CONSTRUCTING THE TOWER: YEATS AS ARCHITECT

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ABSTRACT

W. B. Yeats's tower, the most "visible" symbol in his work, is a product of his concerted labour over more than a decade. It marks a crucial phase of Yeats's poetic career in the wake of *Responsibilities* and the Easter Rising. The Rebellion and its repercussions both public and private acted as a catalyst for the inception of his "tower project" in the period of dramatic personal and national transformation. This study focuses around the genesis and gradual elaboration of Yeats's tower, the sheer work that went into its creation as well as the repeated pattern of interaction between Yeats's agency and contingency in his poetic construction in the period leading up to *The Tower* and beyond. This biography of Yeats's tower traces the development of the architectural dimension of Yeats's later poetry, setting it against the poet's parallel reconstruction of the particular building, Thoor Ballylee. The thesis illuminates the ways in which Yeats's tower poetry evolved into his major poetic project, a landmark and cornerstone of his later work, with its grand scope gradually unfolding even to the poet himself.

Combining the poet's biography with genetic analyses of all the tower-related poems from *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) to *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), including explorations of materials which have hitherto tended to be overlooked on this supposedly well-trodden ground, the thesis casts an unfamiliar light on the tower, one of the most familiar landmarks of modern poetry, and highlights its chronologically changing picture—moving "[m]inute by minute," as it were, shadowed by Irish conflicts. The thesis also demonstrates how closely interwoven different kinds of "building"—literal, textual, political and symbolic—were in Yeats's life and work during the turbulent and transformative years following the birth of "terrible beauty."

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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.

An essay based on the third section of Chapter 5 of this thesis is published as "'Coole and Ballylee, 1931': Yeats's elegy for the poetic demesne" in *Yeats 150: William Butler Yeats 1865-1939*, ed. by Declan J. Foley (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2016).

NOTE ON CITATIONS

Quotations of Yeats's poems and notes are from *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, unless otherwise indicated, and page numbers are cited in parentheses.

Yeats's manuscript materials are taken from the volumes of the Cornell Yeats series, unless otherwise indicated, and the abbreviation of the title of each volume and page numbers are cited.

Yeats's letters are quoted from the four volumes of *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats* and the InteLex Electronic Edition and page numbers or accession numbers after the number symbol are cited. Quotations preserve Yeats's original spellings and the use of [*sic*] is kept to a minimum.

INTRODUCTION

"Begin building again"

1

William Butler Yeats's long poetic career over half a century is characterized by several turning points, often announced by the poet himself as a self-remaker.[1] The emergence of the "image" of the tower with "Ego Dominus Tuus" (published in October 1917) marks the beginning of a crucial phase of his poetic career in the wake of *Responsibilities* and the Easter Rising. The Rebellion and its repercussions both public and private—the stone cast "in the midst of all"—acted as a catalyst for the interplay of Yeats's life and work, including the inception of his "tower project," in the period of dramatic personal and national transformation. This study focuses around the genesis and gradual elaboration of the most "visible" symbol in his work, the tower, documenting the concerted work that went into its creation over more than a decade in the period leading up to *The Tower* and beyond. We will trace the ways in which Yeats's tower poetry evolved into his major poetic project, a landmark and cornerstone of his later work, with its grand scope gradually unfolding even to the poet himself. Interweaving genetic analysis of his tower-related poems and an account of Yeats's investment in a particular building, Thoor Ballylee, we will dwell on the development of the architectural dimension of his later poetry. Attending to the minutiae of Yeats's work in progress through the slowed down explorations of his preserved materials, which have hitherto tended to be overlooked on this supposedly well-trodden ground, I aim to foreground Yeats's labour involved in the construction and the chronologically changing picture of the tower—moving "[m]inute by minute," as it were, shadowed by Irish conflicts.

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[1] See the "[p]reliminary poem" in the second volume of *The Collected Works in Verse and Prose of William Butler Yeats* (1908, Wade 76): "*When ever I remake a song… / It is myself that I remake*," 778.

