition to be a formality and thought he had the committee's backing for the full commission through Yeats's support. Tyler, who spoke to Milles about the coinage commission on several occasions, writes that Milles was dismayed that his designs were not selected and, perhaps due to his poor grasp of English at the time, interpreted Yeats's invitation as a guarantee that his designs would be selected (276-7). Dorothy Tyler, 'A Friendship and a Fiasco: Carl Milles, Yeats, and the Irish Coinage', *Michigan Quarterly Review* Vol. II, no. 4 (October, 1963), 276-277.

[41] [Unsigned], 'Debasing the Coinage, Art as the Bagman's Decoy,' *Irish Truth*, (4 December 1926), 774. See 'NLI, LB 05 I 26'. See also committee minutes of an 'Informal meeting' between Yeats, O'Callaghan, Bodkin and McCauley, 13 December 1926. Yeats and the other members expressed concern that the *Irish Truth* had reported 'to the effect that the committee had anticipated the result of the competition by deciding in advance to give the work of executing the coin designs to M. Carl Milles'. In truth, the committee had yet to confirm Milles's acceptance of the invitation to submit designs before the deadline of January, 1927.

[42] Maud Gonne, quoted in *RF2*, 334.

[43] 'Dear Mr McElligott: Thank you [for] those Eric Gill designs which I will bring before the committee. I feel confident however that it will keep to the designs described in its Interim Report or such modifications as the minister has suggested', NAI D/F F17/23/29, Yeats to McElligott. This letter is not collected or published on *CL InteLex*. Minutes from the sixth meeting of the committee indicate that Gill's unsolicited designs were rejected on the grounds they 'did not suit'. I am grateful to John Kelly for helping me with the transcription of the letter.

recommendations, appeared to be absolute in the soliciting of designs and the design process.[44] The considerable influence of the Royal Mint and the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art at the beginning of the coinage design process, from 1925 to 1926, was heavily eroded with the establishment of the coinage committee as the central authority on designs, from 1926 to 1928, in place of the department of Finance and its choice of advisory bodies.

Despite this sleight of the Royal Mint and British sculptor Eric Gill, the committee eventually chose a sculptor from Yorkshire who was subsequently confirmed by the Irish government. The choice of potential designers for the coins was as much to do with sculptural aesthetics as British and Irish politics. The monumental, figurative statuary of Carl Milles, Ivan Meštrović and others that Yeats had admired for many years prior to his chairmanship of the committee might suggest an opposition to abstract, Vorticist sculptural practices such as direct carving, which were pioneered by Eric Gill, Jacob Epstein, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and Constantin Brancusi (see Chapter Four). Upon viewing Ivan Meštrović's statues for the first time at the V&A Museum in the summer of 1915, Yeats wrote enthusiastically to Lady Gregory: 'To me it seems at the moment that they are the only sculptures I ever cared for – supernatural & heroic & yet full of tenderness. I can think of little else. It is "Gods & Fighting Men" in stone.'[45] The use of statues as models for coin designs by Carl Milles further suggests the compression of a larger, weightier symbol of vaster historical import.[46] Although the Irish society of Antiquaries warned the coinage committee against the use of 'hackneyed symbols' and 'obscure allusiveness', the allusion to Sicilian coins was a means of smuggling in both an ulterior historical continuity of Yeats's own design, and a revivified but ineluctably ancient set of symbols. The bull is at once the Irish stud bull Donn Cuailnge from the *Táin*, and Zeus through the allusion to the Europa myth on the Sicilian model. Yeats treats ancient Greece and modern Ireland as two sides of the same coin.[47] This transmogrification of symbols is even more

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[44] In a letter of 6 January 1927, a bizarrely back-handed compliment is given to Olivia Shakespear after recounting the coinage committee's progress: '[…] Some time in the middle of February all designs for our coinage will be in Dublin for our verdict. I came upon two early photographs of you yesterday, while going through my file — one from "Literary Year Book". Who ever had a like profile? — a profile from a Sicilean coin. One looks back to ones youth as to [a] cup that a madman dying of thirst left half tasted. I wonder if you feel like that.' Olivia Shakespear's ageing is implicit in Yeats's choice of metaphor for her anterior, youthful appearance shown in the photograph: 'a profile from a Sicilean [*sic*] coin'. *CL InteLex*, 4972. In this context, the Sicilian coin is a relic, or more accurately a time capsule, that preserves the youthful life within it.

[45] Yeats to Lady Gregory, [2 July 1915], *CL InteLex*, 2699.

[46] Coincidentally the only Irish coin to feature an Irish political figure was a commemorative ten-shilling issued on the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966. One side of the coin features a miniature of Oliver Sheppard's Cuchulain, and the obverse side replaces the harp image with a portrait of Patrick Pearse. See Geraldine Higgins, *Heroic Revivals*, 151-152.

[47] In *On the Boiler*, Yeats proposed Greek and Irish as core components of a new Irish curriculum. Rehashing Arnoldian classifications of the Greek and the Celt, he proposed that the combination of subjects would be beneficial: 'make the pupil translate Greek into Irish, Irish into Greek […] Irish can give our children love of the soil underfoot; but only Greek, co-ordination or intensity.' *CWV*, 240.

explicit in Milles's high-relief coins: 'I tell myself that they have been dug out of Sicilian earth, that they passed to and fro in the Mediterranean traffic two thousand years and more ago'.[48] Milles's coins have history in them, the half-emergent forms allude to ancestral coin art while appearing modern, fragmentary and angular in anatomy. They are invigorated by their imagined trafficking or circulation over long periods of time. In the manuscript corrections to a typescript of 'What we did or tried to do', Yeats removed a sentence praising Milles's designs as 'an art at once greater and more primitive than ours'.[49] What the art historian Elizabeth Prettejohn describes as 'the modernity of ancient sculpture' is emulated in Milles's sculpture and sculptural coins, which pair antiquity and modern experimentation within the form.[50]

In the 'Dove or Swan' section of *A Vision* (1925), Yeats links Mestrovic and Milles with the abstract painting and sculpture of Wyndham Lewis and Constantin Brancusi. In the work of each '[i]t is as though the forms in the stone or in their reverie began to move with an energy which is not that of the human mind'. '[T]he Scandinavian Milles, Mestrovic perhaps,' are considered 'masters of a geometrical pattern or rhythm which seems to impose itself wholly from beyond the mind, the artist 'standing outside himself''.[51] Yeats returns to the unsettling rhythms of Milles and Mestrovic's sculpture in 'What we did or tried to do': 'Carl Milles and Ivan Mestrovic, sculptor and medallist, have expressed in their work a violent rhythmical energy unknown to past ages, and seem to many the foremost sculptors of their day'.[52] *A Vision* (1925) feeds directly into 'What we did or tried to do', and Yeats's imagined syncretism of civilisations in different 'phases' of history informed his preference for Sicilian coins as models for the new Free State coinage. In subsequent sections I will examine the pairing of coins and poetry that Yeats builds upon in his later works. Following on from his role as chairman of the committee, I will demonstrate that coins in Yeats's poetry serve as the compressed containers of mythic narratives, carrying ancient stories, tropes and figures into the present.

II

If the pairing of poetry and sculpture can be traced back to Horace's famous phrase: '*Exegi monumentum aere perennius* / I have built a monument more lasting than bronze [or 'brass']', the

[48] Yeats, 'What we did or tried to do', 16.
[49] NLI MS 30,866.
[50] Elizabeth Prettejohn, *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture: Greek sculpture and modern art from Winckelmann to Picasso* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).
[51] Yeats, *AVA*, 174. See Chapter Four on Yeats's deliberate pairing of abstract sculptors and the practice of direct carving with modern European sculptors and modelling practices in 'Dove or Swan', *AVA*.
[52] Yeats, 'What we did or tried to do', 12.

pairing of poetry and coins, *via sculpture*, can be traced to liberal appropriations of the same Horatian epithet.[53] In a foundational study of numismatics, *Dialogues Upon the Usefulness of Ancient Medals* (1721), Joseph Addison considered coins to be the most durable art forms conceived by man: '[Coins show] us the faces of all the great persons of antiquity. A cabinet of medals is a collection of pictures in miniature […] a long list of heathen Deities, copies of several statues […] the Genius of nations, provinces, cities, high-ways, and the like Allegorical beings'.[54] Borrowing a line from Horace, coins occupy the place reserved for poetry in Addison's study: '[coins are] the models of several ancient Temples, though the Temples themselves, and the Gods that were worshipped in them, are perished many hundreds of years ago […] These are buildings which the Goths and Vandals could not demolish, that are infinitely more durable than stone or marble, and will perhaps last as long as the earth itself. *They are in short so many real monuments of Brass.*'[55] The durable coin is set against the durational and ephemeral statue, temple, man or god. John Evelyn's *Numismata* (1697) heaps similar praise on ancient coins: 'even the very Names as well as Actions of many famous Persons, had been long since as unknown as if they had never been at all, but for these small pieces of Metal, which seem to have broken and worn out the very Teeth of Time, that devours and tears in pieces all things else'.[56] The capacity of coins or any art form to 'break the teeth of Time' the devourer, appears to be a phrase coined by Evelyn. Yet in an eight-line poem from *The Tower* entitled 'The New Faces', Yeats confers a similar durability onto the poetry and plays 'wrought' by himself and Lady Gregory:

> If you, that have grown old, were the first dead,
> Neither catalpa tree nor scented lime
> Should hear my living feet, nor would I tread
> *Where we wrought that shall break the teeth of Time.*
> Let the new faces play what tricks they will
> In the old rooms; night can outbalance day,
> Our shadows rove the garden gravel still,
> The living seem more shadowy than they.[57]

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[53] Horace, 'Ode 30, Book 3', *The Complete Odes and Epodes*, trans. David West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 108.
[54] Joseph Addison, *Dialogues Upon the Usefulness of Ancient Medals*, (New York: Garland, 1976), 13-15.
[55] Addison, *Dialogues Upon the Usefulness of Ancient Medals*, 23, [*italics mine*].
[56] John Evelyn, *Numismata: A Discourse of Medals, Ancient and Modern* (London, 1697), 2. Addison and Evelyn's studies are slightly belated examples of what Leonard Barkan identifies as a Renaissance cherry-picking of 'truisms' from Ancient Greek writers to establish an inter-arts aesthetic of their own design. See Leonard Barkan, *Mute Poetry, Speaking Pictures* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 27-74. See also David Alvarez, '"Poetical Cash": Joseph Addison, Antiquarianism, and Aesthetic Value,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 3 (2005): 509-531.
[57] *VP*, 435, [*italics mine*].

Yeats's phrase is also a probable allusion to the epilogue of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* where the idea of verse-writing and myth-making that might endure the teeth of time is first coined: 'My work is complete: a work which neither Jove's anger, nor fire nor sword shall destroy, nor yet the gnawing tooth of time.'[58] Yeats was not a numismatician, but his deep interest in coins, and the aesthetic qualities of coins, preceded his involvement in the Free State coinage committee. Yeats collected several illustrated catalogues and postcards of ancient coins;[59] the art historical sources cited in *A Vision* examine ancient sculpture and medallions in parallel;[60] and in many influential works on art history and aesthetic theory from the previous century the divide between the study of statuary and coins is indistinct.[61] History, art history and occult mythography provided avenues for Yeats to understand coins as sculpture. Yet the capacity of poetry to 'break the teeth of Time' is a durability Yeats does not necessarily afford to sculpture. Throughout his poetry, sculpture is conceived as something that ages or materially degrades with the passage of time. Marble is weather-worn, wood is decayed, lapis lazuli is discoloured, and monuments are levelled by the wind or overturned in civil war and revolution.

The dual ambition of poetry to be durable and durational, autonomous yet contingent upon time and audience, might find that the coin is an appropriate material correlative. The coin becomes a site for intriguing – and occasionally bizarre – inter-art analogies, from Rossetti's sonnet on the sonnet to Geoffrey Hill's idea of the poem's 'intrinsic value', and Seamus Heaney and Paul Muldoon's allusions to the Greek obol as a metaphor for poetic inheritance.[62] If coins are designed to circulate they are hard, compact, and portable, intended to outwear 'the teeth of time'; they are also irrevocably current *as currency*, designed to transmit, transmute and perpetually alter in value, contingent upon their bearer's use for them and bound to a system of variable exchanges.

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[58] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. Mary M. Innes (London: Penguin, 1955), 357, l. 841-879.

[59] The Yeats Library includes S.W. Grose's two volume *Catalogue of the McClean Collection of Greek Coins* (1923, 1926) [*YL* 818], Barclay Head's illustrated *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum, Department of Coins and Medals* (1881) [*YL* 862], and Richard Aldington's translation *Medallions from Anyte of Tegea, Meleager of Gadara, the Anacreontea, Latin Poets of the Renaissance* (1930) [*YL* 29]. Among the Yeats Manuscript materials are numerous illustrated postcards of medal and coins [NLI MS 40,583-40,584].

[60] Josef Strzygowski, *Origin of Christian Church Art* (1923) [*YL* 2026]; Eugenie Sellers Strong, *Apotheosis and After Life* (1915) [*YL* 2015]; Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (1926-9) [*YL* 1975]. Yeats read the latter text after completing the 1925 version of *A Vision*. See also George Redford's heavily illustrated *A Manual of Ancient Sculpture* (1886) [*YL* 1732] with numerous illustrations of ancient coins.

[61] For example, Walter Pater's *Greek Studies*, John Ruskin's 'The Hercules of Camarina' in *The Queen of the Air* (1869).

[62] Geoffrey Hill, 'Rhetorics of Value and Intrinsic Value,' *Collected Critical Writings*, ed. Kenneth Haynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 465-477. Seamus Heaney, 'Singing School: 5. Fosterage,' *Opened Ground: Poems 1966-1996* (London: Faber, 1998), 142. Paul Muldoon, 'The Briefcase,' *Poems 1968-1998* (London: Faber, 2001), 202.

The opening sonnet of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *House of Life* can be interpreted as a summation of the dual ambitions for sculptural coins and poetry to be monumental and durable, but on the other side of the coin, to be contingent and mutable with the passage of time:

> A Sonnet is a moment's monument, –
> Memorial from the Soul's eternity
> To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
> Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
> Of its own arduous fulness reverent:
> Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
> As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
> Its flowering crest impearled and orient.
>
> A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
> The soul, – its converse, to what Power 'tis due: –
> Whether for tribute to the august appeals
> Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
> It serve, or, 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,
> In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.[63]

Rossetti's sonnet invites interpretations of the sonnet form as 'sculpturesque' or 'statuesque'. But if sculpture is fixed, solid, obdurate, *permanent*; the language of sculpture is clay in the poet's hands. The speaker invokes the forms and materials of sculpture as correlatives to the sonnet's form and properties. Yet sculpture provides Rossetti with a fluid medium that is metaphoric and metamorphic according to the poet's purposes. The milky lustre of ivory corresponds with the light of 'Day' and the sonnet as sanctifying rite. As its counterpoise, the jet-black ebony serves as the material correlative of 'Night' and the sonnet as an ill omen. This chequered history of the sonnet is played out as binaries from line to line in which the sculptural analogy weds word and image: 'lustral rite/ivory/day', 'dire portent/ebony/night'. Rossetti's meta-poetic engagement with the bifurcated form of the sonnet is achieved as a kind of self-ekphrasis. The sonnet meditates upon itself as a chryselephantine or multiform sculpted artwork, or indeed an 'impossible object'.[64]

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[63] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, '[Sonnet on the Sonnet]', *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Jerome McGann (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 127.

[64] The sonnet achieves an examination of its own properties and internal mechanics with recourse to an alternative art form. To once again adapt lines from Pater's 'The School of Giorgione': 'each art may be observed to pass into *the condition of some other art*', achieving 'a partial alienation from its own limitations, by which the arts are able, not indeed to supply the place of each other, but reciprocally to lend each other new forces.' Walter Pater, 'The School of Giorgione', 124.

The double meaning of 'orient' suggests its dual ambition to monumentality and momentariness. It is at once the well-wrought, autonomous artwork: 'Of its own arduous fulness reverent', and yet it might adapt or re-orient itself with the passage of time: 'let Time see / Its flowering crest impearled and orient'. The clam's creation of a pearl is exemplary of autonomous beauty in the natural world, but it is also a metamorphosis over vast swathes of time. And Rossetti's sonnet-monument 'impearled' over time re-contextualises the object in the eyes of the beholder as something Eastern and Oriental. In this case the seemingly self-enclosed sonnet-monument is ineluctably contingent upon time. It is organic and changeable, the 'flowering crest', as well as a jewelled artifice of eternity.

This is borne out in the sestet with recourse to an alternative sculptural analogue; the coin. The *volta* or turning from octave to sestet enacts the flipping of a coin. The octave is 'its face reveal[ing] / The soul', and the sestet is its converse side displaying the coin or sonnet's value 'to what Power 'tis due', whether Life, Love or Death. Yet the contention that 'A Sonnet is a coin' does not appear to be a rejection of the opening line but a qualification that the particular monumental properties of the sonnet do not impose a rigidity or fixity of meaning in time or place upon the poem. Contrarily it circulates and changes its value: 'Whether for tribute to the august appeals / Of Life' or as 'dower in Love's high retinue', or indeed as an obol placed in 'Charon's palm' to 'pay the toll to Death'. The sonnet-coin analogy also provides a meta-poetic illustration of the bifurcated sonnet form. The octave and sestet are 'two sides of the same coin', the sestet typically offering a self-reflexive evaluation of the octave, yet one that does not contradict or reverse the language of the opening lines but instead qualifies them. The sculptural coin as metaphor for form and content thus encapsulates the poem's durability as hard, carved object, and its versatility as widely circulated and reproduced verbal artwork of varying significance and value.

III

The poetic inheritance of coin imagery can be traced across Yeats's *oeuvre*, from 'Brown Penny', to 'September, 1913', to 'Parnell's Funeral'. It is the contention of this chapter that Yeats's later poetic engagements with coins conceived of the object as a visual arts medium, a durable talisman that records and transmits ancient myths, and as a structural metaphor for the poem itself. Yet Yeats's earliest uses of pennies, half-pence and pence, variously invite discussions of chance versus predetermination in verse, and extended meditations on avarice in modern Ireland. A short poem of 1910, 'Brown Penny', might be described as an overdetermined

courting of chance and the random result. The sixteen-line poem is derivative of the so-called 'it narratives' of late eighteenth-century British and Irish literature. The speaker, undecided on whether he loves an unnamed woman, defers to a simple coin toss:

> I whispered, 'I am too young,'
> And then, 'I am old enough';
> Wherefore I threw a penny
> To find out if I might love.
> 'Go and love, go and love, young man,
> If the lady be young and fair.'
> Ah, penny, brown penny, brown penny,
> I am looped in the loops of her hair.[65]

The speaker's conflicting feelings – 'I am too young', 'I am old enough' – are mapped onto the two sides of the coin once spoken. The penny, comparable to statuary throughout Yeats's *oeuvre*, is animated by the speaker's engagement with it and his transference of agency. The penny speaks back to him: 'Go and love, go and love, young man'. In the pseudo-philosophy of 'Flipism', the individual's self-abnegation from decision-making by leaving 'everything up to chance' is in fact a 'strategic commitment to randomization'.[66] The coin toss is an ordered and orchestrated deferring to chance, as opposed to the intervention of unanticipated chance or a change of fortune. Flipism is therefore a means of revealing one's actual preferences, relieving the mental block in the act of decision-making by appearing to defer to chance. In truth, the individual engaged in the coin toss might realise his own preference or desires before the coin toss is even finished, 'I *threw* a penny / To find out if I might love'; or the individual might even resolve to act contrary to the result indicated by the coin. In the voice of the brown penny, the speaker's initial reticence 'I am too *young*' is turned into an obvious course of action 'go and love, *young* man, / If the lady be *young* and fair'; youth is decidedly not an obstacle if shared by the would-be lovers. The coin merely turns the speaker's logic, and his own choice of words, back upon itself.[67]

If the coin's decision is unequivocal, just as the toss was black and white, the speaker is still equivocating in the second stanza. If youth is no longer a stumbling block the speaker nevertheless constructs further, potentially intractable, dualisms:

> O love is the crooked thing,

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[65] *VP*, 268.
[66] Karl Wärneryd, 'Religion, Ritual, and Randomization,' *Public Choice Society Annual Meeting*, San Antonio, Texas (March 2008).
[67] *VP*, 268 [*italics mine*].