Among the poems in his middle period which anticipate his new style are "A Coat" (composed in 1912, first published in May 1914) and "The Fisherman" (composed on 4 June 1914, first published in February 1916), poems which Jahan Ramazani calls "self-elegiac lyrics of transition."[2] Yeats had frequently represented his poems in terms of textiles before, as in "He wishes for the Cloths of Heaven" (first published in April 1899) where he compared his poem ("dreams") with "the heavens' embroidered cloths" (176). In "Adam's Curse" (first published in December 1902) Yeats wrote that "to articulate sweet sounds together" by "stitching and unstitching" is "to work harder than" to "scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones / Like an old pauper…" (204-205). In "A Coat" the poet announced that his song would strip off the "coat / Covered with embroideries / Out of old mythologies" and "[walk] naked" (320). The declaration signals Yeats's departure from the style of the poet as embroiderer for another which shows "more enterprise" (320). The unnamed Coole ("*under that ancient roof / A sterner conscience and a friendlier home*," 321) embedded in the valedictory poem in the same book *Responsibilities* (Cuala, 1914, Wade 110), in retrospect, prefigures Yeats's more consciously architectural poetics rooted in the neighbouring territory of Ballylee, which he was to launch in a few years. Stripped "naked," Yeats's poetry was to venture on its next phase with "more enterprise," aiming for "one / Poem maybe as cold / And passionate as the dawn" (348), as he wrote in "The Fisherman" in the month following the book's publication.

In Yeats's draft of a poem written before 5 December 1915 a building referred to as "your old wind beaten Tower" prophetically emerged in Yeats's poetry.[3] The poem would be titled "Ego Dominus Tuus" and first published in October 1917. The composition was more than a year before the purchase in March 1917 of "his first house,"[4] a half-ruined Norman keep at Ballylee, Co. Galway (locally known as Ballylee Castle) and the commencement of its restoration work in July 1917. This textual and biographical investment in "one

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[2] See for the dates of composition and compositional history *R* 374-77 and *WSC* xvii, 138-43, 430-31. See also *IY* 289, 290 and Wayne Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 235, 236. Ramazani, *Yeats and the Poetry of Death* 140.

[3] *WSC* 264-65, 298-99.

[4] *Life2* 16.

tower in particular" [5] was approximately contemporaneous with the epoch-making political event in Ireland in April 1916: the Easter Rising. Yeats's textual construction of the new architectural figure progressed, especially at its early stages, in tandem with his reconstruction of the actual building at Ballylee. His representation of the tower, which started with "Ego Dominus Tuus," paradoxically preceding his acquisition of Ballylee Castle, ended with "Coole and Ballylee, 1931" (composed in February 1932, first published in November 1932), five years after Yeats's final departure from the tower as his summer residence in late August 1927. The stone tower, which Yeats obtained, restored, dwelt in and renamed Thoor Ballylee, was turned into an objective correlative of his work of this period, as it were, as he explained, in completing *The Tower*, to T. Sturge Moore, the book's cover designer: "I like to think of that building as a permanent symbol of my work plainly visible to the passer by…."[6]

Later in 1937 Yeats retrospectively identified the moment "some twenty years ago"—roughly coinciding with the early phase of his tower project—as the moment when he "began to make" "a language to my liking."[7] Talking about his "compel[ling] [him]self to accept" or "choos[ing]" traditional forms (metres, stanzas) and also about making alter[rations] ("even what I alter must seem traditional"), Yeats declares: "I commit my emotion to shepherds, herdsmen, camel-drivers, learned men, Milton's or Shelley's Platonist, that tower Palmer drew" (*E&I* 522). The last two items in the list inevitably conjure Yeats's tower at Ballylee—which Yeats indeed "decked and altered" (423) but also made to "seem traditional"—implicitly bringing Yeats's architectural poetics into focus. Explaining that "all that is personal … must be packed in ice or salt," Yeats quotes the phrase "cold and passionate as the dawn"—originally taken from "a letter of [his] father's"—from "The Fisherman," one of the foundational poems underlying "The Tower" as we will see (*E&I* 523).

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[5] Yeats's notes to *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), *VP* 831.

[6] Yeats's letter to Sturge Moore on 21 September 1927, accession number #5030 in *CL InteLex*.

[7] "A General Introduction for my Work," *E&I* 521. The essay was originally written as an introduction for "Charles Scribner's Sons 'Dublin Edition,'" "a complete edition of Yeats's works which was never produced," *E&I* 509n, *Later Essays* (*CW5*) 204.

In this thesis I will explore Yeats's tower poems, attending to how he adopted and adapted the particular tower at Ballylee for his own purposes and also the changes in his account of the tower over time. This study will focus on the sheer "toil" that went into the "tower poems" individually and as the larger "tower project" and the process of his construction work, rather than addressing the ideological ramifications of the image. While many studies of Yeats have highlighted the importance and implications of the tower as building and symbol, none, to my knowledge, has sought to address the process of Yeats's construction of it. A detailed diachronic account of the tower's development from its first emergence to final disappearance has been unexpectedly missing in Yeats criticism. I believe chronological examination of Yeats's slow and deliberate construction of the tower in his poetry set within biographical and historical contexts will illuminate a central dimension of his poetic development during the period. The fact that the tower looks so prominent, as if it had always been "plainly visible" in Yeats's poetry, has probably led to insensitivity among critics to its dynamic and diachronic dimensions as it is built up in his work. This means that most criticism of Yeats's poetry—whether political, postcolonial, gender-oriented or textual [8] —is unconsciously based on synchronic or anachronistic views of Yeats's tower where early representations are overshadowed by later images. Filling this gap in Yeats criticism should further our understanding of the phase of Yeats's poetic career which constructed what has generally been identified as "late Yeats." My aim is to throw a new light on the familiar symbol, interweaving the story of renovation of the actual building and his periods of residence there with a detailed reconstruction of the genesis and composition of all the poems in which he represented it in the great collections published after the Rising: *The Wild Swans at Coole* (Macmillan, 1919), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (Cuala, 1921), *The Tower* (Macmillan, 1928) and *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (Macmillan, 1933).

Of course, this work builds upon earlier influential accounts of Yeats and his tower. Seamus Heaney in "The Place of Writing: W. B. Yeats and Thoor

[8] Rob Doggett focuses on these four areas in "Critical debate, 1970-2006," *W. B. Yeats in Context* 396-405.

Ballylee" (*The Place of Writing*, 1989) elucidates Yeats's poetics in his tower poems, crystallizing the bearings of the medieval tower at Ballylee on Yeats's poetry. Helen Vendler in *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* (2007) illuminates "principles of architectonics in Yeats," including his tower-oriented poems.[9] Lucy McDiarmid's "Yeats and the Lettered Page" (*Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies 8*, 1990) features "[t]wo kinds of poems from the second half of Yeats's career, inscriptions and poems describing the scene of their own composition"—the latter of which she calls "a *topos* that Yeats turned into a major poetic subject"—virtually addressing some of Yeats's tower poems.[10] Edna Longley in "'Monstrous familiar images': Poetry and War, 1914-1923" (*Yeats and Modern Poetry*, 2014) reads "Meditations in Time of Civil War" and other poems of Yeats's during the period in terms of war poetry, calling "Yeats's tower / house in Co. Galway (Thoor Ballylee)" the "stage-set" which "figures poetry's sidelining by war, his poetry's interior and exterior worlds, his situation as civil-war poet."[11] Elsewhere Mary Hanley and Liam Miller, *Thoor Ballylee: Home of William Butler Yeats* (2nd rev. ed. 1977 [1965]) and A. Norman Jeffares, "Poet's Tower" (*The Circus Animals: Essays on W. B. Yeats*, 1970) offer useful overviews of Yeats's tower at Ballylee and his tower poems. Theodore Ziolkowski, "William Butler Yeats: The Tower of Visions" (*The View from the Tower*, 1998) illuminates the stages of the tower's development which "correspond with great precision to the periods of extended stay at Ballylee."[12] Nevertheless, there is still no study that fully and systematically explores Yeats's construction of the tower, attending to both the compositional history of the relevant poems and the reconstruction of the actual tower. Building on predecessors, I aim to offer a more nuanced and dynamic account of the history of Yeats's biographical and textual investment in the tower—and his writing of *The Tower*.

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[9] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 3.

[10] McDiarmid, "Yeats and the Lettered Page," excerpted in *Yeats's Poetry, Drama, and Prose*, ed. James Pethica 371.