There is nobody wise enough
To find out all that is in it,
For he would be thinking of love
Till the stars had run away
And the shadows eaten the moon
Ah, penny, brown penny, brown penny,
One cannot begin it too soon.[68]

The speaker has found out what he should do only '*if* I might love' her. While determining a clear action in this case the coin cannot determine whether or not the speaker actually loves the unnamed woman. The idea of 'love' becomes the unresolvable 'crooked thing' that the coin as ventriloquist dummy, and the simple coin-toss, cannot straighten out for the speaker. By turns of phrase, the dualism imprinted on the coin by the speaker creates new dualisms, with each word and phrase destabilising the clear path determined for the speaker. Where 'too young' becomes 'young and fair', 'old enough' might become too old and too late. The decision made and voiced by the penny 'Go and love, go and love, young man' is obfuscated by the speaker's vacillation and delaying tactics which instigated the coin toss in the first place: 'Ah, penny, brown penny, brown penny, / One cannot begin it too soon'. The meandering repetitions and apostrophe to an inanimate object frustrate a satisfactory resolution. The final line might be construed as an imperative for haste: one cannot begin *too* soon because the lady, like the speaker, is young and single but not forever. Yet the lengthy meditations on love might make the action *too late*: 'For he would be thinking of love / Till the stars had run away / And the shadows eaten the moon'.[69]

If the coin is merely a foil in 'Brown Penny', a later poem from *Responsibilities* considers the accumulation of coins as an even more stultifying fetishism. In the opening of 'September 1913', Yeats maligns the miserly and actuarial impulses in modern Ireland: 'What need you, being come to sense, / But fumble in a greasy till / And add the halfpence to the pence / And prayer to shivering prayer'.[70] A risk-averse, post-Romantic Ireland is content to stack coins and prayers, 'For men were born to pray and save', in a cycle that desiccates the modern men of Ireland: 'You have dried the marrow from the bone'.[71] The cash register reoccurs in 'The Circus Animals' Desertion' with 'that raving slut / Who keeps the till', and in each poem till and till-keeper appear to be a swipe at a predominantly Catholic mercantile class.[72] The opening of

[68] *VP*, 268.
[69] *VP*, 268. The poet enacts a strategic deployment of his own language as oppositional structures, like the two sides to every coin, creating further obstacles to decision-making.
[70] *VP*, 289.
[71] *VP*, 289.
[72] *VP*, 630.

'Easter, 1916' recalls a similar condescension of the men met 'at close of day / Coming with vivid faces / From counter or desk'.[73] But if the poet revises his opinion of a scorned shop-keeping class in 'Easter, 1916', now 'enchanted to a stone', his earlier 'September, 1913' pours scorn on the same men whose avarice and dogma has interred and fossilized a previous generation of Irishmen: 'Romantic Ireland's dead and gone, / It's with O'Leary in the grave.'[74] Indeed, to dry the organic marrow from the dead bone alludes to the process of fossilization undergone by buried remains, wherein bone literally becomes stone.[75] Evidently, Yeats paints a prejudicial portrait of money savers and coin collectors in modern Ireland. The miser and the religious zealot are stultifying influences on Irish life, withdrawn from action and ambition. Yet meditations on a single coin in Yeats's later poems are closer to ekphrastic moments, moving from mere commodity to enthralling art object.

In the eighth section of Yeats's *A Woman Young and Old* (1929) sequence, written at the outset of the coinage committee's business, Yeats uses the coin as a visual arts medium of portraiture. Part VIII, 'Her Vision in the Wood' (1926), trades the restrained, ballad-like octosyllabics of previous sections for the eight-line, stately *ottava rima* stanzas.[76] Nicholas Grene notes that in terms of content 'the starkness of stone and thorn are substituted [with] the amplitude and classical resonances of 'foliage', 'wine-dark', 'sacred wood" in Part VIII.[77] The richer images receive a richer frame of visual arts reference. The 'stately women moving to a song' in the woods are pictured as 'a Quattrocento painter's throng', and later, 'Those bodies from a picture or a coin'.[78] The women are described primarily in profile, 'With loosened hair or foreheads grief-distraught', motivating the coin-image analogy.[79] Accompanying the poem's stylised scenes of violence, in which the flow of blood is replaced with the Eucharistic 'wine' and the Homeric adjective 'wine-dark', the coin's painterly or relief-sculptural properties provide a further mediation or aestheticization of the female speaker's injury and ignored plight.

Several years after the coinage committee's work, it is the panoramic mythography of 'Parnell's Funeral' that best exemplifies Yeats's conception of the ancient coin as a visual arts medium, and indeed, a medium that enables the transmigration of ancient myth into a modern

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[73] *VP*, 391-392.
[74] *VP*, 289.
[75] As Adrian Stokes declares in *Stones of Rimini*, 'Limestone is petrified organism' Adrian Stokes, *The Quattro Cento and Stones of Rimini* (Philadelphia: Penn State Press, 2002), 42. And Yeats's 'The Second Coming' plays with the ambiguity of the rough beast's 'stony sleep' which might allude to its petrification as the stone Sphinx statue, or its fossilization with the passage of time. *VP*, 402.
[76] Helen Vendler uses the phrase 'Yeats's senatorial form' in this context to describe the *ottava rima*. Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 263.
[77] Nicholas Grene, *Yeats's Poetic Codes*, 178.
[78] *VP*, 536-537.
[79] *VP*, 537.

context. In 'Parnell's Funeral' the design of a Sicilian coin is imagined as the imprint of a lengthy and elaborate myth of sacrificing an innocent, delivered from antiquity to modernity. At the burial of Parnell in Glasnevin Cemetery the speaker reflects, 'Can someone there / Recall the Cretan barb that pierced a star?',[80] before moving into a mythic scene of child sacrifice. It is not only the myth, but the myth's medium and means of transmission; a coin, that the poem calls attention to in the second stanza:

I

Under the Great Comedian's tomb the crowd.
A bundle of tempestuous cloud is blown
About the sky; where that is clear of cloud
Brightness remains; a brighter star shoots down;
What shudders run through all that animal blood?
What is this sacrifice? Can someone there
Recall the Cretan barb that pierced a star?

Rich foliage that the starlight glittered through,
A frenzied crowd, and where the branches sprang
A beautiful seated boy; a sacred bow;
A woman, and an arrow on a string;
A pierced boy, image of a star laid low.
That woman, the Great Mother imaging,
Cut out his heart. Some master of design
Stamped boy and tree upon Sicilian coin.

An age is the reversal of an age:
When strangers murdered Emmet, Fitzgerald, Tone,
We lived like men that watch a painted stage.[81]

The Sicilian coin serves as a durable talisman or artefact, emblematising the myth of the Mother-Goddess and the child sacrifice, carrying it into modern times. Echoing Part VIII of *A Woman Young and Old*, woodland images of 'rich foliage' and dense 'branches' are linked with images on a coin. The pun on '*rich* foliage' indirectly connects the materiality of the art form with the exposition of the mythic scene depicted upon it. In their respective studies of the literary and art sources of Yeats's poems, Richard Finneran admits that 'no such coin has yet been traced', and Brian Arkins contends that 'The Sicilian coin does not, in my opinion, exist'.[82] The futility

[80] *VP*, 541.
[81] *VP*, 541-542.
[82] Richard Finneran (ed.), *W.B. Yeats: The Poems*, 2nd edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1989), 504; Brian Arkins, *Builders of My Soul*, 173, 232n46.

of Finneran and Arkins' inquiries might be pre-empted given the overall ambiguity and fragmentariness of the various symbols and images invoked in the poem. Matthew Campbell notes that 'the symbols seem merely thrown into the poem as prophetic baggage, cut up into the abrupt syntax of a list'.[83]

Nevertheless, the Sicilian coin emerges in the fifteenth line as a dense compression of events, characters and unruly images – Hermetic, Greek, Christian and astrological in origins – masterfully or impossibly rendered as a single carved image.[84] The designing of the coin completes the myth, with a further pun on the process of stamping coins. The 'master of design / *Stamped* boy and tree upon Sicilian coin', just as the mythic child sacrifice is represented hanging or nailed to a tree. The coin evidently provides the poet with a considerable paranomastic resource, wherein a language of sculptural process intervenes in the renarration of myth. However, it is not merely the punning potential of the coin that Yeats invokes. His fascination with the Sicilian style of Carl Milles's coin designs shows that Yeats imagined ancient coins as a visual arts medium that enable the transmigration of ancient myth into a modern context. Milles's 'supernatural' coins were both ancient and modern, admired by Yeats for their multiform mythic resonances. His 'strange bull' syncretising the Sicilian Europa and the Bull with the Celtic *Táin*. His flying horse transcending 'technical opinion' and 'the eugenics of the farmyard'.[85] In turn, Ivan Mestrovic's marble statues of Serbian folk heroes could be Lady Gregory's Celtic "'Gods & Fighting Men" in stone'.[86] The extended social life of the Sicilian coin, 'passed to and fro in the Mediterranean traffic two thousand years and more ago,' is embedded in its modern-day realisation and re-enactment. Beyond the mythic men of Ireland's past, the real men and statesmen of recent years are implicated in blood sacrifice:

> Had de Valera eaten Parnell's heart
> No loose-lipped demagogue had won the day,
> No civil rancour torn the land apart.
>
> Had Cosgrave eaten Parnell's heart, the land's
> Imagination had been satisfied,

[83] Matthew Campbell, *Irish Poetry under the Union*, 158.
[84] In notes to the poem, Yeats connects the mythic scene to his multimedia meditation on 'the symbolism of the star shot with an arrow, described in the appendix to my book Autobiographies' (*VP*, 834), and originally published as an article in the *Criterion*, July 1923. The note elaborates a myth of the archer and its multiple incarnations through history with recourse to various visual arts sources; including Cretan pictographs, Cretan coins, a Greek vase and a statue in gypsum, and an array of texts on history, art history and mythology, including George F. Hill's *A Handbook of Greek and Roman Coins*, Salomon Reinach's *Répertoire des vases peints grecs et étrusques*, Pausanias's *Description of Greece*, and Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. *CWIII*, 484-488. In the article and later poem it is not only the myth, but the myth's medium and means of transmission that Yeats calls attention to.
[85] Yeats, 'What we did or tried to do', 19.
[86] Yeats to Lady Gregory, [2 July 1915], *CL InteLex*, 2699.

Or lacking that, government in such hands,
O'Higgins its sole statesman had not died.[87]

As T.S. Eliot acknowledged, Yeats's elaborate mythographies were 'a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.'[88] Yeats's aesthetic concerns the transmission of myth from one source and medium to another, a lifelong preoccupation with the 'myth that was itself a reply to a myth'.[89] Beyond the modernist 'mythical method', it is the *medium* of myths, whether sculptures, monuments or coins, that Yeats returned to and offered replies to, throughout his poetry. Coins and sculptures unearth old myths and give them a new currency.

The Sicilian coin also operates on a metastructural level in 'Parnell's Funeral'. Similar to Rossetti's sonnet on the sonnet, the stanzaic shift from lines 15 to 16 enacts the flipping of a coin: 'An age is the reversal of an age'.[90] The mythic forest scene of stanza two is stamped upon a Sicilian coin, the reverse side of which reveals its value in modern Ireland. As noted above, Rossetti's sonnet constructed a structural analogy with a coin, where the *volta* is metaphorised as a two-sided coin. The octave elaborates upon the hardness and durability of the form: 'A Sonnet is a moment's monument […] carve it in ivory or in ebony', wherein it captures and freezes, or friezes, a moment for posterity. The sestet meditates upon the sonnet's value and currency, yet the contention that 'A Sonnet is a coin'[91] is not a rejection of the opening line but a qualification that the particular monumental properties of the sonnet do not impose a rigidity or fixity in time, place or theme upon the sonnet. Yeats's Sicilian coin performs a comparable role as structural metaphor for the poem. The *reverse* of the coin is not a negation or refutation of the obverse, just as Yeats seeks sequential ages or epochs that are not binary oppositions. They become 'two sides of the same coin' through Yeats's structural metaphor and its concomitant language of sculptural coins. In the confused final section of Yeats's commentary on 'Parnell's Funeral', he writes that, 'He [Parnell] was the symbol that made apparent, or made possible (are there not historical limbos where nothing is possible?) that epoch's contrary: contrary, not negation, not refutation; the spring vegetables may be over, they have not been refuted. I am Blake's disciple, not Hegel's: 'contraries are positive. A negation is not a contrary.'[92] In 'Parnell's Funeral', 'An age is the reversal of an age' hinges upon the coin as an analogue of

[87] *VP*, 542-543.
[88] T.S. Eliot, 'Ulysses, Order and Myth,' *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Vol. 2: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, ed. Antony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard (Johns Hopkins UP/Faber & Faber, 2014), 478.
[89] *CWII*, 722.
[90] *VP*, 541.
[91] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, '[Sonnet on the Sonnet]', *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Collected Poetry and Prose*, 127.
[92] *VP*, 832-845, 835. Yeats provided a prose gloss to 'Parnell's Funeral', originally titled 'A Parnellite at Parnell's Funeral', between the first section of *ottava rima* stanzas and the second section in quatrains.

positive contraries. The poem effectively bookends an extended meditation on Parnell and his legacy, discussed in Chapter Two. Yeats's visual interpretation of Parnell's metamorphosis from diplomat to martyr trades Saint-Gauden's monument on O'Connell Street for a Sicilian coin in this late work. Two very public art forms record the appropriation or renegotiation of Parnell in a new Ireland almost half a century after his death.

To conclude, if sculptural practice and theory are often at cross-purposes,[93] Yeats's closest engagement with the *practice* of sculpting, the designing of the Free State coinage, informs his understanding of the art form as a durable, transmigratory, and 'supernatural' medium. Coins become durable talismans or artefacts, emblematising certain myths – the Mother-Goddess and the child sacrifice in 'Parnell's Funeral' – and carrying the myth into modern times to be interpreted or verbally represented. In 1928, with the duties of the coinage committee finished, Yeats praised the new mint in a letter to Bodkin that quoted, or misquoted, lines from the English poet Austin Dobson's translation of Theophile Gautier:

> […] I have not heard of anything in music, art or literature that has had better treatment in Ireland, & we should be more than content. "The bust out lives" — who was it? — "the coin Tiberias".
>
> Yours ever
> W B Yeats
>
> I have ceased to be a Senator[94]

The actual lines from Dobson assert the endurance of coin and sculpture, or indeed, coin *as* sculpture: 'All passes. Art alone / Enduring stays to us; / The Bust outlasts the throne, / The Coin, Tiberius'.[95] Yeats signs off his letter from Rapallo with a hint of relief in the postscript: 'I have ceased to be a Senator'.

[93] Alex Potts contends that sculpture 'exists both as a distinct art form and as a set of ideas or phantasies about sculpture'. The latter ideas and phantasies *about* sculpture, what I consider as 'the language of sculpture', often seeks 'an alternative to the traditional sculptural object', negating its conventional association with monumentality, solidity and durability. Potts, *Modern Sculpture Reader*, xiii-xiv.
[94] Yeats to Thomas Bodkin, 20 December [1928], *CL InteLex* 5202.
[95] Austin Dobson, 'Ars Victrix,' *Collected Poems*, 9th edition (London: Kegan Paul, 1913), 205.

Chapter 4: Yeats, Pound and the sculpture of Brancusi

I

During a stay with the art collector John Quinn in 1920, George Yeats recalled how her husband went through the various rooms in Quinn's New York apartment 'turning all the Brancusis over, or face down, on sofas and cushions […] All those ovoids – those smooth, curved surfaces, and rounded figures, with their egg-shaped heads – seemed to put him off'.[1] By 1920 Quinn had acquired a sizeable collection of the Romanian sculptor's work, including the smooth, curvilinear faces and bodies of *Prometheus* (1911), *The Newborn* (1915), and several versions of *Sleeping Muse* (1909-1910) and *Mademoiselle Pogany* (1912-1913) in marble and bronze. This vignette of W.B. Yeats rearranging the furniture, turning away the sculpted faces and hiding others from sight altogether, is more than simply anecdotal. Brancusi's abstracted and geometrical 'portraits' marked an unsettling watershed in the history of sculpture. When *Mlle. Pogany* was first exhibited in plaster at the 1913 Armory Show it was derided by one critic as 'a hard-boiled egg balanced on a cube of sugar'.[2] Yet when Ezra Pound and his companions visited the Paris studio of Brancusi, they would exclaim 'he is upsetting all the laws of the universe,' and 'it isn't like work of a human being at all', or so Pound recounted in his 'Paris Letters'.[3] On first impression the abstracted, pared-down forms that barely resembled faces or bodies were to varying degrees ridiculed or admired. In terms of art criticism and sculptural aesthetics, Brancusi was variously written off, rewritten and at times overwritten by his contemporaries. In George Yeats's account, her husband's later reference to the ovoids of Brancusi in *A Vision* (1937) was 'made with a certain amount of humour', not to be taken too seriously, and informed by his early encounter with the ovoids in Quinn's Central Park West apartment.[4]

This chapter proposes that W.B. Yeats was deeply engaged in a substantial body of art writing around the Romanian sculptor. Yeats referred to the sculpture of Brancusi in each version of *A Vision* and in a neglected verse-fragment from the Cuala Press edition of the introduction to *The Words upon the Window-Pane*.[5] The aesthetic debates glossed in these references underscore his familiarity, and at times disagreements, with the authoritative writing of Ezra Pound on Brancusi and modernist sculpture. By revivifying the connections between

[1] Quoted in Ann Saddlemyer, *Becoming George: The Life of Mrs W.B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 250.
[2] Quoted in Milton W. Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), 139.
[3] Ezra Pound, 'Paris Letter, December 1921', *The Dial*, January 1922, 73-78.
[4] Quoted in Saddlemyer, *Becoming George*, 250.
[5] W.B. Yeats, *The Words upon the Window-Pane* (Dublin: Cuala Press, 1934).

Pound's writing on Vorticist sculpture in the 1910s, on Brancusi in the 1920s, and Yeats's own partial but astute engagements with these same figures, we might complicate a prevailing Vorticist historiography of modern sculpture. The 'smooth, curved surfaces, and rounded figures', however unsettling or humorous, became particularly magnetic and paradigmatic in the later writing of Yeats.

Yeats's most well-known reference to Constantin Brancusi occurs in 'A Packet for Ezra Pound', which became the introduction to the 1937 version of *A Vision*. Reflecting upon his system of gyres and recurring phases of history more than a decade after their first conception, he writes:

> Some will ask whether I believe in the actual existence of my circuits of sun and moon […] Now that the system stands out clearly in my imagination I regard them as stylistic arrangements of experience comparable to the cubes in the drawing of Wyndham Lewis and to the ovoids in the sculpture of Brancusi. They have helped me to hold in a single thought reality and justice.[6]

Yeats's comparison of *A Vision*'s system to the ovoids of Brancusi is at once tantalising and bewildering. A preceding claim that his circuits are '*plainly symbolical*' sheds little light on the matter. Do the gyres and phases provide a framework for Yeats's art, just as the ovoid shape in sculpture or the angular cube in painting became organising principles for Brancusi and Lewis across their respective careers? If Yeats is thinking analogically about his writing process – whether through gyres, circuits, cubes or ovoids – do these geometric shapes provide little more than spatial metaphors for his art? Like the communicators in automatic writing sessions which were also referenced in 'A Packet', have the ovoids of Brancusi come to give Yeats 'metaphors *for* poetry'?[7]

The theosophical suggestiveness of the passage, and the use Brancusi's ovoids as illustrative prop, have been glossed by Giorgio Melchiori, Timothy Materer and recently Miranda Hickman.[8] However, Yeats's analogy might flatten or ossify some of the more nuanced interpretations of modern sculpture that persist across his *oeuvre*. Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux notes that the reference to abstract art might be a belated intervention into Vorticist writing on art.[9] Detailed accounts of the relationship between Yeats and Wyndham Lewis have shown the

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[6] Margaret Mills Harper and Catherine Paul (eds.), *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats, XIV* (New York: Scribner, 2015), 19. Abbreviated as *AVB*.
[7] *AVB*, 7, [*italics mine*].
[8] Giorgio Melchiori, *The Whole Mystery of Art*, 164-199, 271-273; Timothy Materer, *Modernist Alchemy: Poetry and the Occult* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1995), 32-40; Miranda B. Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism: The Vorticist Idiom in Lewis, Pound, H.D. and Yeats* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 187-244.
[9] Loizeaux, *Yeats and the Visual Arts*, 161-163.

depth of Yeats's familiarity with Lewis in an inter-arts context that goes beyond his curious cubes metaphor.[10] In turn, Brancusi's importance to Yeats in an inter-arts aesthetic and a specifically sculptural context deserve consideration.

The eponymous addressee of Yeats's packet, Ezra Pound, might elucidate Yeats's Brancusi metaphor.[11] In the late 1920s - early 1930s the ovoids of Brancusi had become a shorthand for the political and aesthetic considerations formulated at length by Pound in the previous decade. Listening to Mussolini in 1934, he was reminded of the Romanian sculptor's carvings: 'The more one examines the Milan Speech the more one is reminded of Brancusi, the stone blocks from which no error emerges, from whatever angle one look at them'.[12] Rebecca Beasley is correct to note that '[t]hree decades of the relationship between politics and the visual arts are submerged in this close reading', and yet it is also 'an analogy whose very pervasiveness indicates the extent to which Pound's engagement with the visual arts has become evacuated of its history, existing only as a repository of analogies to be manipulated at will'.[13] If abstract sculpture claimed to be apolitical, the discourse around abstract sculpture was malleable to the ideologies of its commentators. Brancusi was notoriously Janus-faced in his infrequent comments on his work, refusing to conform to any particular artistic movement. 'Why write about my sculptures?' he once asked, 'Why not simply show their photos?' This claim would foreclose the efficacy of art writing but also the intrinsic three-dimensionality of sculpture, if Brancusi meant it in earnest.[14] In the absence of authoritative delineations of his own work, Brancusi's sculpture was appropriated and redescribed by writers throughout the century. He was variously framed as a modernist, Minimalist, Dadaist and Surrealist. That the same sculpture of Brancusi gave Yeats a metaphor for his elaborate mythography and Pound an analogue to the oratory of Mussolini, underscores the malleability of abstract art in subsequent written accounts.

In *The Literate Eye* (2013) Rachel Teukolsky notes a common trait of art writing from the Victorians to the modernists in their construction of a 'verbal fantasy of visual exactitude'.[15] The othering and apotheosis of the visual arts in art criticism can misrepresent the artwork in

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[10] Peter L. Caracciolo and Paul Edwards, 'In Fundamental Agreement: Yeats and Wyndham Lewis,' *Yeats Annual 13*, (1998), 110-157; Peter L. Caracciolo, 'What rough beast': Yeatsian glimpses of 'Utopia' in Wyndham Lewis's *The Human Age* and *America and Cosmic Man*,' *Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies* 1.1 (2010), 81-108.

[11] Yeats's 'Packet' could be interpreted as an open letter, first published by Cuala Press in 1929 and separate from the contents of *A Vision*. See 'Editors' Introduction,' *AVB*, xxxii-xxxvi.

[12] Ezra Pound, '1934 in the Autumn' *Criterion*, 14, 1935; rpt. in *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* (New York: Liveright, 1936), vii-ix.

[13] Rebecca Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 207.

[14] Constantin Brancusi qtd. in Ashley Lazevnick, 'Impossible descriptions in Mina Loy and Constantin Brancusi's *Golden Bird*,' *Word & Image* 29:2 (2013), 192, 200n5.

[15] Rachel Teukolsky, *The Literate Eye* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 47.

the service of a convenient analogy. Drawing on W.J.T. Mitchell's *Picture Theory* (1994), Teukolsky contends that 'Abstract art is perhaps the most obvious, most extreme case of a visual art whose value is constructed by the words or master-narratives of critics'.[16] Of particular interest for this chapter is the sculptural vernacular of Pound and his fellow Vorticists, including the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, in the modernist little magazines of the 1910s - early 1920s, and the extent to which their art writing dictated the terms of appreciating Brancusi's ovoids. Sarah Victoria Turner has described the art criticism of the Vorticists as an attempted erasure of Victorian aesthetics, 'to create a smooth, plain and neat-edged tabula rasa on which to build the foundations of a "new" kind of art practice in the twentieth century'.[17] The smooth, plain and almost featureless surfaces of Brancusi's work were the ideal blank slate for a radical rewriting of art. Yet as Teukolsky and Turner note, there is an arbitrariness to what is considered Victorian and what is elevated as modernist in the written histories of the visual arts. By attending to Pound's early writing on Brancusi and contemporary sculptors we might delineate a more refined understanding of modern sculptural aesthetics and Yeats's subsequent responses.

Art historians Mark Antliff and Sarah Victoria Turner have recently shown that the schismatic shift from modelled statuary to direct carving was principally fought on the pages of little magazines and in words more than actions.[18] The title of Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska's 1914 manifesto, 'The New Sculpture', appropriated the masthead of a group of nineteenth century Royal Academy sculptors and art writers that they condemned: Edmund Gosse, Frederic Leighton, Thornycroft and Pomeroy. The *new* New Sculptors could summarise their aesthetic in a series of epithets akin to Pound's pithy Imagist credos and in opposition to the *old* New Sculpture movement. According to Gaudier-Brzeska, 'every inch of surface is won at the point of a chisel—every stroke of the hammer is a physical and a mental effort', in contradistinction to the industrial scale of nineteenth century sculptural practice where it might be said, '*sculptors did not make their own sculpture*'.[19] The distinction between the individual labour of the direct carver and the team of academy sculptors working in wax to produce casts, and translating clay or plaster models into marble, could not be clearer: 'No more arbitrary

[16] Teukolsky, *The Literate Eye*, 238. W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 232-235.
[17] Sarah Victoria Turner, '"Reuniting What Never Should Have Been Separated": The Arts and Crafts Movements, Modernism and Sculpture in Britain 1890-1914,' *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 14:2 (Summer 2015).
[18] Mark Antliff. 'Politicizing the New Sculpture,' in *Vorticism: New Perspectives*, ed. Mark Antliff and Scott W. Klein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 102-118. Sarah Victoria Turner, 'Ezra Pound's New Order of Artists: "The New Sculpture" and the critical formation of a sculptural avant-garde in early twentieth-century Britain,' *Sculpture Journal* 21:2 (2012), 9-21.
[19] Tim Armstrong, *The Logic of Slavery: Debt, Technology and Pain in American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 102. See also Martina Droth, Jason Edwards, and Michael Hatt (eds.), *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837-1901* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 15-55.

translations of a design in any material'. Gaudier, alongside Jacob Epstein and Brancusi, 'are fully aware of the different qualities and possibilities of woods, stones, and metals'.[20]

Penelope Curtis contends that a Vorticist master-narrative around the tradition of direct carving shackled early twentieth century British sculpture and its subsequent historiography.[21] Traditions of modelling ran concurrently and complimentarily to those of carving, despite the claims of Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska in various *Egoist* and *Blast* polemics. Furthermore, figurative statuary that was not merely derived from but dependent on the human figure, was still considered modern and innovative across continental Europe. Several of Yeats's favoured sculptors for Dublin monument commissions and the Free State coinage commission were lifelong modellers: Oliver Sheppard, John Hughes, Carl Milles, Paul Manship, and Ivan Meštrović to name a few.[22] Curtis notes that even the chief practitioners of direct carving, including Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska and Brancusi, often built up their forms in clay or wax before reproducing the work in stone or metal. Nevertheless, an opposition emerged in Britain between modernist carving and the dated practice of modelling, an opposition which was formalised by the Vorticist manifestos of the 1910s, the book-length studies of Herbert Read and Adrian Stokes in the 1930s, and the critical prose of Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth from the 1930s to 1950s. The importance of Yeats's overlooked commentary on the sculptors of his time and sculptural aesthetics can be recovered by identifying the deliberate omissions from a Vorticist historiography of sculpture and examining the language in which these distinctions were established between carving and modelling.

II

The classical idealism of nineteenth-century sculpture and its self-authorising art writing were equally undermined by the 'new wild sculpture' of Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska. According to Pound, primitive, Vorticist art 'is to be admired rather than explained. The jargon of these sculptors is beyond me', and inconsequential to an appreciation of the work. Epstein's contorted *Female Figure in Flenite* (1913) serves as a foil to an academic language of sculpture that entrenched 'beauty' in the perfect human form as the aim of plastic art. Pound confesses, 'I do not precisely know why I admire a green granite, female, apparently pregnant monster with one eye going around a square corner'. Its angularity and asymmetry cannot be validated by scales of

[20] Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, 'Allied Artists Association Ltd.', *The Egoist* 1, no. 12 (15 June 1914): 227-229, 227.
[21] Penelope Curtis, 'How direct carving stole the idea of Modern British Sculpture,' in *Sculpture and the Pursuit of a Modern Ideal in Britain c. 1880-1930*, ed. David J. Getsy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 291-318.
[22] Warwick Gould, John Kelly, and Deirdre Toomey (eds.), *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats, Volume 2: 1896-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 269-271, 484. Yeats, 'What we did or tried to do', 9-16.

representative bodily beauty, but the 'work permits no argument. They do not strive after plausibility'. In an elevation of direct carving, Pound conflates the smooth, modelled statuary of earlier sculptors with a smooth hucksterism in the art criticism that surrounds it: 'we are sick to death of plausibilities; of smooth answers; of preachers who "prophecy not the deaths of kings."' Epstein's *Female Figure* resists conventional expectations of realism and beauty by 'the mass, the half-educated simpering general, the semi-connoisseur, the sometimes collector, and still less the readers of the 'Spectator' and the 'English Review".[23] As Pound's polemic suggests, there is a war of words underway between English art periodicals. Art critics of the academy are implicated in an entrenchment of debased tastes through favourable reviews of modelled, monumental statuary. For the emerging Vorticists, the universally acclaimed sculpture of the Ancient Greeks is merely reminiscent of 'cake-icing' and 'plaster-of-Paris', while the present day 'Rodin at his plaster-castiest' is overrated and derivative.

Consequently, Pound dismissed negative reviews of Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska on the grounds that art writing cannot quantify or characterise the most admirable properties of this new sculpture. In an exhibition review for the *Egoist*, 16 March 1914, Pound reaffirmed his belief that the spectator cannot affect or even interpret abstract sculpture, writing of Epstein's marble *Group of Birds*:

> These things are great art because they are sufficient in themselves. They exist apart, unperturbed by the pettiness and the daily irritation of a world full of Claude Phillipses, and Saintsburys and of the constant bickerings of uncomprehending minds. They infuriate the denizens of the superficial world because they ignore it. Its impotences and its importances do not affect them […] This work infuriates the superficial mind, it takes no count of this morning's leader; of transient conditions. It has the solemnity of Egypt.[24]

Pound caricatures the prolific art critics Claude Phillips and George Saintsbury as connoisseurs creating their own readership of semi-connoisseurs and collectors. Pound's claim for the apolitical status of Epstein's birds in a periodical that advanced an anarchist individualist agenda under the editorship of Dora Marsden is suspect. Further, his insistence that Epstein's sculptures do not permit verbal commentary or prescribed measures of appreciation in articles that inaugurated a 'New Sculpture' and enumerated its properties, is clearly casuistic.

His assault on an academic language of sculpture persisted into his early articles on Constantin Brancusi, several years after the death of Gaudier-Brzeska in the First World War.

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[23] Ezra Pound, 'The New Sculpture,' *Egoist*, 16 February 1914, 67-68.
[24] Ezra Pound, 'Exhibition at the Goupil Gallery,' *Egoist*, 16 March 1914, 109.

Pound saw Brancusi 'doing what Gaudier might have done in thirty years [*sic*] time' while also appending the sculpture of Brancusi to a Vorticist history of sculpture.[25] The growing popularity of modern European sculptors working from the model, such as the Croatian sculptor and architect Ivan Meštrović, could be dismissed with recourse to the legacy of Gaudier-Brzeska and the continuing work of Brancusi: 'no one who understood Gaudier was fooled by the cheap Viennese Michaelangelism and rhetoric of Mestrovic'.[26] The echo of evangelism in Pound's coinage, bundles Auguste Rodin, Aristide Maillol and Meštrović together as second-rate disciples of the Quattrocento sculptor and his teachings. Brancusi and Gaudier-Brzeska represent a purer language of sculpture beyond the cheap rhetoric of sculptors working from the model. The pejorative "rhetoric" is connected to public appeal, an artwork that would compel a mass audience to think or feel merely as the sculptor intended. In a series of articles for *Blast* and *The New Age* in 1915, Pound castigated '[a] public which has always gushed over the sentimentalities of Rodin', promoting Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska instead.[27] By 1921 to 1922, Brancusi could fit the same formula: 'he is distinct from the futurist sculptors, and he is perhaps unique in the degree of his objection to the "Kolossal," the rhetorical, the Mestrovician, the sculpture of nerve-crisis, the sculpture made to be photographed'.[28] Pound is alluding to his own favourite distinction between poetry and rhetoric, a binary famously reworked by Yeats in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*: 'We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry'.[29] These monumental sculptors are implicated in a debased, rhetorical appeal to the masses and the demands of the mass-market. Brancusi's language of sculpture is closer to poetry than rhetoric, deserving parity with Cavalcanti and Dante in Pound's 1921 *Little Review* essay, while in his 'Paris Letter' of the following January, 'the serene sculpture of Brancusi' is set 'apart from the economic squabble, the philosophic wavering, the diminishing aesthetic hubbub' of the crowd.

Yeats's interventions and self-positioning in these polemical exchanges over Vorticism, sculpture, and sculptural aesthetics are subtle but can be recovered through close reading and by attending to the overlapping chronologies of Yeats and Pound's careers during the period. James Longenbach has shown how Pound's statements about Imagism and an emerging Vorticism were much more assured and precise after his winters discussing symbolism with

[25] Quoted in A.D. Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet: The Epic Years, 1921-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4.
[26] Ezra Pound, 'Brancusi,' *The Little Review* 8, no. 1 (Autumn, 1921): 3-7, 3.
[27] Pound, 'Affirmations: Vorticism', *The New Age*, 14 January, 1915, 277; 'Affirmations: Jacob Epstein', *The New Age*, 21 January, 1915, 311; Pound, 'Et Faim Sallir le Loup des Boys', *Blast* 2, July 1915, 22.
[28] Pound, 'Paris Letter, December 1921', 73-78.
[29] *CWV*, 8.

Yeats at Stone Cottage, whether in agreement or marked disagreement.[30] Recently Tom Walker and Lauren Arrington have shown the extent to which Yeats and Pound's concurrent magazine contributions in *The New Weekly* and *The Exile* offer a dialogue or 'quarrel' on poetry, politics and inter-arts aesthetics.[31] However, if Yeats's comments on Vorticist sculpture in the 1910s were indirect and uncommon, his interest and writing on other contemporary sculptors might complicate some of the master-narratives of modernist sculpture inscribed by Pound, Gaudier and the Vorticists. Upon viewing Ivan Meštrović's statues for the first time at the V&A Museum in the summer of 1915, Yeats wrote enthusiastically to Lady Gregory: 'To me it seems at the moment that they are the only sculptures I ever cared for – supernatural & heroic & yet full of tenderness. I can think of little else. It is 'Gods & Fighting Men' in stone.'[32] In 1926 the Croatian sculptor was chosen by Yeats and the Free State coinage committee as one of several prospective designers for Ireland's new coinage. However, his letter of invitation was sent to the wrong address and he missed the deadline for the competition.[33] On the same 1915 visit to London, Yeats encountered the sketches of the British sculptor Ernest A. Cole, writing to John Quinn:

> He is a thorn in the Futurist and Cubist flesh for he draws incomparably in the style of Michael Angelo. If his sculpture which no one seems to have seen, is as fine as his drawings, it will be like the publication of 'Paradise Lost' in the very year when Dryden announced the final disappearance of blank verse.[34]

This is a bold claim about a sculptor whose work Yeats had not seen and perhaps never saw. Nor is Ernest A. Cole a household name in the canon of twentieth-century plastic arts. Yet Yeats hoped for the revival – or revenge – of figurative statues over early abstract sculpture. He writes in anticipation of a new generation of sculptors modelling the human form at the precise moment Ezra Pound had declared their obsolescence. As will be seen, Yeats's later critical and poetic responses to the rhetoric of Pound suggest an alternative modernist model of sculpture and 'sculptural poetics', one that is achieved by Yeats through the same terminology employed by Pound in his art writing of the 1920s.

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[30] James Longenbach, *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats and Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 81.
[31] Tom Walker, "our more profound Pre-Raphaelitism': Yeats, Aestheticism and *Blast*', in *Blast at 100*, eds. Philip Coleman, Kathryn Milligan and Nathan O'Donnell (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2017). Lauren Arrington, 'Feeding the Cats: Yeats and Pound at Rapallo, 1928', *Uncertain Futures: Essays about the Irish Past for Roy Foster*, ed. Senia Paseta (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 188-198.
[32] Yeats to Lady Gregory, [2 July 1915], *CL InteLex*, 2699.
[33] Yeats 'What we did or tried to do', 11.
[34] Yeats to John Quinn, [24 June 1915], *CL InteLex*, 2687.

III

Constantin Brancusi was the subject of several articles and letters by Pound from 1919 to 1922, most significantly the autumn 1921 issue of the *Little Review*, which featured twenty-four photographs of Brancusi's sculpture and studio.[35] His introductory 'Brancusi' (1921) essay was the first substantive essay on the Romanian sculptor to appear in English, and Rebecca Beasley notes that it is one of Pound's most important and influential writings on art.[36] In terms of sculptural aesthetics, Alex Potts has described the essay as 'the most important early apologia for Brancusi's work'.[37] Pound returns to his Vorticist credos of the 1910s to begin the essay, and generally reads Brancusi under the auspices of Gaudier-Brzeska:

> 'A work of art has in it no idea which is separable from the form.' I believe this conviction can be found in either vorticist explanations, and in a world where so few people have yet dissociated form from representation, one may or at least I may as well approach Brancusi via the formulations of Gaudier-Brzeska, or by myself in my study of Gaudier.[38]

At the time of writing Pound admits to only 'a few weeks acquaintance' with Brancusi, compared to 'several years' friendship' with Gaudier, and yet he insists, 'I have found, to date, nothing in vorticist formulae which contradicts the work of Brancusi'.[39] As Beasley notes, Pound reiterates his pre-war assault on representational, democratic art and reaffirms his commitment to abstract form in the essay.[40] Pound restates an opposition to traditional monumental statues by praising Brancusi's small scale works, as he did the handheld carvings of Gaudier-Brzeska, and insisting that, '[t]he great black-stone Egyptian patera in the British museum is perhaps more formally interesting than the statues of Memnon.' Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska were both heavily influenced by Brancusi when his work was first exhibited in England at the 1913 Allied Artists' Association. Yet if Vorticism was the lodestar for Pound's 'Brancusi' essay, a Vorticist vernacular sat uneasily with Brancusi's art. Pound couches his formulations in uncertainty, reminding his readers that, 'No critic has the right to pretend that he fully understands an artist', or that, 'It is perhaps no more impossible to give a vague idea of Brancusi's sculpture in words than to give it in photographs, but it is equally impossible to give an exact sculptural idea in

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[35] Pound, 'Wyndham Lewis at the Goupil', *The New Age*, 20 February 1919, 263-264; Pound, 'Paris Letter, December 1921', 73-78.
[36] Beasley, *Ezra Pound*, 176-184, 177.
[37] Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination* (London: Yale University Press, 2000), 135.
[38] Ezra Pound, 'Brancusi', *The Little Review* 8, no. 1 (Autumn, 1921): 3-7, 3.
[39] Pound, 'Brancusi', 3-4.
[40] Beasley, *Ezra Pound*, 179.

either words or photography'.[41] This of course contradicts Brancusi's tongue-in-cheek aphorism that a photograph would suffice in place of writing about his sculptures. Yet Pound's essay is at its most contradictory and fascinating when it goes beyond the comfort of his earlier Vorticist formulations.

The ovoids of Brancusi are unlike anything created by Gaudier-Brzeska in his brief career, Pound acknowledges, and 'the metaphysic of Brancusi is outside and unrelated to vorticist manners of thinking'. Where Gaudier's carvings suggest a corresponding 'combination of forms'; in the marble and bronze ovoids, 'Brancusi has set out on the maddeningly more difficult exploration toward getting all the forms into one form'.[42] Appropriately, the *Little Review*'s twenty-four photographs of Brancusi's work switch between close-ups of single shapes and wider shots of Brancusi's studio that show a clutter of similar sculptural forms. The seemingly pell-mell assortment of ovoids and other forms in the artist's studio photographs are distinct from a typical exhibition of works in a gallery. Yet as Alex Potts has noted, a deliberate pattern of corresponding shapes and forms is achieved in Brancusi's studio photographs, where successive versions in different materials – from rough-cut oak, to veined and abraded marble, to polished bronze – suggest an incremental process of abstraction by the removal of material imperfections.[43] Brancusi's fixation on the ovoid, captured by multiple photographs in the *Little Review*, allows Pound to make the case for a sculptural style that 'is an approach to the infinite *by form*, by precisely the highest possible degree of consciousness of formal perfection; as free of accident as any of the philosophical demands of a 'Paradiso' can make it'.[44] Incomparable in his own art form, Brancusi is paired with Dante and Cavalcanti in the quixotic endeavour to perfect his art. The sculptor's Paradiso ends with a Dantean glowing sphere, or at least an ovoid in bronze: 'Perhaps every artist at one time or another believes in a sort of elixir or philosopher's stone produced by the sheer perfection of his art; by the alchemical sublimation of the medium; the elimination of accidentals and imperfections.'[45]

The higher Platonic aims of the continually reproduced and refined ovoid form was to be dissociated from the accidences of the sculptural material and the viewer, just as 'so few people […] dissociated form from representation'[46] when admiring, or perhaps dismissing, the work of Gaudier-Brzeska and Epstein. However, Pound faces his own crisis of representation when writing about Brancusi's perfect sculpture:

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[41] Pound, 'Brancusi', 3.
[42] Pound, 'Brancusi', 6.
[43] See Potts, *Sculptural Imagination*, 132-134, 140, for suitable examples of Brancusi's studio layout.
[44] Pound, 'Brancusi', 7.
[45] Pound, 'Brancusi', 5.
[46] Pound, 'Brancusi', 3.