[11] Longley, *Yeats and Modern Poetry* 125.

[12] Ziolkowski, though, fails, for instance, to include 1925, the crucial year of Yeats's composition of "The Tower" there, in his list of "the periods of extended stay." *The View from the Tower* 68.

In this thesis I take the manuscript and text–based approach, interweaving it with the poet's biography, "the material conditions out of which Yeats's writings"—in this case his tower poetry—"emerged."[13] George Bornstein examines the compilation of *The Tower* volume "as example of modernist projects that result more in processes than products," focusing on the "protean changes" of what is called *The Tower* in his "Building Yeats's Tower / building modernism," *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (2001).[14] Bornstein focuses on the finished poems' "material textuality": "'bibliographic code'" ("features of page layout, book or periodical design" and so forth) and "'linguistic code' (or words)."[15] My thesis addresses the manuscript materials as well as published texts of Yeats's tower-oriented poems along with the material architecture of the actual medieval tower. I utilize the Cornell Yeats series, which has reproduced and transcribed many of Yeats's extant manuscript materials, as well as the archives in the National Library of Ireland and elsewhere. I explore the trajectories of Yeats's drafts and revisions, for they record "the living stream" (393), out of which the poet labours to construct his tower, with his "smithies break[ing] the flood" (498)—to use Yeats's phrase in 1930. In the course of the thesis we will witness the cumulative as well as "fluid" nature of Yeats's texts in the making.[16] Pursuing genetic analysis of Yeats's poems, pioneered by such works as Jon Stallworthy, *Between the Lines: Yeats's Poetry in the Making* (1963) and Curtis Bradford, *Yeats at Work* (1965), we will also see, as Wayne chapman puts it, "the reconstructed sequence [of composition] and minutiae of detail up to and beyond the first printed version of a poem" telling us "unsuspected" stories "about a poem and its maker."[17] Each tower poem's unique history of composition not only illuminates different dimensions of the poem but suggests that the construction of the tower grew to be Yeats's major poetic project as he went along, not that he had a clear and definite blueprint from the outset.

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[13] Doggett, "Critical debate, 1970-2006," *W. B. Yeats in Context* 402.
[14] Bornstein, *Material Modernism* 3.
[15] Bornstein, *Material Modernism* 1.
[16] Doggett, "Critical debate, 1970-2006," *W. B. Yeats in Context* 403.
[17] Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* xiii.

This biography of Yeats's poetic tower casts an unfamiliar light on and "recontextualizes" the familiar landmark of modern poetry, whereby, using Bornstein's terms, "an alternative construction emerges that emphasizes historical contingency, multiple versions … the material features of the text itself"[18] and also the dimensions of collaboration. We will trace the work Yeats has done with chisel and hammer from scratch, his step-by-step journey over the seventeen-year period from the inception of his tower project to its completion and close, so we may feel the texture and weight of each of his poetic building blocks. Yeats's tower-oriented poems will be diachronically explored from the manuscript materials to the published texts in book form, set against turbulent contemporary Irish history and the construction of the new nation as well as the poet's parallel reconstruction of the tower at Ballylee. In the process we will extensively draw on Yeats's essays, autobiographies and correspondence, especially the InteLex Electronic Edition of the unpublished volume of *The Collected Letters* (Oxford UP, 2002). *Yeats's "Vision" Papers* (Macmillan, 1992)—the automatic script and notebooks from 5 November 1917 to the end of 1923—and *Lady Gregory's Journals* (Colin Smythe, 1978, 1987), "begun, originally, to record her efforts to regain the Lane Pictures for Dublin" in November 1916 (*J1* xii, 1), will also be brought into play to illuminate the intersections between Yeats's poetic composition, philosophical search for "metaphors for poetry" (*AVB* 8) and friendship and collaboration in his public and private life.