> In the case of the ovoid, I take it Brancusi is meditating upon pure form free from all terrestrial gravitation; form as free in its own life as the form of the analytic geometers; and the measure of his success in this experiment (unfinished and probably unfinishable) is that from some angles at least the ovoid does come to life and appear ready to levitate. (Or this is perhaps merely a fortuitous anecdote, like any other expression.)[47]

Potts has shown that Pound's self-contradictory contemplation of the ovoids provides a fascinating phenomenological account of abstract sculpture. 'Pound both recognised and then sought to suppress the momentary, involuntary responses that the physical presence of the sculpture provoked', writes Potts, 'He was compelled, if very uneasily, to register how these physical accidents of viewing, which could momentarily disturb one's sense of the work as a clearly shaped object, helped to give it an enlivening immediacy'.[48] From a certain angle the bronze ovoids might appear to be lifelike or levitating. But this is an unwanted *accident* of viewing the object, being caught up in its superficial 'polished brass surfaces', and being transported beyond the 'thing in itself' to imagine something else, an experience akin to 'crystal-gazing'. Furthermore, it is the spectator's attempt to describe the object in words that misleads or misdirects his thinking. The 'levitation' of an object formerly praised as non-mimetic, 'free from all *terrestrial gravitation*', is a fortuitous association, a happy accident of his own language as he describes an image. If Pound reaches for the word 'levitate' to describe the ovoid's 'pure form' he must resist his verbal virtuosity:

> Crystal-gazing?? No. Admitting the possibility of self-hypnosis by means of highly polished brass surfaces, the polish, from the sculptural point of view, results merely from a desire for greater precision of the form, it is also a transient glory. But the contemplation of form or of formal-beauty leading into the infinite must be dissociated from the dazzle of crystal […] with the crystal it is a hypnosis, or a contemplative fixation of thought[49]

The 'pure form' of the bronze ovoid must be dissociated from the 'dazzle' of outward physical appearances. In visual arts parlance, and in Pound's usage, the fortuitous 'anecdote' means the depiction of small or extraneous incidents at the expense of the overall artwork's unity of design.[50] Yet Pound admits to being momentarily seduced by these surface features, the shine of polished bronze appearing to levitate and abandon its base. These are 'transient visual

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[47] Pound, 'Brancusi', 6.
[48] Potts, *Sculptural Imagination*, 136.
[49] Pound, 'Brancusi', 6.
[50] 'anecdote, n. 2c'. OED Online. February 2017. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/7367 (accessed February 09, 2017).

interests' that threaten or undermine the autonomy of the artwork, opening it up to accidences or contingencies such as where the viewer happens to stand in relation to the object, and what appears to be reflected or distorted in the chrome surface.[51]

Pound's reference to crystal-gazing might be a swipe at Yeats, who recalled his early interest in crystallomancy and other Hermetic practices in *Reveries Over Childhood and Youth*.[52] T.S. Eliot mocked Yeats for his fascination with 'self-induced trance states, calculated symbolism, mediums, theosophy, crystal-gazing, folklore and hobgoblins' in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933) and *After Strange Gods* (1934), interpreting his early poems as concerted efforts to get an equivalent trance-like experience or self-hypnotism into verse.[53] The crystal-gazing of Yeats and his circle was also ridiculed by Shaw and Orwell in later years.[54] And indeed in an unpublished essay on 'Brancusi and Human Sculpture' (1934) Pound sought to dissociate Brancusi's work from occultism and the Celtic Twilight, among other external impurities:

> The white stillness of marble. The rough eternity of the tree trunks. No mystic shilly shally, no spooks, no god damn Celtic Twilight, no Freud, no Viennese complex, no attempt to cure disease of the age by pasting up pimple. And no god damn aesthetics, as the term is understood in Bloomsbury […] He (Constantin Brancusi) wanted to get all the forms BACK into one form[55]

The ovoids do not represent or seek affinity with antiquated mysticism or modern psychoanalysis. According to Pound the ovoid is a solid, durable form – the thing itself – as opposed to a fluid, durational medium that is contingent upon time and audience, and which adopts the attributes of things beyond itself that it might appear to represent. 'Crystal-gazing' is one such spurious but fortuitous anecdote that emerges in the verbal description of the appearance and effect of Brancusi's smooth, polished ovoids in bronze. The chipped, abraded marbles or coarse-grained wooden sculptures avoid a hypnotic oscillation between the form and its myriad, imagined referents that the dazzle of bronze invites. As early as 1909, Pound's fiancée

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[51] Pound, 'Brancusi', 6.
[52] *CWIII*, 97.
[53] T.S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber, 1964), 140. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), 48.
[54] George Bernard Shaw, qtd. in Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 28; George Orwell, 'W. B. Yeats', in *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* vol. 2, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (Middlesex: Seeker & Warburg, 1968), 175-179.
[55] Pound, 'Brancusi and Human Sculpture', *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts*, ed. Harriet Zinnes (New York: New Directions, 1980), 307-8.

Dorothy Shakespear recalled asking if he had ever 'seen things in a crystal?', to which Pound answered in jest, 'I see things without a crystal'.[56]

W.B. Yeats's most sustained exercise of crystal-gazing in verse occurs in 'Lapis Lazuli'. The lapis carving, given to the poet on his seventieth birthday by Harry Clifton, is reshaped by outside forces, whether by time or by the participation of the viewer who might accidentally drop or damage the stone. In the final two stanzas of Yeats's poem, the significance of the sculpture and its referents have changed with the passage of time. As I discussed in my introduction, the fading of the upper parts of the lapis from an intense blue colour to white becomes a snow-covered slope in the poet's imagination. The various cracks and dents are interpreted as newly formed rivers and streams running through the sculpture:

> Two Chinamen, behind them a third,
> Are carved in Lapis Lazuli,
> Over them flies a long-legged bird
> A symbol of longevity;
> The third, doubtless a serving-man,
> Carries a musical instrument.
>
> Every discoloration of the stone,
> Every accidental crack or dent,
> Seems a water-course or an avalanche,
> Or lofty slope where it still snows[57]

The sculpture in Yeats's verse is unstable, multi-faceted, contingent upon time and audience, and subject to erosion or erasure. The cracks, imperfections and faults, perhaps fault-lines, of the stone and the poem are defining characteristics of each. In the above lines the consistent *abab* rhyme scheme of the overall poem is supplemented by an internal rhyme scheme: 'dent' echoing 'accidental', and the assonance of 'discol*or*ation' with 'water-c*our*se', as if to suggest that the changing shape of the stone has reshaped, or is mirrored by the reshaping of, the poem's form. These are the happy accidents of viewing and an ingenious interplay of word and image, wherein cracks can be interpreted as watercourses and discoloration as snow. If Pound is resistant to the material contingencies of viewing a sculpture, which might interrupt an apprehension of its perfect wholeness or 'pure form', form unsubordinated to representation, these accidental cracks or dents are essential features of the sculpture in Yeats's poem. They prove to be creatively enabling as the speaker imagines the stone as a mountain, the

[56] Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz, eds. *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters: 1909-1914* (New York: New Directions, 1984), 3.
[57] *VP*, 566-567.

imperfections as geological features. In line 45, the word 'seems' indicates the speaker's self-conscious awareness of his role in seeing, or making, this ideal in art. Contrarily, Pound asserted that the sculpture itself was the locus of the ideal, eliminating accident or fancy from the contemplation of 'pure form'. If a close reading of 'Lapis Lazuli' uncovers an alternative sculptural poetics in Yeats's work, a more precise engagement with sculptural aesthetics in Poundian terms and its alternatives can be traced in Yeats's prose art writing on modern sculpture and Constantin Brancusi.

IV

Yeats's first and lengthiest discussion of Brancusi appears in the 'Dove or Swan' section of *A Vision* (1925), where he appears alongside his contemporaries Wyndham Lewis, Ivan Meštrović, Pound, Eliot and Joyce. Throughout 'Dove or Swan' examples from poetry, prose, painting and particularly sculpture are invoked to explain the sequential, if at times cyclical, 'phases' of human history. Matthew DeForrest has noted that the section is preserved almost in its entirety between the 1925 and 1937 versions of *A Vision*. This is perhaps due to what De Forrest describes as the concreteness of 'Dove or Swan', which is 'constantly grounded in particulars and […] illustrative examples', as opposed to 'the sections that deal in the abstractions of the more theoretical and philosophical concepts'.[58] Yeats draws on a wide range of art writing from classic tomes to contemporary magazine articles that discuss these artworks or illustrative examples. In the case of modern art this inevitably means revisiting the discourses of Imagism and Vorticism: 'I discover already the first phase – Phase 23 – of the last quarter in certain friends of mine, and in writers, poets and sculptors admired by these friends'.[59] Yeats's commentary on 'Phase 23' is bound up in the language and discriminations of Pound's manifestos and polemical art writing: 'It is with them a matter of conscience to live in their own exact instant of time, and they defend their conscience like theologians'.[60] Here, Yeats is borrowing a phrase from Pound's 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste' published in the Chicago-based periodical *Poetry* at the outset of his Imagist phase: 'An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.'[61] Before introducing Brancusi and other abstract artists, Yeats echoes Pound's

[58] Matthew DeForrest, 'W.B. Yeats's *A Vision*: "Dove or Swan"', *W.B. Yeats's* A Vision*: Explications and Contexts*, ed. Neil Mann, Matthew Gibson and Claire V. Nally (Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2012), 136-158, 136.
[59] Catherine Paul and Margaret Mills Harper (eds.), *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats, XIII* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 174-175, 174. Abbreviated as *AVA*.
[60] *AVA*, 174.
[61] Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', *Poetry* 6, March 1913, 200-206, 200.

early impressions of the sculptor's work that, 'it isn't like work of a human being at all'.[62] In Yeats's words: 'It is as though the forms in stone or in their reverie began to move with an energy which is not that of the human mind'. Finally, Yeats alludes to the Vorticists' penchant for verbally blasting and bombarding the artists and art critics with whom they disagreed: 'these friends, who have a form of strong love and hate hitherto unknown in the arts'.[63]

Constantin Brancusi and Wyndham Lewis are introduced as the prime examples of the twenty-third phase and its turn towards mechanical and geometric forms:

> Very often these forms are mechanical […] I think of the work of Mr Wyndham Lewis, his powerful 'cacophony of sardine tins', and of those marble eggs, or objects of burnished steel too drawn up or tapered out to be called eggs, of M. Brancusi, who has gone further than Mr Wyndham Lewis from recognisable subject matter and so from personality […][64]

Crucially, Yeats distinguishes between Brancusi's 'marble eggs' and his bronze ovoids 'too drawn up or tapered out to be called eggs', an acknowledgement of Pound's view that the polished bronze sought a 'greater precision of the form' abstracted from living things or recognisable, 'terrestrial' referents. Yeats also acknowledges the distinction between direct carving and modelling established by the Vorticists: 'I compare them to sculpture or painting where now the artist now the model imposes his personality', alluding to Rodin's *Gates of Hell* as 'images out of a personal dream', and the antithesis of Brancusi and Lewis's impersonal, abstract artworks.

In addition to Rodin, Yeats alludes to two contemporary European sculptors who fell outside the Vorticist standards and parameters of Pound's circle: 'of sculptors who would certainly be rejected as impure by a true sectary of this moment, the Scandinavian Milles, Mestrovic perhaps, masters of a geometrical pattern or rhythm which seems to impose itself wholly from beyond the mind'. The 'true sectar[ies] of this moment' echoes Yeats's reference to his friends and acquaintances – Pound, Lewis, Gaudier-Brzeska – who are said to be living in their 'exact instant of time' and defending their conscience like theologians. The impurities of a Milles or Meštrović were rejected in the same art criticism that dished out benevolent approval and promotion of Brancusi, Epstein, Eric Gill and Gaudier-Brzeska. Yet Yeats reads these sculptors as consistent with the sculptural practice and critical vocabularies advanced by his friends. Milles and Meštrović are equally 'masters of a geometrical pattern or rhythm which

[62] Pound, 'Paris Letter, December 1921', 73-78.
[63] *AVA*, 174.
[64] *AVA*, 174.

seems to impose itself wholly from beyond the mind, the artist 'standing outside himself'.[65] Consequently, Yeats calls attention to a tradition of representational art that thrived alongside and in conversation with abstraction. The revisionist art history elaborated by Curtis and Turner identifies a wider European circle of modernist sculptors who were not tied to the dichotomy of direct carving and modelling that persisted in Britain. Where Pound dismissed the cheap 'Michaelangelism and rhetoric of Mestrovic', in Yeats's 'Dove or Swan' the Croatian Meštrović and the Swede Carl Milles are deliberately paired with Lewis and Brancusi and are set in opposition to an antecedent phase of 'sculpture or painting where now the artist now the model imposes his personality'.[66] If there is an effort in Yeats's elaborate systematizing across 'Dove or Swan' to make artists of each phase cohere, in 'Phase 23' there is nevertheless a precise reference to passages from Pound's early art criticism and an attempt to widen the circle of artists to which these principles applied. In Yeats's dismissal of a purist or true sectary's distinction between carved and modelled statuary of the period, he is in curious alignment with Adrian Stokes, for whom the terms carving and modelling became less a strict dichotomy of technical processes, but discreet attitudes that sculptors and viewers brought to certain artworks in their execution and subsequent written reception.[67]

Although 'Dove or Swan' was largely preserved between the 1925 and 1937 versions of *A Vision*, this dense paragraph on the artists of 'Phase 23' was excised from the later version. A passage from the first published version of 'Packet for Ezra Pound' might explain Yeats's reasoning for the removal. Namely, his unease about predicting the trend of modern writers and his successors:

> It is almost impossible to understand the art of a generation younger than one's own. I was wrong about 'Ulysses' when I had read but some first fragments, and I do not want to be wrong again—above all in judging verse.[68]

If Yeats was uncertain about casting permanent judgements on the writing of Joyce, Pound and Eliot, this chapter has shown that the ephemeral art criticism of Yeats's contemporaries remained influential and central to his diagnosis of modern sculpture. The removal of these paragraphs from *AVA* does not necessarily mean an indiscriminate rejection or suppression of these aesthetic debates. The incorporation of Brancusi's ovoids and the cubes of Wyndham Lewis into 'A Packet for Ezra Pound' suggests a compression of earlier ideas, just as Pound

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[65] *AVA*, 174.
[66] *AVA*, 174.
[67] Adrian Stokes, *Quattro Cento* (Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 2002), 28; *The Image in Form* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972) 47-48.
[68] *AVB*, 309-310n14.

paraphrased his art writing of the 1910s into what Beasley described as 'a repository of analogies to be manipulated at will' by the 1930s.[69] While due attention has been paid in Yeats studies to the esoteric art histories of Eugenie Sellers Strong, Josef Strzygowski and Salomon Reinach that informed both versions of *A Vision*,[70] the significance of 'ephemeral' art criticism by Pound, Lewis and Gaudier-Brzeska in modernist little magazines has been underexplored. The utility of Brancusi and his configurations in art history remained important to the later Yeats. Beyond *AVA*, the abstract ovoid served as a potent and protean image in Yeats's schema.

In an untitled and uncollected ten-line poem from the introduction to the 1934 Cuala Press edition of *The Words upon the Window-Pane*, Yeats reiterates the importance of accidence to sculpture whilst engaging directly with Pound's writing on Brancusi:

> Let images of basalt, black, immovable,
> Chiselled in Egypt, or ovoids of bright steel
> Hammered and polished by Brancusi's hand,
> Represent spirits. If spirits seem to stand
> Before the bodily eyes, speak into the bodily ears,
> They are not present but their messengers.
> Of double nature these, one nature is
> Compounded of accidental phantasies.
> We question; it but answers what we would
> Or as phantasy directs---because they have drunk the blood.[71]

The colossal statues in Egypt and the abstract ovoids of Brancusi bookend the entire history of sculpture in the poem. Each sculpted work, whether chiselled basalt or polished bronze, has the capacity to represent divine entities, to make them seem present and palpable 'before the bodily eyes' and ears. However, these manmade images, interpreted *as* the spirits they represent, are also an imaginative departure, '[c]ompounded of *accidental* phantasies', answering to the spectator, or perhaps even the believer, with what he wants to hear: 'We question; it but answers what we would / Or as phantasy directs'. The medium alters the message by virtue of its appearance; the material, the accidental details of the object, and the misdirection of the observer's phantasies.

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[69] Beasley, *Ezra Pound*, 207.
[70] T.R. Henn, *Lonely Tower*, 191-219. Matthew Gibson, 'Timeless and Spaceless?' *W.B. Yeats's A Vision: Explications and Contexts*, ed. Neil Mann, Matthew Gibson and Claire V. Nally (Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2012), 103-135. Brian Arkins, *Builders of My Soul*, 182.
[71] *VPl*, 969.

The obscure poem and the play it accompanies, *The Words upon the Window-Pane*, provide an exploration of séances and the veracity of spirit mediums.[72] Yeats inserted the poem-fragment into the second section of a commentary on the play following discussions with George about the nature of séances and automatic writing. His conclusion that the answers given by spirits in a séance were the collaboration of the medium and audience as active spectators speaks to his own automatic writing sessions of past decades: 'Remember how many of what seems the laws of spirit life are but the pre-possession of the living'.[73] In redrafting his commentary from 1931-32, the ten-line poem appears as a distillation of multiple correspondences with George on the nature of mediumship. Yet the beginning of the poem is chiefly concerned with the means by which the *sculpted medium* represents spirits. Yeats chooses precisely the materials that Pound stated an uncertainty or resistance to in his 1921 'Brancusi' essay: the polished bright steel of Brancusi's ovoids as opposed to marble or wood, and the 'Kolossal' figurative Egyptian statues chiselled from basalt, opposed to the smaller 'Egyptian patera in the British Museum'.[74] Where the polished bronze material of Brancusi's ovoids is interpreted by Pound as a means of eliminating 'accidentals and imperfections', the 'bright steel' surface and its 'transient visual interests'[75] are seized upon by Yeats as a model for mediumship and crystal-gazing, compounded of 'accidental phantasies'.

Yeats's later reflection on the gyres and lunar phases in 'A Packet' bears the same mix of measured scepticism and susceptibility to fantasy expressed in his ten-line poem from the introduction to *The Words upon the Window-Pane*: 'Now that the system stands out clearly in my imagination I regard them as stylistic arrangements of experience comparable to the cubes in the drawing of Wyndham Lewis and to the ovoids in the sculpture of Brancusi. They have helped me to hold in a single thought reality and justice'.[76] The earlier 1929 Cuala Press volume of *A Packet for Ezra Pound* did not refer to the painterly and sculptural analogies of Lewis's cubes or Brancusi's ovoids.[77] Their inclusion in *A Vision* (1937) might be read as a compression of ideas raised in the untitled ten-line poem on sculpture and its fantasised potential for mediumship.

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[72] The manuscript and typescript introductions to the 'Coole Edition' of *Plays* and the Cuala Press edition of the play, dated 7 October 1932 and 1934 respectively, suggest that the verse fragment was an addition to the prose commentary on séances and 'cheating mediums', originally published in the *Dublin Magazine* in February 1932. See the National Library of Ireland *Yeats Papers*: NLI MS 30,185 and MS 30,211.

[73] Yeats, *The Words Upon the Window Pane: Manuscript Materials*. ed. Mary Fitzgerald (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2002), xxviii. See the National Library of Ireland *Yeats Papers*: NLI MS 30,185, MS 30,211, MS 30,324, and MS 30,545 in private hands.

[74] Pound, 'Brancusi', 6; Pound, 'Paris Letter, December 1921', 73-78.

[75] Pound, 'Brancusi', 5-6.

[76] *AVB*, 19.

[77] *AVB*, 325n68.

Despite Pound's objections in the 'Brancusi' (1921) and 'Brancusi and Human Sculpture' (1934) essays, the natural vocabulary of abstract art was spiritualist in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. 'I was made to look at a coloured geometric form and then, closing my eyes, see it again in the mind's eye', recalled Yeats on the trance techniques taught in the Order of the Golden Dawn, 'I was then shown how to allow my reveries to drift, following the suggestion of the symbol'.[78] Evidently, Yeats embraces his own 'fortuitous anecdotes' and associations that emerge in the contemplation of Brancusi's abstract ovoids turned symbols. If this implies an unorthodox reading of Pound's polemics, Yeats's art writing contributions and poem on Brancusi nevertheless complicate a prevailing narrative of modern sculpture, offering one of many approaches to inter-arts aesthetics of the period that resist the elision of Modernism with Vorticism. Taken together, Yeats's commentaries seek to reclaim 'accident', 'crystal-gazing', and the beholder's fancy, or fantasy, for the language of sculptural aesthetics. Mina Loy's free verse poem 'Brancusi's Golden Bird' published in *The Dial* one year after the *Little Review*'s Brancusi number suggests another poetic response to Pound's writing on Vorticist sculpture and photography.[79] The range of appropriations and inversions of Pound's sculptural vernacular during his lifetime and by his contemporaries indicates a more diverse visual culture in the modernist period. Yeats's infamous description of Ezra Pound in the opening of 'A Packet' does not foreclose the possibility of a cross-fertilisation of aesthetics, or indeed sculptural poetics. In recent Yeats criticism the characterisation might emblematise their paradoxical inter-arts exchanges: 'Ezra Pound, whose art is the opposite of mine, whose criticism commends what I most condemn, a man with whom I should quarrel more than anyone else if we were not united by affection'.[80]

[78] Yeats, *Memoirs*, ed. Denis Donoghue (New York: Macmillan, 1973) 27.
[79] See Ashley Lazevnick, 'Mina Loy and Constantin Brancusi', *Word & Image*, 192-202.
[80] *AVB*, 3.

Chapter 5: Yeats's late Sculptural Poetics – *A Vision* and Revisions

I

In *Flowering Dusk* (1945), the Irish poet and mystic Ella Young recalled a visit to the Paris studio of Auguste Rodin with W.B. Yeats and Maud Gonne. The trip was instigated by Gonne and probably occurred in the winter of 1908 to 1909.[1] Young provides a mesmeric account of the French sculptor and his studio:

> Rodin was chiselling at a block of marble without a model of any kind. He was doing it, as we used to say when children, "out of his own head." So did Michelangelo chisel. […] He received us graciously, and explained that the marble he was working at would be a rapture of Sainte Therese. We gazed at it solemnly […] The room was full of Rodin's sculptures. He led us from one to the other talking of them, and gesticulating as he talked. He invited us for a week-end at Meudon, and said finally: "But you must see my pictures in the other room, my sketches. They are my great works." The other room opened off the first […] The sketches hung in a line from wall to wall. When I had contemplated two or three of them, I looked into the garden. Yeats went reverently from sketch to sketch. Maud Gonne joined me at the window.[2]

According to the Rodin biographer Frederic V. Grunfeld, the sketches Yeats gazed at with reverence were in fact a sequence of female nudes with buttocks and vaginas prominently displayed. The erotic drawings and watercolours unflinchingly record the female body in a way that several visitors to Rodin's studio at the time found fetishistic or perverted.[3] The visit led Ella Young to conclude that there was only 'one thing' she knew about Rodin: 'He is mad, brutally and sensually mad. Perhaps it will never break out, but it shows in those sketches.'[4] December 1908 was also the period of probable consummation between Yeats and Gonne when the poet took a room for the month at Hôtel de Passy, near Gonne's residence at 13 Rue de Passy.[5] Whatever happened in Paris, subsequent statuesque manifestations of Yeats, Maud and Iseult Gonne abound in his poetry. The lover or desired lover is petrified in a series of poems ranging from 'The Living Beauty' and 'Men Improve with the Years' in *The Wild Swans*

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[1] Yeats arranged to meet with the French sculptor for lunch while in Paris on 19 December 1908. Unfortunately, Yeats took ill with indigestion and had to cancel the meeting, writing to Maud Gonne with disappointment the same day: 'I was to have met Rodain [*sic*] to day at lunch but am not fealing well — the change of climate has upset my digestion badly — & will not go. I wanted to see him to get leave to see his studio.' *CL InteLex* 1019.
[2] Ella Young, *Flowering Dusk: Things Remembered Accurately and Inaccurately* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1945), 206-208, 207.
[3] Frederic V. Grunfeld, *Rodin: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1987), 516-517. Getsy, *Rodin*, 146-171.
[4] Young, *Flowering Dusk*, 207.
[5] *RF1*, 393-394, 603n172. Adrian Frazier, *The Adulterous Muse: Maud Gonne, Lucien Millevoye & W.B. Yeats* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2016).

at Coole, to Yeats's last poems including 'Beautiful Lofty Things' and 'A Bronze Head'. These statues are invoked to address the speaker's concerns with ageing, loneliness and a thwarted or unreciprocated desire. The Pygmalion myth goes hand in hand with the Medusa myth.[6]

In 'Fallen Majesty', written shortly after their winter together in Paris, Yeats records the ageing and disappearance of youthful beauty: 'The lineaments, a heart that laughter has made sweet, / These, these remain, but I record what's gone.'[7] The outline or 'lineaments' of a former lover alludes to William Blake's syllogistic reasoning in 'Gnomic Verses': 'What is it men in women do require? / The lineaments of gratified desire. / What is it women do in men require? / The lineaments of gratified desire.'[8] The conscious absence or passing of gratification informs Yeats's later uses of the term 'lineaments', which is frequently deployed by the poet in its specific sculptural context.[9] In 'The Statues' from *Last Poems* (1939), boys and girls in ancient Greece press 'Live lips upon a plummet measured face', and modern-day Irishmen are called back to 'trace / The Lineaments of a plummet-measured face'.[10] Here, the 'plummet-measured face' refers to the use of a plummet or 'plumb bob' in figure drawing to sketch, and subsequently sculpt, an anatomically correct figure. Conversely, in 'Beautiful Lofty Things' from *New Poems* (1938), the ageing poet recalls a young Maud Gonne at 'Howth station waiting a train,' with the perfect proportions and form of an ancient statue: 'Pallas Athena in that straight back and arrogant head: / All the Olympians; a thing never known again.'[11] The trope of the statue freezes, or friezes, the speaker's loved one across Yeats's *oeuvre*. From a living beauty to a marble or a bronze repose, from the Blakean 'lineaments of gratified desire' to the unresponsive 'lineaments of a plummet-measured face'.

In this chapter, I will trace the prominence of sculpture in Yeats's late poems. The poet's extensive engagement with sculptors and sculpture-writing, elaborated in previous chapters, necessitates a reassessment of his poems about sculpture. Beyond considerations of sculptural practice, I will examine the fantasies of sculpture that recur in 'Byzantium', 'A Bronze Head', 'The Statues', and other late poems. In these poems, I contend that sculpture paradoxically

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[6] As early as 1898, in a séance Yeats saw Maud Gonne 'as a great stone statue through which passed flame, and I felt myself becoming flame and mounting through and looking out of the eyes of a great stone Minerva. Were the beings which stand behind human life trying to unite us, or had we brought it by our own dreams?' Yeats, *Memoirs*, 134.

[7] *VP*, 315.

[8] William Blake, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Alicia Ostriker (London: Penguin, 1977), 158.

[9] Following 'Fallen Majesty' the word appears in 'His Phoenix': 'Of her unblemished lineaments, a whiteness with no stain'; 'Michael Robartes and the Dancer': 'The lineaments that please' a beautiful woman's view; 'The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid': 'The soul's own youth and not the body's youth / Shows through our lineaments'; 'The Gyres': 'For beauty dies of beauty, worth of worth, / And ancient lineaments are blotted out'; 'The Municipal Gallery Revisited': 'Where my friends' portraits hang and look thereon; / Ireland's history in their lineaments trace'; 'The Statues': 'Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace / The lineaments of a plummet-measured face'.

[10] *VP*, 610-611.

[11] *VP*, 578.

provides Yeats with a fluid medium, which is metaphoric and metamorphic in the hands of the poet.[12] I begin with close readings of poems about Maud and Iseult Gonne where statues or busts are invoked to address concerns with ageing, loneliness and a thwarted or unreciprocated desire. The story of Pygmalion and Galatea will be read as a useful origin myth for sculptural-poetic exchanges, one that is adapted by Yeats in *The Wild Swans at Coole*. In subsequent sections I connect Yeats's esoteric ideas about ancient statues in *A Vision* and a Rapallo Notebook to *New Poems* and *Last Poems*, where statues are non-static, seemingly organic and consequently subject to ageing or material degrading. I will conclude that Yeats's late 'sculptural poetics' returns to and reanimates his early fantasies – as well as the material realities – of the art of sculpture.

In so doing, this chapter will examine the more profound sculptural-poetic analogies that Yeats's work raises. Previous chapters have challenged the assumption that Yeats's poems about sculpture conceive of poetic form as simply 'statuesque', or 'blocky', or of poems in general as 'round, whole, independent, of themselves, enduring'.[13] From Celtic Revival statuettes to modernist abstract sculpture, coin designs to public monuments, Yeats's lyric manifestations of sculptural works resist these narrow taxonomies. In late works however, Yeats reaches for sculptural analogies for writing or rewriting poetry, albeit ones that are variously tied to sculptural aesthetics and practices of sculpting or engraving.

From the late 1910s to 1939, Yeats intimates an awareness of the rich history of sculptural-poetic pairings. The illusion of the living statue, the 'art his art concealed',[14] has its origins in verse. Book X of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* tells the story of the Cypriot sculptor Pygmalion who carved a woman out of snow-white ivory only to fall in love with his creation. At first, the nude statue is unresponsive to his fetishist affections, as John Dryden writes in his adaptation of the myth: 'the harden'd Breast resists the Gripe / And the cold Lips return a Kiss unripe'.[15] Desire is at once reified and stultified through statuary in 'Men Improve with the Years' and another misleadingly titled poem from Yeats's *The Wild Swans at Coole*, 'The Living Beauty':

> I bade, because the wick and oil are spent
> And frozen are the channels of the blood,
> My discontented heart to draw content
> From beauty that is cast out of a mould

[12] In *The Sculpted Word*, Grant F. Scott defines ekphrasis as 'the translation of the arrested image into the fluid movement of words.' Scott, *The Sculpted Word: Keats, Ekphrasis and the Visual Arts* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1994), xi.
[13] Loizeaux, *Yeats and the Visual Arts*, 188.
[14] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 233, l. 252.
[15] John Dryden, 'Pygmalion and the Statue', *John Dryden: The Major Works*, ed. Keith Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 675.

In bronze, or that in dazzling marble appears,
Appears, but when we have gone is gone again,
Being more indifferent to our solitude
Than 'twere an apparition. O heart, we are old;
The living beauty is for younger men:
We cannot pay its tribute of wild tears.[16]

In an inversion of the Pygmalion myth, the speaker's desired congress with a living beauty is frustrated by the static, 'indifferent' statue. The female figure cast in bronze or modelled in marble, remains inanimate. The speaker, briefly dazed or deceived by the 'dazzling marble' comes to his senses, revisiting and revising his choice of the word 'appears': 'in dazzling marble appears, / *Appears*, but when we have gone is gone again'.[17] The statue merely gives the appearance of life, as the figures in 'The Statues', 'moved or *seemed* to move / In marble or in bronze'.[18] A self-deception is played out and acknowledged by the speaker in his verbal description of the statue. Even the conclusion that the statue is 'indifferent to our solitude' alights upon a pathetic fallacy, investing the sculpture with agency and empathy it withholds. Yeats's marmorializing tendency in these poems, like the sculptor Pygmalion's vow of abstinence, is a means of frustrating desire and foregoing mutual fulfilment.[19] The channels of the speaker's heart are frozen in 'The Living Beauty', just as the speaker laments age as a weather-worn marble statue in 'Men Improve with the Years'. These frustrated love poems perform a Pygmalionic erotics of sculpture, wherein a central antagonism plays out between action and petrifaction. Distinct from the Pygmalion myth, the statue in 'The Living Beauty' does not come to life.

Yeats's adaptation and frustration of the Pygmalion myth extends beyond a couple of 'male menopause poems'[20] in *The Wild Swans at Coole*. Ovid's epithet from the story of Pygmalion and Galatea, *Ars est osendere artem. Ars celare artem* – 'Such art his art concealed' or 'the art lies in the hiding of artifice'[21] – has far reaching implications for sculpture and sculptural poetics. Classical figurative statuary, as the Pygmalion myth suggests, *becomes* the thing it represents. Daniel Albright contends that this is true of all the arts,[22] yet the three dimensional, free-standing statue of a man or woman has a special claim to the immediacy of embodiment. Across Yeats's

[16] *VP*, 333-334.
[17] *VP*, 334, [*italics mine*].
[18] *VP*, 610, [*italics mine*].
[19] R.F. Foster notes that after their winter in Paris, Gonne began to send Yeats letters 'about the advantage conferred on artists who abstained from sex'. *RF1*, 394.
[20] Nicholas Grene, *Yeats's Poetic Codes*, 67.
[21] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. E. J. Kenney, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 233, l. 252.
[22] Daniel Albright, *Panaesthetics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 7-8.

oeuvre it might be said that the art lies in the hiding of artifice, statues are animated and dematerialised, becoming their depictions. As noted in Chapter One, Yeats appears to allude to Ovid's epithet from the Pygmalion myth in *Autobiographies* when admiring two anonymous statues of Mausolus and Artemisia in the British Museum: 'we cannot distinguish the handiwork of Scopas from that of Praxiteles; and I wanted to create once more *an art where the artist's handiwork would hide* as under those half-anonymous chisels'.[23] Yeats proceeds to identify the same Pygmalionic mastery of craft in early, anonymous verse: 'as we find it in some old Scots ballads, or in some twelfth- or thirteenth-century Arthurian romance'.[24] If 'The Living Beauty' refuses a seamless metamorphosis, several of Yeats's late poems on sculpture oscillate between the sculpted material and the representation. In 'A Bronze Head', a bust in patinaed plaster is imagined as the 'withered and mummy dead skin' of an aged Maud Gonne. And as discussed in Chapter Four, Yeats's speaker in 'Lapis Lazuli' oscillates between the lapis material and dynamic, idiosyncratic representations. The deep blue of the lapis becomes the glittering eyes of the Chinamen, blanched lapis becomes snow, cracks are imagined as watercourses, dents as avalanches.

This incorrigible plurality haunts Yeats's Byzantium poems: 'Miracle, bird or golden handiwork, / *More miracle than bird or handiwork*'.[25] In 'Sailing to Byzantium' and 'Byzantium', the golden bird is suspended between verisimilitude and mere artifice. In the final stanza of the latter poem, the destruction and refashioning of sculpted materials sparks a chimerical accumulation of images:

> Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,
> Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,
> The golden smithies of the Emperor!
> Marbles of the dancing floor
> Break bitter furies of complexity,
> Those images that yet
> Fresh images beget,
> That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.[26]

The goldsmiths break and remake the Byzantine depictions of animals and nature. In terms of material, these fluid and multi-stable images in gold are a molten conglomerate of former

[23] *CWIII*, 138, [*italics mine*].
[24] See North, *The Final Sculpture*, 56-61. Loizeaux, *Yeats and the Visual Arts*, 174-175.
[25] *VP*, 497, [*italics mine*].
[26] *VP*, 498.

artworks or objects. Stanza four calls attention to this oscillation between material and depiction through the paradox of an unlit and un-extinguishable flame:

> At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit
> Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,
> Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,
> […]
> An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.[27]

The 'flames begotten of flame' are immaculately conceived conflagrations, sourceless and eternal, but they are also sculpted representations of flames, cast and forged *in fire* by the craftsman. The artificial flame 'that cannot singe a sleeve' is molten cast, alluding to fire in its material production as well as its depiction. Once the artificial flame is cast, it is still and singular, a flame 'that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit'.[28]

In 'Sailing to Byzantium', the paradox of men standing in fire unburnt can be materially illustrated in mosaic work. The poem's third stanza begins with this decorative arts metaphor: 'O sages standing in God's holy fire / *As* in the gold mosaic of a wall.'[29] The apostrophe in lines 3-4 of the third stanza blurs the distinction between the miraculous event and its material representation: 'Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre, / And be the singing-masters of my soul'.[30] The sages in the holy fire, remain ambiguously suspended between real persons and artifice as mosaic depictions. The refusal of a simplistic binarism between material and referent in the later 'Byzantium' enables a range of paradoxes: the 'breathless mouths', the golden bird crowing, flames without origin or end, flames 'that cannot singe a sleeve'. Indeed 'Byzantium' emerged, in part, as a corrective or response to T. Sturge Moore's queries about 'Sailing to Byzantium'. Writing to Yeats, Moore was 'sceptical as to whether mere liberation from existence has any value or probability as a consummation. […] Your *Sailing to Byzantium*, magnificent as the first three stanzas are, lets me down in the fourth, as such a goldsmith's bird is as much nature as a man's body'.[31] Moore contends that the golden bird merely constructs a *paradis terrestre*. Writing 'Byzantium', Yeats acknowledged that Moore's objection that 'a bird made by a goldsmith was just as natural as anything else […] showed me that the idea needed exposition'.[32]

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[27] *VP*, 498.
[28] *VP*, 498.
[29] *VP*, 408, [*italics mine*].
[30] *VP*, 408.
[31] T. Sturge Moore, *W.B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence: 1901-1937*, ed. Ursula Bridge (London: Routledge, 1953), 162.
[32] *CL InteLex*, 5360: WBY to T. Sturge Moore, 4 October 1930.

Examining the final stanzas of 'Byzantium', Daniel Albright suggests that there is a total collapse of the poem into 'the gong-tormented sea':

> the *images* in "Byzantium" are outrages to the imagination, artificial excitements that cannot satisfyingly terminate in a picture […] At the end the half-random agglomeration of *images*—dolphins, statues, dancers, gongs—reaches such a pitch of frenzy that the imagination's superstructure collapses, and the waves drown all.[33]

The flurry of images suggest a desire to break material substances: 'The smithies break the flood, / The golden smithies of the Emperor! / Marbles of the dancing floor / Break bitter furies of complexity'. Responding to Albright's reading of 'Byzantium', Alan Gillis notes that 'the poem's structure emphatically does not collapse […] The poem's rhyme scheme (*a a b b c d d c*) is central to its success, counterpointing the arbitrary progression of its weird imagery with an ordered sonority, a pattern of phonetic departure and return […] augmented by the repetition of a predominant number of words and images, and further subtle, internal sound repetitions'.[34] The images are also held together in an ordered chaos. To adapt a phrase from Albright, sculpture *is* the imagination's superstructure, animating and remaking images that yet fresh images beget.

Yeats's eight-line stanzas circuitously shift between pentameter, tetrameter and trimeter measures, achieving 'a more disturbing measure' writes Helen Vendler, 'than the historically stabilized pace of the pentameter *ottava rima*'.[35] Yet 'Byzantium' is nevertheless measured, however variable the measurement may be, following a pattern of 5-5-5-4-5-3-3-5 line-lengths through each stanza. Vendler misplaces the tetrameter line in her counting of 'Byzantium' line-lengths as '5-5-4-5-5-3-3-5'.[36] Albright's conclusion that the 'imagination's superstructure collapses, and the waves drown all' is an appealing one on account of the chaotic multiplication of images and the poem's closing line: 'That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.' Yet even in terms of content, the poem ambiguously straddles a border between iconoclasm and icon-making, broken images set in motion another pattern of images. It is unclear whether the work of the goldsmiths is destroyed by the flood, or if the flood itself is broken: 'The smithies *break the flood*', and later the 'Marbles of the dancing floor / *Break bitter furies of complexity*' as opposed to the marble being broken underfoot.[37]

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[33] Daniel Albright, *Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot and the Science of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 53.
[34] Alan Gillis, *Irish Poetry of the 1930s*, 179.
[35] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 304.
[36] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 293.
[37] *VP*, 498.