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It was probably in August 1896 that Yeats first went to Ballylee, Co. Galway.[19] Yeats was taken to visit Coole for the first time around 10 August, 1896. He was staying as a guest of Edward Martyn at Tulira Castle with Arthur Symons on their tour in the West of Ireland including the Aran Islands and Sligo,

[18] Bornstein, *Material Modernism*, front matter.
[19] Hanley and Miller, *Thoor Ballylee* 11.

from which Yeats was intending to gather "local colour" for his autobiographical novel, *The Speckled Bird* (1896-1902), which would remain unpublished.[20] The following summer of 1897 Yeats made his first long visit to Coole, which he commemorates in "The Wild Swans at Coole." During this stay "Lady Gregory brought [him] from cottage to cottage collecting folk-lore," helping him as a translator and scribe.[21] Yeats first registered the tower at Ballylee in the opening passage of his 1899 landmark essay on Raftery, a local blind Gaelic poet, and his muse Mary Hynes: "There is the old square castle, Ballylee … and a cottage … and a little mill … and old ash-trees throwing green shadows upon a little river and great stepping-stones" ("'Dust hath closed Helen's Eye'").[22] The tower, Raftery and Mary Hynes are also referred to in the 1900 and 1902 versions of *The Speckled Bird*: "There is a little mill and an old tower and a few cottages, and stepping stones over a river."[23] Yeats immediately made that particular medieval Norman keep at Ballylee serve as a dwelling place of his imagination and later that of himself as well, transforming it into his habitable aesthetic property.

Ballylee Castle was on the Gregory estate, part of which was "being sold off" "since the Land Purchase Acts and the crisis of the war" about two decades later, when Yeats set about acquiring it.[24] Roy Foster summarizes the significance of Yeats's acquisition of the property: "Ballylee also gave him a

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[20] Kelly 40. *Life1* 164-72. *SB* ix-x, xiv: "Yeats began working on *The Speckled Bird* in 1896 and wrote four distinct versions of it before abandoning the project in 1903 … The setting is based on the country houses of Edward Martyn, Count Florimond de Basterot, and Lady Gregory in County Galway and County Clare … Sometime in early 1896 A. H. Bullen of the publishing firm Lawrence and Bullen offered advance royalties of £2 a week and some travel expenses for Yeats to write a 'long novel' that would be set in part on Tory Island…." Yeats to John O'Leary, after 6 June 1896, *CL2* 35-36: "Tory Island where I go for local colour for a new story." "Tory" means "Towery," 36n4. See also Yeats to William Sharp, c. 25 August 1896, *CL2* 47-49, 48n4.

[21] "Dramatis Personae: 1896-1902," *Au* (*CW3*) 298. *Life1* 170-71, 181-83. Kelly 44.

[22] *Myth* 14.

[23] *SB* 44-45 (1902 version), see also 156-57 (1900 version). For architectural descriptions of "the ancestral castle," see *SB* 95 (1897-98 version) and 115 (1900 version). Yeats uses as the protagonist's surname "De Burgh," the name of the Norman family who built Ballylee Castle, in the 1900 version, *SB* 217n4. There is also a description of the mysterious disappearance of the river which "is reminiscent of Coole River" in the 1900 version, *SB* 115, 217n3. See Chapter 5 for more on this river.

[24] *Life2* 17.

purchase on Coole."[25] In January 1915, with the tenants wanting "the land but not the tower," which was half ruined, Lady Gregory suggested to Yeats that he "should consider buying it."[26] This 1915 proposition of hers marks a watershed in Yeats's relationship with Ballylee Castle and its neighbourhood. It probably acted as a trigger for Yeats's tower project, whose grand scope was to gradually unfold—probably even in his own mind—over the next decade. It began to happen, however, more than two years before Yeats became its actual possessor.

"I am quite serious about Ballylee … but I cannot bid for it now," Yeats replied on 29 January 1915 (#2592). The road to his becoming the actual as well as textual tower owner was less straightforward and more interrelated with his life planning as well as historical circumstances than a reader of his later tower poems may imagine. In 1915 Ballylee was not yet a realistic proposition for Yeats, a bachelor at that stage, but he asked Gregory: "Can you put it in the government's care? … & that I suppose would leave it still to be got."[27] It was more than a year and a half later that Yeats embarked on his acquisition of the tower. On 22 November 1915, according to John Kelly's chronology, Yeats "[p]robably [met] George Hyde-Lees in the afternoon, and may have discussed marriage."[28] This nearly coincides with the composition of his first tower-oriented poem "Ego Dominus Tuus" in London in December 1915—even if their actual marriage had to wait until after his other unsuccessful proposals to Maud Gonne ("widowed by MacBride's execution after the Easter Rising") on 1 July 1916 and then to Iseult in the following month and again on 7 August 1917.[29] A fortnight before marriage Yeats wrote to his fiancée: "at first you were but a plan & a dream & then you became a real woman, & then all in a moment that real woman became very dear" (Yeats to George Hyde-Lees, 5 October [1917] #3333). Yeats's marriage with George may be seen as "a plan" developing in parallel with his fantasy of owning Ballylee.

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[25] *Life2* 85.
[26] *Life2* 17.
[27] "If I remain unmarried I would find it useless (I am too blind for the country alone & too fond of company) & it would use up the money my father or sister may need, & remain empty," #2592.
[28] Kelly 182.
[29] Kelly 186-87, 194. Yeats visited "the Tuckers and George Hyde-Lees" on 18 March, shortly before his purchase of the tower on 27 March, Kelly 192.

Writing to thank Joseph Hone for *William Butler Yeats. The Poet in Contemporary Ireland*, shortly after the composition of "Ego Dominus Tuus," Yeats used the architectural metaphor of my "house" for his oeuvre: "my house being still unfinished, there are so many rooms and corridors that I am still building upon foundations laid long ago. … I am making some alterations in my publishing schemes and hope to make my work as a whole accessible…" (2 January 1916 #2842).[30] It is noteworthy that Yeats's allusions to "alterations in [his] publishing schemes"—which would involve the transfer of his books to his new publisher Macmillan[31]—and his "house"-building work as a poet were contemporary with the emergence of "your tower" in his poetry. Yeats was consciously building the house of his oeuvre and choosing its publishing house, when he was beginning to construct his own poetic tower.

The inception of Yeats's tower project also roughly coincided with the Easter Rising. Yeats wrote to John Quinn about a month after the event: "A world seems to have been swept away. At the moment I [feel] as if I shall return to Dublin to live, to begin building again" (23 May 1916 #2960). Lady Gregory wrote to Yeats in August: "there must be some spiritual building possible just as after Parnell's fall."[32] The notion of "building" if not necessarily of buildings was on both their minds. Lady Gregory's comment to the British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith over a lunch at 10 Downing Street on Yeats's purchase of the tower—"Yeats [is] showing his confidence in the stability of Ireland by buying a castle" (29 November 1916 *J1* 15)—encapsulates something of the public bearings of Yeats's tower project. A week after he finished the elegy "Easter, 1916," dated "Sept. 25, 1916," at Coole—the first poem Yeats wrote after the "Dublin tragedy," starting it in London shortly after the executions of the leaders

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[30] The book was published in Dublin and London in 1916, "one of a series 'Irishmen of To-Day,'" *L* 605n2, n3.

[31] Kelly 184, 185. See Yeats to John Quinn, 2 April [1916] #2923: "expect quite a large sum in a few days as all my books except the collected edition are being transferred from Bullen to Macmillan & Macmillan is to give me £250 for Bullens copies." See also "Agreement with the Macmillan Company," 10 February 1916 #2859, A. P. Watt & Son to Macmillan & Co., 11 March 1916 #2891, #2892, 17 March 1916 #2906, 18 April 1916 #2932, Yeats to A. H. Bullen, [? 22 March 1916] #2908 and 5 April [1916] #2925.

[32] Lady Gregory to Yeats in August 1916, quoted in her *Seventy Years* 548: "I believe there is a great deal you can do, all is unrest and is discontent, there is nowhere for the imagination to rest; but there must be some spiritual building possible…."

which almost immediately followed the event[33]—Yeats began negotiations for the purchase of the tower on 2 October 1916 and worked on "The Wild Swans at Coole" on the same day at Coole.[34] It was around the same period, on 10 October 1916, that the enlarged edition of *Responsibilities* and the English edition of *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* were simultaneously launched from his new publisher, Macmillan, London.