It remains problematic to assume that metrical consistency or patterned full-rhymes imply a poetic equivalent of the monumentalising impulse, or that the subversion of established forms implies the opposite, a counter-memorial or de-monumentalising impulse. As noted in Chapter Two, Vendler suggests that the 'pentameter rhymes' of Yeats's typical *ottava rima* poems brings them into the tradition of the 'sacred song: ode, choral commentary, public hymn' and suggests that the *ottava rima*, far from being in the mock-heroic vein of Byron, is 'Yeats's senatorial form'.[38] Nevertheless, according to Vendler 'The Statues', 'turns the form on its head,' implying an abandonment of his senatorial duties 'letting its earlier connotation of the "aristocratic" stability of art be troubled by historical migrations, transformations, and revolutionary upheavals in which art participates'.[39] The implication is that the revolutionary zeal Yeats feared in post-Easter Rising Ireland, and across Europe after the Russian Revolution, is symbolized by the destabilising of the established and conventional *ottava rima* form in 'The Statues'. Vendler, like Albright reading 'Byzantium', is at risk of turning a description of the content into a prescription of the poem's form. Whilst detailing the modern turmoil of Irishmen – 'We Irish, born into that ancient sect' – 'The Statues' maintains metrical consistency through a perfect iambic pentameter in lines 29-30: 'But thrown upon this filthy modern tide / And by its formless spawning fury wrecked'.[40] Although the subject matter is ineluctably 'formless', unstable or chaotic, these lines are formally consistent. Yeats is resisting Ezra Pound's oft-quoted declaration from Canto LXXXI that 'To break the pentameter, that was the first heave'.[41] At the point where the narrative of the poem is most fraught by flux and the chaos and uncertainty of revolution, the pentameter does not break but stands resolute. It might be tempting to explain this formal dissonance in monumental terms – that is, to describe the pentameter as standing impassive and statue-like against 'this filthy modern tide'. But to revert to the assertion that the poem is embracing the repose and statuesque quality of Cuchulain in this stanza would be to miss the point. Butting against the poem's narrative in these lines, the metrical form demands exegetic attention, yet the relation of the poetic to the statuesque is as precarious as it is appealing.

Critics have employed the adjectives 'sculpted', 'statuesque' and 'monumental' broadly, interchangeably, and often metaphorically in their readings of Yeats's poems. And conversely, as in Albright's reading of 'Byzantium' or Vendler's reading of 'The Statues', Yeats criticism is replete with descriptions of poems in which the 'superstructure collapses', 'things fall apart' and

[38] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 263.
[39] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 271-272.
[40] *VP*, 611.
[41] Ezra Pound, 'Canto LXXXI', *The Cantos* (London: Faber, 1975), 518.

'the centre cannot hold'.[42] These metaphors of sculpting or destroying sculpture allow critics to trade the dry terminology of 'ambivalence', 'dialectics' or 'form versus content' in Yeats studies for a language imbued with decisive verve and action, blurring the line between poetic composition and monument-making or monument-breaking. What emerges from a study of the statues within Yeats's poems, however, is a simultaneous desire to break-down the fixity and stability of the monument and a resistance to iconoclasm. In later sections, this chapter will identify the more profound sculptural analogies of Yeats's own design. The revision of old poems imagined as entering into a statue or re-inhabiting one's younger self, and as I discuss in my conclusion, the analogy of writing elegies as carving an inscription or epitaph.

II

Yeats's final poem to Maud Gonne trades a marmorean muse for bronze, or at least plaster painted bronze. In 'A Bronze Head' from *Last Poems*, the speaker recalls a bust of Gonne by the young Irish sculptor Laurence Campbell (1911-2001), which was displayed at the Municipal Gallery and the Royal Hibernian Academy.[43] The hieratic head has an encrusted and patinaed plaster surface that accentuates the skin as old, 'withered and mummy-dead'. A Celtic knot tying her dress and a shawl tied with Celtic badges at each temple, suggest a unity of Irish symbols with the ancient Egyptian pose and posture. The portrait in verse, as in plaster, is a haunting presence:

> Here at right of the entrance this bronze head,
> Human, superhuman, a bird's round eye,
> Everything else withered and mummy-dead.
> What great tomb-haunter sweeps the distant sky
> (Something may linger there though all else die)
> And finds there nothing to make its terror less
> *Hysterica passio* of its own emptiness?[44]

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[42] As examples of unilluminating sculpture-poem analogies: F.A.C. Wilson contends that 'The Statues' is 'one of the most monumental of *Last Poems*'; Tom Paulin claims that in 'Sailing to Byzantium', 'Yeats is wary of being too monumental, so he uses half rhymes – *young/song*, *trees/seas/dies*'; and Giorgio Melchiori states that Yeats's late poems seek 'the feeling of concreteness'. See, respectively: F.A.C. Wilson, *Yeats's Iconography* (London: Macmillan, 1960), 291; Tom Paulin, *The Secret Life of Poems* (London: Faber, 2008), 161-162; Giorgio Melchiori, *The Whole Mystery of Art* (London: Routledge, 1960), 235.

[43] The plaster bust *Maud Gonne MacBride* (1932) was exhibited at the RHA in 1935. See Ann M. Stewart, *Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts: Index of Exhibitors 1826-1979, vol. I.* (Dublin: Manton Publishing, 1986). See also Paula Murphy (ed.), 'Campbell, Laurence', *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume III: Sculpture 1600-2000*, 59-62.

[44] *VP*, 618.

'A Bronze Head' was intended as a companion piece to 'The Municipal Gallery Revisited' from *New Poems*. An excised draft title for the poem was 'The Municipal Gallery again'.[45] Nicholas Grene has noted that it is 'moored' to Yeats's earlier verse meditation on the Municipal Gallery paintings, with the speaker as gallery tour guide repeating similar visual directions to his reader-visitor: 'Here', 'there', and 'this'.[46] In 'A Bronze Head', these deictic and ekphrastic gestures centre on one sculpture instead of a gallery of portrait paintings. However, 'The Municipal Gallery Revisited' is not necessarily devoid of sculpture. In addition to the John Singer Sargent and Antonio Mancini portraits of Hugh Lane, Catherine Paul has suggested the *Portrait Bust of Sir Hugh Lane* (1933) as a possible source for Yeats's reference to Lane in the poem's third stanza: 'Wherever I had looked I had looked upon / My permanent or impermanent images; Augusta Gregory's son; her sister's son, / Hugh Lane, 'onlie begetter' of all these; Hazel Lavery living and dying'.[47] The marble bust was the sole object in the Hugh Lane 'continental paintings' room of the gallery during the 1930s, an absent presence for the Lane bequest of pictures still held by the National Gallery in London.[48] As Paul notes, 'Acknowledging the existence of so many possibilities for the image of Lane to which Yeats refers is more important than arguing conclusively in favour of one.'[49] The image of Lane in the gallery is compound and composite, just as the overall poem resists the narrow remit of conventional ekphrastic poetry.

In 'A Bronze Head', the speaker's meditation on the withered bust of Maud Gonne in her mid-sixties triggers multiple recollections of a younger, idealised Maud: 'No dark tomb-haunter once; her form all full / As though with magnanimity of light / Yet a most gentle woman'.[50] Campbell's modelled plaster imitates wrinkles and inlets in the skin from the handling of the material. By painting the plaster a patinaed bronze colour, the sculptor is approximating Rodin's technique of exaggerating the frayed and encrusted surfaces in finished bronzes to display the marks of the sculptor's hand in earlier materials.[51] Looking beyond this frayed and worn portrait, the speaker recalls a youthful Gonne, 'all sleek and new'. He wonders 'who can tell / Which of her forms has shown her substance right? / Or maybe substance can be

[45] *Last Poems: Manuscript Materials*, ed. James Pethica (London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 268-269.
[46] Nicholas Grene, *Yeats's Poetic Codes*, 46, 136-137.
[47] *VP*, 602.
[48] Catherine Paul, *Poetry in the Museums of Modernism*, 52-55. Roisin Kennedy has noted that the room was not left empty for the entirety of 1933-1959. After the death of Hazel Lavery, the painter John Lavery gifted a series of paintings to the gallery in her memory in 1935. These works were installed in the Lane room in 1937 at the time Yeats was writing 'The Municipal Gallery Revisited'. See Roisin Kennedy, 'Art and Uncertainty: Painting in Ireland 1912-1932', *Creating History*, ed. Brendan Rooney (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2016), 154-171.
[49] Paul, *Poetry in the Museums of Modernism*, 55.
[50] *VP*, 618.
[51] As David Getsy and others have noted of Rodin, this is a fantasy of exhibited process. His tactile marks and grooves in the surface were reproduced in marble or bronze from plaster-casts and the original clays. Rodin rarely handled the final materials, outsourcing to the foundry for casting in bronze or to the stoneworkers for carving in marble. See David Getsy, *Rodin: Sex and the Making of Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

composite'.[52] Once again the multiple forms, appearances and aesthetic afterlives of an individual are held together by the poet in contemplation of a single artwork.[53] Beyond the metaphysical considerations of composite form, invoking 'Profound McTaggart', Yeats is attending to the multiform substance of sculptural materials in the poem.[54] The plaster skin, withered like Egyptian mummy-cloth, is contrasted with the stern, unworn eyes of the sculpture: 'Human, superhuman, a bird's round eye'. The patina green hue, although affected, suggests the ageing and material weathering of the sculpture. Yet the mottled decay of the skin is contrasted with the stern, round eyes of the bust. Even in life, the speaker confesses, 'I thought her supernatural; / As though a sterner eye looked through her eye / On this foul world in its decline and fall'.[55] Campbell is careful to reproduce the curve of the eyelid and eye in the *Maud Gonne MacBride* bust, but the pupils are left empty, imitating a sculptural technique Yeats had long admired.

In the 'Dove or Swan' section of *A Vision* (1925), Yeats suggested that Roman and Byzantine sculptors drilled a round hole in place of a pupil so that the eyes avoided the material decay of the overall statue:

> The Greeks painted the eyes of marble statues and made out of enamel or glass or precious stones those of their bronze statues, but the Roman was the first to drill a round hole to represent the pupil […] The colours must have already faded from the marbles of the great period, and a shadow and a spot of light, especially where there is much sunlight, are more vivid than paint, enamel, coloured glass or precious stone. They could now express in stone a perfect composure, the administrative mind, alert attention where all had been rhythm, an exaltation of the body, uncommitted energy.[56]

The drilled pupil in Roman sculpture avoids the fading or discolouration of painted Greek eyes. The gay, 'ancient, glittering eyes'[57] of the Chinamen in 'Lapis Lazuli' will eventually blanch, while the speaker in 'The Statues' admires the wisdom gleaned from unageing eyes: 'Empty eyeballs knew / That knowledge increases unreality'.[58] Yeats's prognosis of sculpted eyeballs in *AVA*, as markers of succeeding civilisations, was eerily reminiscent, or prescient, of Oswald Spengler's

[52] *VP*, 618-619.
[53] Geraldine Higgins connects Yeats's multiple iterations of Cuchulain to his question on composite forms in 'A Bronze Head'. Higgins, *Heroic Revivals*, 109.
[54] Deirdre Toomey has elaborated the possible neo-Platonic considerations of Yeats's reflections on J.M.E. McTaggart, form, and substance as composite. See Toomey, 'Labyrinths: Yeats and Maud Gonne', *YA* 9, 95-131.
[55] *VP*, 619.
[56] *AVA*, 156.
[57] *VP*, 567.
[58] *VP*, 610.

Decline of the West, which was published in German in 1918, but did not appear in an English translation until 1926:

> Both [Spengler] and I had symbolised a difference between Greek and Roman thought by comparing the blank or painted eyes of Greek statues with the pierced eyeballs of the Roman statues, both had described as an illustration of Roman character the naturalistic portrait heads screwed on to stock bodies, both had found the same meaning in the round bird-like eyes of Byzantine sculpture, though he or his translator preferred 'staring at infinity' to my 'staring at miracle'. I knew of no common source, no link between him and me, unless through
>
> The elemental things that go
> About my table to and fro.[59]

The 'elemental creatures' of 'To Ireland in the Coming Times' are recast as the communicators from Yeats's automatic writing sessions decades later. This is one of Yeats's favourite late moves: re-inhabiting old verse for new situations, of which more later. Wherever he had gleaned the same insights or 'knowledge' as Spengler in *AVA*, Yeats would draw heavily from *Decline of the West* in *AVB*. Indeed, in both versions of *A Vision*, Yeats is lifting passages and examples wholesale from his books on art history and religious history.

III

Throughout 'Dove or Swan', Yeats seeks a material realization of one politico-cultural epoch after another. The analogy of sculpture to historical movements is achieved through suggestive wordplay and punning. Occasionally Yeats's account of the rise and fall of civilisations reads like a walk through a museum exhibition lined with sculptures and paintings. For example, he describes the ascendancy of Greece after the fifth century BCE Greco-Persian wars as follows: 'Side by side with Ionic elegance there comes after the Persian wars a Doric vigour, and the light-limbed dandy of the potters, the Parisian-looking young woman of the sculptors, her hair elaborately curled, give place to the athlete'.[60] Statues are among the few surviving records of several events in the history of Ancient Greece, yet Yeats presents Greek sculpture as paralleling or even determining Greek character. In peace-time the ancient Greeks are dandyish, light-limbed and predominantly female in line with their statues. During the Greco-Persian wars, the Greeks are disciplined, vigorous and male, alongside their sculptural equivalents.

[59] *AVB*, 14.
[60] *AVA*, 152.

Distinguishing the repose of Roman statuary from the apparent movement of Greek statuary, Yeats adopts and adapts the word 'rhythm': 'They [the Romans] could now express in stone a perfect composure, the administrative mind, alert attention where all had been rhythm, an exaltation of the body, uncommitted energy' in Greece.[61] Unlike the reserved, 'toga'd marble bodies' of Roman senators, the Elgin marbles are described as rhythmic, energetic and suggestive of movement:

> Those riders upon the Parthenon had all the world's power in their moving bodies, and in a movement that seemed, so were the hearts of man and beast set upon it, that of a dance; but presently all would change and measurement succeed to pleasure, the dancing-master outlive the dance.[62]

Yeats's descriptions are appropriately rhythmic and patterned, with the repetition of 'moving […] movement', and 'dance', and the opposition of 'pleasure' to 'measurement'. Wordplay is paramount in these discursive extracts, allowing Yeats to twin a commentary on aesthetics with a commentary on politics. In an earlier passage, meticulously measured statues imply a loss of movement and rhythm: 'There are everywhere statues where every muscle has been measured, every position debated, and these statues represent man with nothing more to achieve, physical man finished and complacent'.[63] The suggestion that the 'troops of marble Senators' were carefully measured and modelled by the sculptor, with 'every position debated', inflects towards the role of the Roman Senate, its open-ended discussion and debates. '[P]hysical man *finished* and complacent' finds its material correlative in finished sculpture and the importance placed upon neo-classical finish by Winckelmann and early art historians. Conversely, the elevation of fragmented ancient Greek sculptures by Pater and Hegel, works discovered in the late-eighteenth to nineteenth century, is shared by Yeats in his praise of the Parthenon marbles. The finish and complacency of man in the Roman Republic is juxtaposed to the 'heroic life, *passionate fragmentary man*, all that had been imagined by great poets and sculptors' in Ancient Greece.[64]

Concomitant with static Roman sculpture is a complacent and declining state, according to *A Vision*. Consider the sculptural terms in which Yeats begins his description of the decline of the Roman Empire: 'All is rigid and stationary, men fight for centuries with the same sword

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[61] *AVA*, 156.
[62] *AVA*, 156. As Catherine Paul and Margaret Harper note, Yeats had surely read Pater's description of the Parthenon marbles in the 'Winckelmann' essay in *The Renaissance*: 'If a single product only of Hellenic art were to be saved in the wreck of all beside, one might choose perhaps from the 'beautiful multitude' of the Panathenaic frieze, that line of youths on horseback, with their level glances, their proud and patient lips, their chastened reins, their whole bodies in exquisite service'. Walter Pater qtd. *AVA*, 299n49.
[63] *AVA*, 153.
[64] *AVA*, 154, [*italics mine*].

and spear […] the speed of a sailing ship remains unchanged from the time of Pericles to that of Constantine'.[65] He perceives the civilisation as inflexible and impoverished by its commitment to 'the most scrupulous realism' in its sculpture, and by extension, its politics and philosophy: 'When I think of Rome I see always those heads with their world-considering eyes, and those bodies as conventional as the metaphors in a leading article'.[66] Yeats's imagining of the Romans as 'toga'd marble bodies' recalls Cicero's *De Officiis*, and his declaration of peacetime governance: 'let arms yield to the toga'.[67] If the toga was emblematic of Roman diplomacy it marks a stultifying phase in human civilisation for Yeats. The static, mass-produced 'toga'd marble bodies' upon which can be screwed a range of modelled heads, indicates that bodily exertion and action have died out: 'the dancing master himself has died, the delineation of character as shown in face and head, as with us of recent years, is all in all'.[68] Evidently in *A Vision*, statues are understood to be the cultural and social accretions of succeeding civilisations. Particular sculptures become emblematic, perhaps symptomatic, of the civilisation in which they were made. However, it is necessary to underscore the limitations and unsystematic nature of Yeats's schema.

The omissions in Yeats's account of human history are due to a self-confessed ignorance of the artworks of that period and people. In a paragraph on the rise of Byzantium he concedes: 'I have not the knowledge […] to trace the rise of the Byzantine state through Phases 9, 10 and 11. My diagram tells me that a hundred and sixty years brought that state to its 15th Phase, but I that know nothing but the arts and of these little, cannot revise the series of dates'.[69] Yeats's systematising of the rise and fall of civilisations is at once modest and unsystematic in the absence of appropriate analogies from the world of art. On the fall of Byzantium, Yeats writes: 'Of the moment of climax itself I can say nothing and of what followed from Phase 17 to Phase 21 almost nothing, for I have no knowledge of the time; and no analogy from the age after Phidias, or after our own Renaissance can help'.[70] What emerges from an examination of the inconsistencies in Yeats's system is its reliance, or overreliance, on art history. Indeed, in acknowledging that his system parallels Charlemagne with Alexander the Great, Yeats makes the following, somewhat bizarre, admission: 'I notice too that my diagram makes Phase 22

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[65] *AVA*, 157.
[66] *AVA*, 157.
[67] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cicero: On Duties*, ed. and trans. M.T. Griffin and A.N. Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 31. Recalling Cicero and Virgil's depictions of the Romans as the 'lords of the world and the toga-wearing people', Yeats asked in his 1930 diary: 'What idea of the state, what substitute for that of the toga'd race that ruled the world, will serve our immediate purpose here in Ireland?' W.B. Yeats, *Explorations* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 377.
[68] *AVA*, 156.
[69] Yeats, *AVA*, 158.
[70] Yeats, *AVA*, 160.

coincide with the break-up of Charlemagne's Empire and so clearly likens him to Alexander, but I do not want to concern myself, except where I must, with political events'.[71] Earlier in 'Dove or Swan', Yeats is untroubled by his linking of Christ to Alexander with recourse to sculpture: 'When revelation comes athlete and sage are merged; the earliest sculptured image of Christ is copied from that of the Apotheosis of Alexander the Great; the tradition is founded which declares even to our own day that Christ alone is exactly six foot high, perfect physical man'.[72] A commentary on the history of art informs and takes precedence over a commentary on politics and the history of man.

IV

In a journal entry of 1929, Yeats wrote: 'I recall a passage in some Hermetic writer on the increased power that a God feels on getting into a statue. I feel as neither Elliot [*sic*] nor Ezra do the need of old forms, old situations, that, as when I re-write some early poems of my own, I may escape from scepticism'.[73] The entry – written when Yeats visited Ezra Pound in Rapallo – corresponds with Pound's views on Roman sculpture articulated the previous year in his article on 'Cavalcanti' for *The Dial*: '*The god is inside the stone* […] The force is arrested, but there is never any question about its latency, about the force being the essential, and the rest "accidental"'.[74] Terence Diggory speculates that it was from Pound and not a Hermetic writer that Yeats recalled this idea of a God getting into a statue: 'As in the case of 'Swedenborg, Mediums and Desolate Places', Yeats substituted a Hermetic writer for Pound, who had written in the *Dial* for March 1928 that 'the best Egyptian sculpture is magnificent plastic; but its force comes from a non-plastic idea, i.e. the god is inside the statue".[75] However, Yeats was already familiar with Hermetic beliefs in the 'ensouling' of statues prior to discussions with Pound in Rapallo from 1928 to 1929. His personal copy of the *Hermetica* – edited and translated by the classics scholar Walter Scott and published in three volumes from 1924-36 – contains multiple marginal notations.[76] In the annotated *A Vision: The Revised 1937 Edition* (*AVB*) Margaret Harper and

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[71] *AVA*, 161.
[72] *AVA*, 154. As Paul and Harper note, this passage is derivative of Eugenie Sellers Strong's *Apotheosis and After Life: Three Lectures on Certain Phases of Art and Religion in the Roman Empire*, [YL 2,015], *AVA*, 296-297. George Yeats purchased a copy of this book in early 1916. Saddlemyer, *Becoming George*, 83.
[73] Quoted in Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats* (London: Faber, 1954), 240.
[74] Ezra Pound, 'Cavalcanti,' *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T.S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1968), 152.
[75] Terence Diggory, *Yeats and American Poetry: The Tradition of the Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 52.
[76] *YL* 881: *Hermetica. The Ancient Greek and Latin writings which contain religious or philosophic teaching ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*, ed. and trans. Walter Scott [3 vols.; Oxford Clarendon Press, 1924-36]. It is important to note that while the first volume of *Hermetica* (1924) in the Yeats Library (NLI) is heavily annotated, the second and third volumes are almost entirely uncut.