It is striking that the multiple turning points and beginnings of new construction in his life and work converged and interplayed around 1916 and 1917: the transfer of his books to Macmillan and his beginning to commission his books' cover designs to Sturge Moore, the Easter Rising and the subsequent "ending of a phase in his relationship with [Maud Gonne]" (*Life 2* 69), his acquisition of Ballylee Castle, his marriage, automatic writing sessions and family building. The third stanza of "Easter, 1916," where figures "the living stream" with "long-legged" "moor-hens" and "moor-cocks" among others (393), [35] may have been implicitly built around the river by the tower, "enlarged in a symbol," as he puts it elsewhere.[36] A "water-hen" (326) would later be established as a crucial component of the picture of the tower in another elegy "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory." The "stone" "[t]o trouble the living stream" and "in the midst of all" (393), which, as David Lloyd points out, represents the "paradox" of "Easter, 1916" in the form of the tension between "gravestone" and "foundation-stone," was to serve as a catalyst and cornerstone of Yeats's tower.[37]

After the negotiations about the "boundaries and price" with the Congested Districts Board, which was redistributing "the properties relinquished by the [Gregory] estate," Yeats agreed on the purchase of Ballylee Castle for £35 on 27

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[33] Yeats to Lady Gregory, [11 May 1916] #2950: "I am trying to write a poem on the men executed; 'terrible beauty has been born again'." Twenty-five copies of the poem were "privately printed by Clement Shorter for distribution among his friends" (Wade 117, p. 7), "in the spring of 1917," *MRD* xix. The comma in the title was deleted in *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (1950) 391.

[34] Kelly 187.

[35] The adjective "long-legged" suggests that Yeats meant by the word "moor-cocks" in the poem the kind of birds called "moorhen," both male and female, and not the male birds of those called "red grouse."

[36] About the tower's winding stair in a letter to Sturge Moore, 26 September 1930 #5387.

[37] Lloyd, *Anomalous States* 71-72.

March 1917.[38] The tower was handed over to him on 16 May 1917. On the day before, Yeats wrote to Olivia Shakespear that he had been staying at Coole—an indispensable "Irish base"[39] for Yeats both before and after his acquisition of the tower—"for some weeks looking after my Castle chiefly" (15 May 1917 #3243). His confidence as a builder is striking: "The architect has been down & I know what I am going to do … As I shall have the necessities in the cottages I can devote the castle to a couple of great rooms." About three months after his overseeing the launch of rebuilding work on 9 July 1917, Yeats married George Hyde-Lees on 20 October 1917, which was shortly followed by the beginning of her automatic writing.[40] George Yeats was developing the symbolic potential of the tower in their automatic writing sessions in 1918, even before her first visit to Ballylee in April that year.[41]

From May to September 1918 the couple stayed at Ballinamantane House on the Coole estate, supervising the rebuilding work and waiting for moving in. Yeats wrote three tower-related poems from April to July 1918 at or near Coole: "A Prayer on going into my House" (at Coole, April), "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" (at the Ballinamantane House, May and June) and "The Phases of the Moon" (at the Ballinamantane House, July). It was around this period that Yeats quoted in his letter to John Quinn in New York (23 July 1918 #3465) the early version of the lines to be "inscribed … [o]n a great stone beside the front door," prematurely using the postal address "Ballylee Castle | Gort | Co Galway" before their actual move-in. This anticipatory use underscores Yeats's deliberate employment of the postal address as one of the crucial building blocks for creating his own place. We will see in what follows the "process by which [the] postal address becomes a poetic symbol," as Seamus Heaney has put it.[42] Those lines to be "inscribed" would later undergo radical revision and enter his book of verse following *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) (See Chapter 2). The Yeatses finally moved into the cottage quarters at Ballylee on 12 September

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[38] *Life2* 84, see also 85. Hanley and Miller, *Thoor Ballylee* 12, see also 13.
[39] *Life1* 170.
[40] See *AVB* 8. See also the introduction by George Mills Harper, *YVP1* 1.
[41] See the sessions on 19 and 20 March 1918 at Glendalough, *YVP1* 391, 394.
[42] Heaney, *Place of Writing* 20: "The process by which this postal address becomes a poetic symbol is the very subject of many of Yeats's poems in the 1920s…."