Catherine Paul suggest that Yeats read or reread the Asclepius dialogue from the Hermetic fragments between late 1931 and early 1932, concurrent with his rethinking of 'such topics from Book II as the *Daimon*, destiny, light, and a universal self'.[77] Furthermore, Yeats's journal entry evinces an awareness of a very particular Hermetic belief that the statue provides a god with increased earthly power. In the Asclepius dialogue of the *Hermetica*, the author Hermes Trismegistus instructs a ritual practice of calling down the spirits of gods to ensoul or animate a statue:

> Our ancestors […] invented the art of making gods out of some material substance suited for the purpose. And to this invention they added a supernatural force whereby the images might have power to work good or hurt, and combined it with the material substance; that is to say, being unable to make souls, they invoked the souls of daemons, and implanted them in the statues by means of certain holy and sacred rites.[78]

According to the *Hermetica*, this embodiment or incarnation of a god did not limit or arrest but instead heightened its earthly power: 'our gods on earth below see to things one by one, predict events by means of sacred lots and divination, foresee what is coming and render aid accordingly; they assist, like loving kinsmen, in the affairs of men. Thus the celestial gods rule over things universal; the terrestrial gods administer particulars'.[79] If gods or daemons are arrested within the confines of sculpture they are also made particular to a time and people, ensuring a new and greater salvific function.

Just as the *Hermetica* claims that the divinely ensouled statue can, 'render aid to humans as if through loving kinship, looking after some things individually', so Yeats in preliminary drafts of 'The Statues' imagined the movement from statues in one period to another as the multiple reincarnations of a single deity:

> 1 They went out in broad day or under the moon
> 2 Moving with the divine certainty, somebody called them
> 3 ~~Gods~~ divinities ; ~~only forms incapable of~~ empty faces,
> 4 measure Pythagorean perfection ; only that which is
> […]
> Apolo
> 20 ~~Oppolo~~ forgot Pythagoras & took the name of Budda[80]

[77] *AVB*, xxvii-xxviii.
[78] *Hermetica*, 359. This particular extract is highlighted in pencil in Yeats's copy (YL 881).
[79] *Hermetica*, 363.
[80] *Last Poems: Manuscript Materials*, ed. James Pethica (London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 203.

The statue of the god, whether Apollo or Buddha, allows for the god to be materially present. It is this presence of the earthly god that the speaker claims 'we have need of' in post-independence Ireland. In the published version of 'The Statues' in *Last Poems*, the four stanzas chart a movement of sculptural practices from Ancient Greece, to India in the middle ages and finally to Ireland in the twentieth century. Yet Yeats's drafts of the poem bear a closer and clearer proximity to the syncretic, theosophical systems set out in 'Dove or Swan', and the movements from statues in one period to another are more explicitly rendered as the multiple reincarnations of a single deity. The statue representing the god *is* the god.[81]

In his essay on Guido Cavalcanti, Pound finds Greek and Roman statues, unlike Egyptian statues, to be preoccupied with superfice at the expense of the 'god inside': 'There is hardly any debate about the Greek classical sculpture, to them it is the plastic that matters. In the case of the Etruscan Apollo at Villa Giulia (Rome) the 'god is inside,' but the psychology is merely that of a Hallowe'en pumpkin'.[82] Where Pound suggests that an ethereal spirit or god is latent within sculpture and that the statue is superficial and constricting, Yeats writes of the god 'getting *into* a statue' of its likeness, and increasing its earthly power. If Yeats is appropriating Pound's ideas of sculpture, I would suggest that Yeats's foreknowledge of Hermeticism and his efforts to construct an occult mythography in *A Vision* shaped his understanding of sculpture in spiritual terms. His recollection of a 'passage in some Hermetic writer on the increased power that a God feels on getting into a statue' appears in the 'Diary of Thought' from third 'Rapallo Notebook', where Yeats distinguishes his poetic practice and understanding of tradition from Pound and T.S. Eliot:

> I have felt when re-writing some early poem—"The Sorrow of Love" for instance--that by assuming a self of past years, as remote from that of today[,] or some dramatic creation, I touched a stronger passion & greater confidence than I possess, or ever did possess. Ezra[,] when he recreates Propertius or some Chinese poet escapes his scepticism.
> […]
> We[,] even more than Elliot[,] require tradition & though it may include much that is his, it is not a belief or submission, but exposition of intellectual [?minds/?needs]. I recall a passage in some Hermetic writer on the increased power that a god feels on getting into a statue. I feel[,] as neither Elliot nor Ezra do[,] the need of old forms, old situations, that, as when I re-write some early poems of my own, I may escape from scepticism.[83]

[81] As Adrian Stokes writes in *The Stones of Rimini*, the 'carved white marble was not only the image of the god but the god himself.' Stokes, *The Stones of Rimini*, 86.
[82] Pound, 'Cavalcanti,' *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, 152.
[83] Yeats, 'Diary of Thought' (1929), in Rapallo Notebook [C], NLI 13,580. I am grateful to Wayne Chapman for helping me with the transcription of Rapallo notebook.

Yeats's 1929 poem 'Mohini Chatterjee', a partial re-writing of one of his earliest poems 'Kanva on Himself',[84] appears in the notebook shortly after the 'Diary of Thought'. In each poem he attempted to distil an idea of reincarnation elaborated by the Indian Brahmin, Mohini Chatterjee, in Yeats's youth. Yeats recalled that he spoiled the Brahmin's 'beautiful words' in 1889 by 'turning them into clumsy verse',[85] a mistake he rectified with 'Mohini Chatterjee' in *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (1929). Is it a religious scepticism that Yeats hopes to escape by returning to models of reincarnation from old poems? And if the claim that Ezra Pound, 'when he recreates Propertius or some Chinese poet escapes his scepticism' can be taken on good faith, is it the same kind of scepticism? For the purposes of this chapter I want to focus on Yeats's strange theory of statuary tied to poetic revisions that appears in the notebook, and his attempt to differentiate his 'tradition' and need for tradition from that of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. Another heavily revised poem mentioned in the diary entry, 'The Sorrow of Love', might elucidate Yeats's idiosyncratic analogy for revision.

In 1901, Yeats admitted to Robert Bridges that he was 'not very proud of "The Sorrow of Love"', his *douzain* that first appeared in *The Countess Kathleen* (1892) and which underwent extensive revision in 1925.[86] The opening lines were changed from 'The quarrel of the sparrows in the eaves, / The full round moon and the star-laden sky,'[87] in the 1892 text to the following in 1925: 'The brawling of a sparrow in the eaves, / The brilliant moon and all the milky sky'.[88] The poem is one of several early works that Yeats returned to and reworked into the version we read today. As Justin Quinn notes, 'the standard edition for decades was based on the 1933 *Collected Poems*, for most readers all of Yeats is late Yeats.'[89] In the revision of early poems, a sterner eye looks out through his younger self. In *Dramatis Personae* (1935), he reflects on the revivifying experience of correcting 'The Sorrow of Love' and other early poems in later life:

> I learnt that occasional prosaic words gave the impression of an active man speaking […] if we dramatize some possible singer or speaker we remember that he is moved by

[84] The first stanza of 'Mohini Chatterjee' resembles Yeats's juvenile poem 'Kanva on Himself' which begins: 'Now wherefore hast thou tears innumerous? / Hast thou not known all sorrow and delight […] And as a slave been wakeful in the halls / Of Rajas and Mahrajas beyond number? / Hast thou not ruled among the gilded walls?' *VP*, 723-724.
[85] *CW IV*, 290. The full quotation: 'Someone asked him [Chatterjee] if we should pray […] he answered that one should say, before sleeping: 'I have lived many lives. I have been a slave and a prince. Many a beloved has sat upon my knees, and I have sat on the knees of many a beloved. Everything that has been shall be again.' Beautiful words, that I spoilt once by turning them into clumsy verse'. *CW IV*, 289-291, 290.
[86] *CL3*, 90.
[87] *VP*, 119.
[88] *VP*, 119.
[89] Justin Quinn, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern Irish Poetry, 1800-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 78.

> one thing at a time, certain words must be dull and numb. Here and there in correcting my early poems I have introduced such numbness and dullness, turned, for instance, 'the curd-pale moon' into the 'brilliant moon', that all might seem, as it were, remembered with indifference, except some one vivid image.[90]

As noted in Chapter One, with recourse to Peter McDonald, some of Yeats's earliest revisions of old poems were concerned with visual refinement. Revising 'The Wanderings of Oisin' between 1889 and 1895, Yeats dispensed with some of the 'visual difficulty' of overwrought narrative descriptions, crystallising a symbolist poem that was 'more clearly (and artfully) delineated' in the mind's eye.[91] Yeats's late revisions to early poems also seek a certain visual refinement. In 'The Sorrow of Love', 'sparrows' become a single 'sparrow', the 'star-laden sky' becomes merely 'milky', and the 'full round' and 'crumbling moon' becomes a 'brilliant' and 'climbing moon'.[92]

The possibility of re-inhabiting a younger self through the revision of early poetry raises the spectre of Yeats's interest in eugenics. *Contra* Chapter Two, it is important not to absolve Yeats of unseemly political positions on eugenics and revolutionary violence because of his political ambivalence and revisionism in verse. In 'A Bronze Head', the immortal eye of Maud Gonne's bust surveys 'gangling stocks grown great, great stocks run dry' and wonders 'what was left for massacre to save.'[93] Equally troubling was Yeats's lifelong contention that art and public monuments might ennoble the blood of the Irish masses. In 'To a Shade' (1913), a poem that evidences Yeats's early flirtation with eugenics, the speaker reflects on the Parnell monument in Dublin and Hugh Lane's rejected offer of French Impressionist paintings to Dublin. Nobility in art and politics coagulate in a passage that wonders if artworks, 'Had given their children's children loftier thought, / Sweeter emotion, working in their veins / Like gentle blood'.[94] The visual arts and the unbuilt Hugh Lane gallery are imagined as the source of racial and class purity, perfecting the common Irishman.[95] With less equivocation in *On the Boiler*, Yeats describes the 'Irish masses' as 'vague and excitable because they have not yet been moulded and cast' in the

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[90] *CWIII*, 321.
[91] Peter McDonald, 'Victorian Yeats', 622-636, 630.
[92] When turning the 1892 'The Death of Cuchulain' into 'Cuchulain's Fight with the Sea' Yeats wrote to George, 'I am exceedingly lively and have wholly rewritten "The Death of Cuchulain." He does not now die at all. To rewrite an old poem is like dressing up for a fancy dress ball'. *CL InteLex*, 4672.
[93] *VP*, 619.
[94] *VP*, 292.
[95] When advising Lennox Robinson in 1934 on the choice of an actor to play Parnell in an upcoming play, Yeats insisted that the actor should be tall and broad in stature to live up to the monument if not necessarily the man: 'You must have a Parnell who can dominate the scene. […] Not ten men in your audience will remember whether Parnell was tall or short. What do they know except from his statue which is ten feet high.' *CL InteLex*, 6088: WBY to Lennox Robinson, 26 August 1934. In post-Independence Ireland, and more than forty years after the death of Parnell, the representation had effaced the reality.

image of the Anglo-Irish cultural elite: 'we have as good blood as there is in Europe. Berkeley, Swift, Burke, Grattan, Parnell, Augusta Gregory, Synge, Kevin O'Higgins are the true Irish people, and there is nothing too hard for such as these'.[96]

Sculpture, showing the ideal human form and the perfectibility of man through arduous physical labour, lends itself to eugenicist thought. The French surgeon and eugenicist Alexis Carrel (1873-1944) used an analogy of self-sculpting to summarise his theory of improving and purifying the human body: 'To progress again, man must remake himself. And he cannot remake himself without suffering. For he is both the marble and the sculptor. In order to uncover his true visage he must shatter his own substance with heavy blows of his hammer'.[97] Yeats's oft-quoted declaration from 'An Acre of Grass' (1936), written one year later, bears an unsettling proximity to Carrel's formulation:

> Grant me an old man's frenzy,
> Myself must I remake
> Till I am Timon and Lear
> Or that William Blake
> Who beat upon the wall
> Till Truth obeyed his call;
>
> A mind Michael Angelo knew
> That can pierce the clouds,
> Or inspired by frenzy
> Shake the dead in their shrouds;
> Forgotten else by mankind,
> An old man's eagle mind.[98]

In 'An Acre of Grass' the speaker declares, 'Myself must I remake', albeit through writing; the material in which he exists. The poem chiefly cites models from poetry and drama, 'Timon and Lear / Or that William Blake'. And yet, talk of Michelangelo aligns the poem with a series of late poems by Yeats that imagine the ideal human form incarnated in the Italian's paintings and sculptures.[99] An untitled quatrain from Yeats's 1908 *Collected Works* suggests that the phrase 'Myself must I remake' is another act of revision on the part of the poet: 'The friends that have it I do wrong / When ever I remake a song, / Should know what issue is at stake: / It is myself that I remake.'[100] The poet's revisions of old verse are a procedure of self-refinement. By

[96] Yeats, 'Ireland after the Revolution', *CWV*, 242.
[97] Alexis Carrel, *Man, The Unknown* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935), 274.
[98] *VP*, 576.
[99] See discussion of 'The Statues' and 'Long-legged Fly' in Chapter One.
[100] *VP*, 778.

drawing on the untitled quatrain, 'An Acre of Grass' is another example of Yeats reanimating and re-inhabiting youth through the revision of a poem. Returning to 'The Sorrow of Love', the revisions to the last line of the first and last quatrains similarly anchor the poem to 'man's image and his cry.' In 1892 the poem concluded 'And the loud chanting of the unquiet leaves, / Are shaken with earth's old and weary cry', but the meaning is wholly changed in 1925, remaking it in man's own image, or indeed the speaker's own image: 'And all the lamentation of the leaves, / Could but compose man's image and his cry'.[101] Evidently Yeats's late revisions reorient certain poems around the speaker-maker of the poem. 'An Acre of Grass' resonated with the mid-career criticism and late poetry of T.S. Eliot. Late Yeats's restrained and revised poems were praised in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, *After Strange Gods* and a series of Eliot lectures from the 1930s to 1940. While Yeats acknowledged in the 'Diary of Thought' that his process of revision placed him in an ambiguous and ambivalent relationship to Pound and Eliot, it is necessary to consider the stature of Yeats in Eliot's contemporary criticism.

V

In the 1933 Page-Barbour lectures – a series of lectures that were published the following year as the infamous *After Strange Gods* (1934) – Eliot half-praises and half mocks Yeats for his recent poem 'Vacillation':

> [T]hough Mr. Yeats is still perhaps a little too much the weather-worn Triton among the streams, he has arrived at greatness against the greatest odds; if he has not arrived at a central and universal philosophy he has at least discarded, for the most part, the trifling and eccentric, the provincial in time and place.[102]

In this jibe Eliot is misquoting another Yeats poem, 'Men Improve with the Years', from *The Wild Swans at Coole*, in which the poet refers to himself as a living statue: 'I grow old among dreams, / A weather-worn, *marble* triton / Among the streams'.[103] Eliot omits the word 'marble' in his caricature of Yeats, suggesting that the Greek god himself is weather-worn and not merely a marble statue in its image, and more importantly, that Yeats is comparing himself to a god and not a crumbling statue representing the god. If the 'weather-worn Triton' in Eliot's lecture could be construed as a somewhat self-aggrandizing image, the 'weather-worn, *marble* triton' is self-deprecatory in Yeats's poem, as I discussed in Chapter Two. Eliot's remark is revealing, however

[101] *VP*, 120.
[102] Eliot, 'After Strange Gods', *Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, vol. 5, 15-55, 36.
[103] *VP*, 329 [*italics mine*].

flippant it may be, as his misquotation highlights a deeper caricaturing or misrepresentation of Yeats that occurs and reoccurs in Eliot's essays and reviews. In a 1919 review of Yeats's *The Cutting of an Agate*, for example, Eliot concludes that Yeats's esoteric thought makes him otherworldly. He explicitly refers to Yeats as a 'fantastic God' and later, 'a fantastic avatar; supported by adepts and narthekophoroi, controversy might rage again about whether Mr. Yeats really feels and thinks, or whether the deception, if it is the case, is derogatory to his divinity'.[104] Eliot entitles the review 'A Foreign Mind', and treats Yeats as something between an anomaly in modern literature and an outright anachronism: a fantastical or phantasmal god similar to ones imagined by a fifth century heretical sect.[105]

It is necessary to reassess the critical antipathy between Eliot and Yeats even when it is at its most polemic and seemingly disengaged from the content of the other's work.[106] The extract from 'Vacillation' quoted in *After Strange Gods* is perhaps the most significant intertextual connection between Yeats and Eliot. Helen Gardner has noted that these lines are later adapted into the 'gifts reserved for age' spoken by the compound ghost in 'Little Gidding'.[107] In Yeats's 'Vacillation' the speaker recalls:

> Things said or done long years ago,
> Or things I did not do or say
> But thought that I might say or do,
> Weigh me down, and not a day
> But something is recalled,
> My conscience or my vanity appalled.[108]

Eliot's meditation on old age and recollection is rendered thus, in the unrhymed *terza rima* passage of 'Little Gidding':

> Of all that you have done, and been; the shame
> Of motives late revealed, and the awareness
> Of things ill done and done to others' harm
> Which once you took for exercise of virtue.[109]

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[104] Eliot, 'A Foreign Mind: a review of *The Cutting of an Agate*, by W.B. Yeats', *Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, vol. 2, 72-76, 73.
[105] Eliot, 'A Foreign Mind', 73.
[106] Recent scholarship on Yeats and Eliot has documented their interactions and raised potential instances of a cross-fertilisation in their later works. See John Kelly, 'Eliot and Yeats', *YA* 20, 179-227. Edward Larrissy, 'Yeats, Eliot, and The Idea of Tradition', *Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Poetry* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 113-129. Edna Longley, *Yeats and Modern Poetry* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 34-67. Ronald Schuchard, '*The Tower*: Yeats's Anti-Modernist Monument', *YA* 18, 121-150.
[107] Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 68.
[108] *VP*, 501.
[109] T.S. Eliot, *The Poems of T.S. Eliot: Volume I*, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), 205.

Part II of 'East Coker' also borrows from Yeats's 'An Acre of Grass': 'Grant me an old man's frenzy, / Myself must I remake', becomes: 'Do not let me hear / Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly, / Their fear of fear and frenzy'.[110] If these lines represent one of the most fruitful cross-fertilisations in Yeats and Eliot's work, the context in which the 'Vacillation' passage first appeared in *After Strange Gods*, partly praised and partly mocked, might be more representative of the fraught relationship between the two men.

Eliot's admiration of late Yeats for discarding 'the trifling and eccentric, the provincial in time and place', is telling.[111] For Eliot, a critic keen on the 'extinction of personality'[112] from verse, Yeats's new poems and revisions of old poems were a welcome sea-change. The second stanza of 'The Sorrow of Love', for example, became depersonalised in Yeats's 1925 revisions and departed from its original context. The first version was written in October 1891, when Maud Gonne arrived in Dublin for Parnell's funeral: 'And then you came with those red mournful lips / And with you came the whole of the world's tears, / And all the sorrows of her labouring ships'.[113] In 1925 the girl with red mournful lips is anonymous and no longer the addressee of the poem. In turn, Yeats sets up a broader Homeric scaffolding:

> A girl arose that had red mournful lips
> And seemed the greatness of the world in tears,
> Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships
> And proud as Priam murdered with his peers;

In Eliot's opinion of the late Yeats, 'A few faded beauties remain: Babylon, Nineveh, Helen of Troy, and such souvenirs of youth: but the austerity of Mr. Yeats's later verse on the whole, should compel the admiration of the least sympathetic.'[114] In 'Tradition and the Practice of Poetry' (1936), a lecture delivered at University College Dublin, Eliot elaborated his dislike of Yeats's early provinciality and eccentricity: 'it happened that in my own formative period Yeats was in his most superficially local phase, in which I failed to appreciate him.'[115]

For all the austerity Eliot admires in the poet's late verse, Yeats is nevertheless returning to old forms and old situations. The lineaments of Gonne's 'red mournful lips' persist as vivid

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[110] Gardner, *Composition of Four Quartets*, 68.
[111] Eliot, 'After Strange Gods', 36.
[112] Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, vol. 2, 108.
[113] On Yeats's revisions to 'The Sorrow of Love' and the original context of its composition, see Warwick Gould, 'Lips and Ships, Peers and Tears', *YA* 18, 15-55; Matthew Campbell, 'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves', *Irish Poetry under the Union*, 160-162.
[114] Eliot, 'After Strange Gods', 36
[115] Eliot, 'Tradition and the Practice of Poetry', *Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot,* vol. 5, 304.

images however seemingly depersonalised or obscured they become in the revised poem. For Yeats, these were enlivening rediscoveries in old poems that did not extinguish but enhanced the personality speaking them. While Edward Larrissy has compared Yeats and Eliot's corresponding ideas of poetic tradition, Yeats's unpublished 'Diary of Thought' might be the clearest evidence of the poet thinking about his work within the terms of Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. Where Eliot describes 'the existing monuments' of the literary canon being moved and modified by 'the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them',[116] Yeats describes himself as a statue inhabited and animated when he remakes his old poetry. Accommodating Yeats within his model and reified standards of literary criticism caused a great deal of strain for Eliot in the 1930s to 1940 when he delivered the first Yeats memorial lecture. His theory of impersonality, resistance to the provincial and the eccentric had to be altered, if ever so slightly, to appreciate Yeats. In his Abbey Theatre lecture, he praised Yeats's 'exceptional honesty and courage to face the change' in his later works, refusing to write stale reproductions without the passion of the early poems: 'There is another and even worse temptation: that of becoming dignified, of becoming public figures with only a public existence— coat-racks hung with decorations and distinctions, doing, saying, and even thinking and feeling only what they believe the public expects of them. Yeats was not that kind of poet'.[117] The poet's late work 'reflects light upon the earlier, and shows us beauty and significance not before perceived.'[118] Eliot's tribute to Yeats one year after his death alights upon the adaptation of Yeats in the modernist period, the revision and reimagining of his aesthetic that, as this chapter has shown, was self-consciously exercised by Yeats under the aegis of modernist and sculptural terms. The poet changing and remaking himself among old dreams, like the 'weather-worn marble Triton / Among the streams.'

[116] Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent,' *Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot* vol. 2, 106. Eliot's account of a moveable pantheon of literary tradition has been adapted to art history in a series of monographs by Elizabeth Prettejohn to characterise the non-linear and non-competitive intertextuality of modern paintings and sculptures. See Prettejohn, *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture*, 255-256; Prettejohn, *Modern Painters, Old Masters* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), 55-56.
[117] T.S. Eliot, 'Yeats', *On Poetry and Poets*, (London: Faber, 1957), 252-262, 257.
[118] Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets*, 260.

Conclusion: Yeats's Epitaphs

'Let no man write my epitaph'
—Robert Emmet, 'Speech from the Dock'[1]

I have chosen to end this thesis with a series of self-elegies, or self-epitaphs, by Yeats that mark a final experiment in sculptural analogies for poetry. In a poem chiefly concerned with its own endurance, 'To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee' (1921), the analogy of writing *as* carving reaches an apex:

> I, the poet William Yeats,
> With old mill boards and sea-green slates,
> And smithy work from the Gort forge,
> Restored this tower for my wife George;
> And may these characters remain
> When all is ruin once again.[2]

As the future tense title indicates – '*To be* Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee' – the poem is not the carving or artefact itself.[3] Indeed the characters are slightly different on the page and the future reproduction on a stone at Thoor Ballylee: the semi-colon at the end of line four is replaced with a full-stop on the later tower inscription. The verse intimates its own writing as arduous engraving, through short, mostly monosyllabic lines that record people and places: 'William Yeats', 'my wife George', 'Thoor Ballylee', and 'Gort forge'. These conventional tropes of engraving in the poem's form are paired with an expectation of death and destruction in the poem's recorded contents. As John Ruskin noted in his punning definition of the practice, '*engraving* means, primarily, making a permanent cut or furrow in something. The central syllable of the word has become a sorrowful one, meaning the most permanent of furrows'.[4] The opening line of 'To be Carved' assumes a graveside prosopopoeia typical of the elegy, while at the same time self-elegising: 'I, the poet William Yeats'. The speaker-poet assumes an epitaphic voice as if speaking from beyond the grave. Ruskin's 1872 lecture on engraving contends that

[1] Robert Emmet, quoted in *Speeches from the Dock,* ed. Seán Ua Cellaigh (Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son, 1953), 60.
[2] *VP*, 406.
[3] For this reason, the title of the poem might be better understood as a *pre*scription rather than the actual inscription.
[4] John Ruskin, 'Ariadne Florentina,' *The Works of Ruskin*, Vol. 22, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1906), 306, [*italics mine*].

the labour and primitive nature of the practice underlies a feeble search for permanence:[5] 'Engraving, then, is in brief terms, the Art of the Scratch. It is essentially the cutting into a solid substance for the sake of making your ideas as permanent as possible, graven with an iron pen in the Rock forever.'[6] Yeats's six-line poem records the restoration and anticipates the eventual ruination of the tower, intending to outlive its contents: 'And may these characters remain / When all is ruin once again'. Nicholas Grene considers this anticipatory elegy to be part of a 'pre-memorializing Yeatsian mode', without a loss to mourn the poem redirects its focus to its own moment and the act of writing as something to be monumentalised.[7]

Yeats's terminal couplet – 'And may these characters remain / When all is ruin once again' – is a hollow and haunting inversion of war memorial tropes at the time. The popular, altar-like grave *Stone of Remembrance* designed by Edwin Lutyens in 1917 featured an inscription from the Book of Ecclesiasticus chosen by Rudyard Kipling, who had lost his only son in the war. The grave stone and inscription – 'Their *name* liveth for evermore' (44:14) – would be replicated across hundreds of war cemeteries by the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC).[8] The heroic imperative that one's name live forever is troubled in Yeats's poem where merely the 'characters' or rough markings in the stone *may* remain. The transcendent Christian ambition that the Word lives, is contorted into the sparse comfort that the written or carved words merely endure. The ephemeral, weather-worn materials invoked in Yeats's verse deflate any grander intimations of immortality.[9]

In an early version of the poem sent to John Quinn on 23 July 1918, Yeats was much more concerned with the material conservation of Thoor Ballylee, borrowing a formula from

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[5] Even the finality of the gravestone weathers, the names engraved upon it become a palimpsest inscription, effaced by the wind and rain. Consider the self-obliterating final line of Thomas Hardy's 'During Wind and Rain': 'Down their carved names the rain-drop ploughs.' Thomas Hardy, *Selected Poetry*, ed. Samuel Hynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 123. Or T.S. Eliot's 'Little Gidding' which exposes a similar anxiety that the inscription, whether poetic or funerary, will eventually face erasure, the words becoming 'illegible' and no longer read or spoken:

> Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
> Every poem an epitaph. And any action
> Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat
> Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.

T.S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding', *The Poems*, 208.

[6] Ruskin, 'Ariadne Florentina', 320.

[7] Nicholas Grene, *Yeats's Poetic Codes*, 43.

[8] For context on war grave inscriptions see Sarah Victoria Turner, 'The poetics of permanence? Inscriptions, memory and memorials of the First World War in Britain', *Sculpture Journal* 24.1 (2015), 73-96, 84.

[9] In a 'Coda' to his book-length study of Kipling and Yeats at the Fin de Siècle, Alexander Bubb proposes a parallel between the two writers when they undertook their most public roles, Yeats as a Free State Senator and Kipling as a Unionist agitator and War Graves Commissioner. See Alexander Bubb, *Meeting Without Knowing It: Kipling and Yeats at the Fin de Siècle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 238-244. Treating the two contemporaneously, however, might delineate clearer interactions between their writing. Kipling was a War Graves Commissioner while Yeats penned his most charged elegies and resistances to war poetry.

the final verses of the Book of Revelation, by cursing his heirs if they would make changes to the tower:

> I, the poet, William Yeats,
> With common sedge and broken slates
> And smithy work from the Gort forge
> Restored this tower for my wife George;
> And on my heirs I lay a curse
> If they should alter for the worse,
> From fashion or an empty mind,
> What Raftery built and Scott designed.[10]

The closing verses of Revelation 22:18-19 carry a warning that 'If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book'.[11] The imperative in Revelation warns against changing, by either addition to or omission of the words, verses, chapters and books of the Bible, effectively bookending and defending the *magnum opus* from posterity. In Yeats's draft poem, it is the physical tower, Thoor Ballylee, that the poet wishes to preserve for and from posterity. From this perspective, Yeats's compositional adjustments to the poem might be viewed as an acknowledgement of the futility of his plea. In the published version of the poem in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, it is only 'these characters', written or carved, that the poet modestly hopes will endure when all the materials that make up the tower, including the 'old mill boards', the 'sea-green slates' and 'smithy work' from the forge, crumble or decompose. The poet relinquishes these material attachments to compose a poem that can claim some form of permanence limited to its own medium.

In the *Michael Robartes and the Dancer: Manuscript Materials*, Thomas Parkinson and Anne Brannen cite a further seven-line draft of the poem. A handwritten text of the draft, in a handwriting other than Yeats's, counts the number of letters in each line, ostensibly with a view toward carving the lines on a stone.[12] The paring down of the poem's content and number of lines might have been literally dictated by its sculptural counterpart and product. As noted in Chapter Two, the act of engraving is the clearest analogy of poetry and sculpture. In Walter

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[10] *CL InteLex*, 3465; *VP* 406. Joseph Hassett notes that the misspelling of 'Rafferty' as 'Raftery' in this version led to critics mistakenly identifying Antoine Raftery, a nineteenth century Irish poet, as the builder of Thoor Ballylee. In truth it was Michael Rafferty of Glenbrack and a renowned architect William A. Scott who built and designed the tower. See Hassett, 'What Raftery Built', *YA* 18, 97-106.

[11] Book of Revelation 22:18-19.

[12] *Michael Robartes and the Dancer: Manuscript Materials*, ed. Anne Brannen and Thomas Parkinson (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1994), 198-200.

Pater's essay on 'Style', the composition of verse is conceived in sculptural terms that centre around engraving: 'For in truth all art does but consist in the removal of surplusage, from the last finish of the gem-engraver blowing away the last particle of invisible dust, back to the earliest divination of the finished work to be lying somewhere, according to Michelangelo's fancy, in the rough-hewn block of stone.'[13] The apparent surplusage in Yeats's drafts of 'To be Carved' include the builders' names, the durability of the tower and its surroundings, and even Yeats's progeny. As Geraldine Higgins points out, the changes from manuscript versions to the poem's final form chart the poet's 'redirection of emphasis from the tower to the shaping of matter into form to his own words'. More broadly, these revisions mark a shift 'from monumentality to memorial tropes to the aesthetics of form' and the words alone.[14] The final version's distilled self-reflexivity emerges from a lengthy contemplation of the practice of engraving, and what truly remains or endures.

In Wordsworth's *Essays upon Epitaphs*, the poet proposes an important distinction between the epitaph and the elegy. The first of the *Essays* (1810) suggests that a funerary inscription – because of its placement upon a monument or memorial and its intended permanence – should be restrained and resistant to the passions that 'might constitute the life and beauty of a funeral oration or elegiac poem':

> [T]o raise a monument is a sober and a reflective act; that the inscription which it bears is intended to be permanent, and for universal perusal; and that, for this reason, the thoughts and feelings expressed should be permanent also – liberated from that weakness and anguish of sorrow which is in nature transitory, and which with instinctive decency retires from notice. The passions should be subdued, the emotions controlled.[15]

According to Wordsworth, the act of engraving one's own words in stone for posterity demands an awareness of their monumental capacity. Speaking from the afterlife the writer cannot linger on earthly objects or troubles. And because these words will be subject to 'universal perusal' the inscription must also be made in the knowledge that future readers might reinterpret or misinterpret the lines:

> [A]n epitaph is not a proud writing shut up for the studious: it is exposed to all – to the wise and the most ignorant; it is condescending, perspicuous, and lovingly solicits regard; its story and admonitions are brief, that the thoughtless, the busy, and indolent,

[13] Walter Pater, 'Style', 19-20.
[14] Geraldine Higgins, *Heroic Revivals*, 119. See also Lucy McDiarmid, 'Yeats and the Lettered Page', *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies VIII*, 1990, 100-112.
[15] William Wordsworth, 'Essays upon Epitaphs,' *Selected Prose*, ed. John Hayden (London: Penguin, 1988), 334-335.

> may not be deterred, nor the impatient tired: the stooping old man cons the engraven record […] the child is proud that he can read it […] it is concerning all, and for all.[16]

The inscription on the statue of 'Ozymandias', for example, becomes a monument to hubris long after the king's death, when 'Nothing beside remains. Round the decay / Of that colossal wreck'. The command to 'Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!', smacks of desperation.[17] If thoughts and feelings achieve permanence by evacuating their particularity or accidental associations, Wordsworth confesses that 'I do not speak with a wish to recommend that an epitaph should be cast in this mould'.[18] Only by admonishing earthly objects and becoming one 'who has no temptations to mislead him, and whose decision cannot be but dispassionate […] is death disarmed of its sting, and affliction unsubstantialised', a prospect that remains unappealing for Wordsworth.[19]

In an 1891 poem sent to Maud Gonne when she was ill, Yeats imagined his beloved dead: 'left […] to the indifferent stars above / Until I carved these words: / *She was more beautiful than thy first love, / But now lies under boards.*'[20] The poem, 'A Dream of Death', was originally entitled 'An Epitaph'. The thrifty, thoroughly unromantic tribute in wood might be said to adhere to, if perhaps exaggerate, the conventions of reserve and impersonality found in funerary inscriptions. Gonne received the poem while recovering in the south of France, writing with some amusement: 'Willie Yeats sent me a poem, my epitaph he had written with much feeling'.[21]

The epitaphic mode is a foil to the histrionics of elegy, but it is also a remedy to the vacillations of the political poem. In the iconographic final lines of 'Easter, 1916' we read: 'I write it out in a verse / MacDonagh and MacBride / And Connolly and Pearse'. Despite a stated resistance to war poetry, Yeats was engaged in an extended period of naming the war-dead in marmoreal elegies. 'To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee' closes the collection which centred around his ambivalent response to the Easter Rising. The final lines of 'Easter, 1916' might similarly assume an epitaphic register, unencumbered by earlier equivocations about the actions of the Rising rebels, who are 'Now and in time to be, / Wherever green is worn, […] changed, changed utterly'.[22]

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[16] Wordsworth, 'Essays upon Epitaphs', 334.
[17] Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Ozymandias', *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*, ed. Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 198.
[18] Wordsworth, 'Essays upon Epitaphs', 336.
[19] Wordsworth, 'Essays upon Epitaphs', 335. On Wordsworth's poems as engravings see Peter Simonsen, *Wordsworth and Word-Preserving Arts: Typographic Inscription, Ekphrasis and Posterity in the Later Work* (London: Palgrave, 2007).
[20] *VP*, 123.
[21] Maud Gonne, *A Servant of the Queen* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), 147.
[22] *VP*, 394.

With the act of engraving, the poet-sculptor analogy is at its most concrete, and yet this might project a perilously reified correspondence between poetry and sculpture. Not all poems are written or composed by cutting lines like stone, removing 'surplusage' to achieve a small gem-like verse formed under immense pressure. Only in the conclusion of Yeats's sprawling self-epitaph 'Under Ben Bulben' does the speaker assume a restrained and refined epitaphic voice:

> Under bare Ben Bulben's head
> In Drumcliff churchyard Yeats is laid,
> An ancestor was rector there
> Long years ago; a church stands near,
> By the road an ancient Cross.
> No marble, no conventional phrase;
> On limestone quarried near the spot
> By his command these words are cut:
> *Cast a cold eye*
> *On life, on death.*
> *Horseman, pass by!* [23]

I began this thesis with an account of the unveiling of Henry Moore's *Standing Figure: Knife Edge* (1961) in the Yeats memorial garden in St. Stephen's Green, 1967. The occasion prompted a number of sculptural-poetic pairings. Austin Clarke recalled a line from 'Easter, 1916' upon seeing the sculpture, 'the stone's in the midst of all', and recited 'Beautiful Lofty Things' with its 'plaster Saints', 'O'Leary's noble head' and Maud Gonne at Howth station, looking like 'Pallas Athena in that straight back and arrogant head'. Michael Yeats offered lines from 'Under Ben Bulben', repeated by Taoiseach Jack Lynch at the ceremony: 'Poet and sculptor, do the work, / Nor let the modish painter shirk / What his great forefathers did'.[24] In the course of my thesis research I have found that everyone familiar with Yeats's work can recall a poem or line of verse that mentions a statue, stone or sculpture. My initial fear was that the more ubiquitous the use of sculpture in Yeats's poetry the less it meant anything. Ultimately, this thesis has shown that Yeats's interest in the art of sculpture was as immersive as it was pervasive. The language of sculpture was more than a repository of analogies and two-dimensional metaphors for the craft of poetry. This thesis has traced Yeats's early attempts to conceive of a panaesthetic Celtic Revival, his ruminations on Dublin public monuments stratified with layers of meaning, and his ambitions for a new coinage stamped with ancient

[23] *VP*, 640.
[24] *VP*, 638. *Irish Times*, 'Moore Memorial to Yeats unveiled', 27 October 1967, 13.

archetypes. Yeats intervened in debates over public sculpture commissions, promoted the work of sculptors in Ireland and across Europe that he admired, and inserted himself in the war of words between modelled statuary and direct-carving in the early twentieth-century. Yeats sought more profound analogies between poems and statues in the revision of poetry and the act of engraving. Beyond analogy, he proposed new pairings of poetics and sculptural aesthetics by nuancing or directly challenging the sculpture-writing of figures as divergent as Matthew Arnold, George Russell, Ezra Pound, and Patrick Pearse. Beyond contributing to our understanding of Yeats's poems about sculpture, the larger ambition of this thesis has been to underscore the alternative historiographies of Irish and modernist sculpture that Yeats raised and carved in his own image.

Abbreviations

AVA	*A Vision: The Original 1925 Version*, ed. Catherine E. Paul and Margaret Mills Harper (London: Scribner, 2008), Volume XIII of *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats*.
AVB	*A Vision: The Revised 1937 Version*, ed. Margaret Mills Harper and Catherine E. Paul (London: Scribner, 2015), Volume XIV of *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats*.
CL1, 2, 3, 4	*The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats: Volume I, 1865-1895*, ed. John Kelly and Eric Domville; *Volume II, 1896-1900*, ed. Warwick Gould, John Kelly, Deirdre Toomey; *Volume III 1901-1904*, and *Volume IV, 1905-1907*, ed. John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, 1997, 1994, 2005).
CL InteLex	*The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, gen. ed. John Kelly, Oxford University Press (InteLex Electronic Edition) 2002. Letters by Accession number.
CWII	*The Plays*, ed. David Clark and Rosalind E. Clark (London: Scribner, 2001), Volume II of *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats*.
CWIII	*Autobiographies*, ed. William H. O'Donnell and Douglas N. Archibald (London: Scribner, 1999), Volume III of *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats*.
CWIV	*Early Essays*, ed. Richard J. Finneran and George Bornstein (London: Scribner, 2007), Volume IV of *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats*.
CWV	*Later Essays*, ed. William H. O'Donnell (London: Scribner, 1994), Volume V of *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats*.

CWVI	*Prefaces and Introductions: Uncollected Prefaces and Introductions by Yeats to Works by other Authors and to Anthologies edited by Yeats*, ed. William H. O'Donnell (London: Macmillan, 1988), Volume VI of *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats*.
CWVIII	*The Irish Dramatic Movement*, ed. Mary Fitzgerald and Richard J. Finneran (London: Scribner, 2003) Volume VIII of *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats*.
CWIX	*Early Articles and Reviews: Uncollected Articles and Reviews written between 1886 and 1900*, ed. John P. Frayne and Madeleine Marchaterre (London: Scribner, 2004), Volume IX of *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats*.
CWX	*Later Articles and Reviews: Uncollected Articles, Reviews and Radio Broadcasts written after 1900*, ed. Colton Johnson (London: Scribner, 2000), Volume X of *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats*.
LNI	*Letters to the New Island* by W.B. Yeats, edited and with an introduction by Horace Reynolds (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).
NAI	National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.
NCAD	National College of Art and Design, Dublin.
NLI	National Library of Ireland, Dublin.
NMI	National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Dublin.
NYPL	New York Public Library, NY.

RF1	*W.B. Yeats: A Life, I: The Apprentice Mage*, by R.F. Foster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
RF2	*W.B. Yeats: A Life, II: The Arch-Poet*, by R.F. Foster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
VP	*The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York: Macmillan, 1957). Cited from the corrected fourth printing of 1968.
VPl	*The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Russell K. Alspach (London: Macmillan, 1966). Cited from the corrected second printing of 1966.
YA	*Yeats Annual* (London: Macmillian, 1982–) cited by number.
YL	*A Descriptive Catalog of W.B. Yeats's Library*, by Edward O'Shea (London: Garland Publishing, 1985).

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John Quinn Memorial Collection, New York Public Library.

Oliver Sheppard Papers, National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

Thomas Bodkin Papers, Special Collections, Trinity College Dublin.

T.S. Eliot Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

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