1918—with the "Castle" yet to be "roofed & floored" (#3478)—and stayed there for a short time, during which Yeats probably wrote "Two Songs of a Fool" around 20 September.[43] We should note that all his tower-related poems (except for "Two Songs of a Fool") in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), which Chapter 1 will address, were written before they moved into Ballylee and that Yeats's construction of the tower at the first stage was anticipatory. There are also preserved manuscripts for an unfinished "play for dancers," set around the tower and the river, on which Yeats worked from this period ("from winter to late summer 1918") to 1923.[44] Later that year, they rented Maud Gonne's house at 73 Stephen's Green, Dublin for a few months, during which the First World War ended on 11 November 1918.

Their next (and first extended) stay at Ballylee was between mid-June to mid-September 1919, when Yeats substantially wrote and finished "A Prayer for My Daughter," which he had begun in Dublin by 1 April, with their first child Anne born on 27 February 1919. The Anglo-Irish War began in January 1919 and continued in the form of "'incidents' against policemen and security forces escalat[ing] into a guerrilla war," followed by "Black and Tan atrocities" and "the death of the imprisoned hunger striker Terence MacSwiney, the Sinn Féin lord mayor of Cork" in 1920.[45] Chapter 2 concerns Yeats's tower construction at this stage. From October 1919 to mid-March 1922 (except for the period of his American lecture tour from mid-January to the end of May 1920 and their spending several months in 1921 elsewhere[46]) the Yeatses were primarily based in their rented house at 4 Broad Street, Oxford. A truce of the Anglo-Irish War was declared on 11 July 1921 and the ratification of the Anglo-Irish Treaty by the Dáil on 7 January 1922, which created the Irish Free State, led to the Irish Civil War raging from 1922 to 1923. It was in these socio-political contexts that the Yeatses moved out of England to spend the whole year based in Ireland—"I

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[43] Kelly 200. 4 September [1918] #3478. See Kelly 201-85 for the following dates and their addresses.

[44] Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 116, see also 97-127, 246-89, NLI 30,427, 30,488. We should note that the phrase "Guardians of the Tower and Stream" is not Yeats's title of the play. Chapman uses it to call the play, "inspired by a speech at the end of the prose draft," *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 97.

[45] *Life2* 140, 180-81.

[46] At Minchin's Cottage, Shillingford, Berkshire and at Cuttlebrook House, Thame, Oxfordshire.

am not likely to leave Ireland again except for brief travel" (#4110)—and returned to Ballylee in the spring of 1922, after an interval of two and a half years. "Whether I have come home to civil war or country quiet I cannot yet know," wrote Yeats in a letter on 30 March 1922 to Harriet Monroe in Chicago, where he first inscribed his newly-reinvented postal address "Thour Ballylee | Gort | Co Galway" (#4110), again in an anticipatory way, actually moving to Ballylee from Coole around 7 April.[47] The bedroom in the tower was for the first time ready for their longest stay from early April to late September 1922, which produced Yeats's first tower sequence "Meditations in Time of Civil War." Chapter 3 addresses this period.

After the six months at Ballylee in 1922 they moved into their new house at 82 Merrion Square, Dublin in late September 1922, where they saw the Civil War "entering on the final & more dreadful stage."[48] "A bunch of martyrs (1916) were the bomb & we are living in the explosion" (#4184), reported Yeats, living closer to actual violence. On Christmas Eve that year two bullets entered their house and "a fragment" of a bullet hit "George on the shoulder," though "without injuring her."[49] On 11 December 1922 Yeats "became a member of the Irish Senate" as "one of three Senators appointed to advise the government on matters concerning education, literature, and the arts" and served for six years until 28 November 1928.[50] In mid-November 1923 Yeats was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. It was from mid-July to mid-October 1925, after a three-year interval, that the Yeatses next returned to Ballylee on a long-term basis, when Yeats worked on "The Tower," on which we will dwell in Chapter 4. Yeats went back and forth between Dublin and Ballylee from May to September in the following year 1926.

In 1927 the Yeatses were based at Ballylee from mid-July until 26 August. This turned out to be their final long stay there, during which Yeats finished "Blood and the Moon." Serious illness struck him in the autumn of 1927 and urged his wintering in the south that year, ultimately precipitating the end of the

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[47] Kelly 218. *W. B. Yeats and George Yeats: The Letters* 82.
[48] Yeats to Olivia Shakespear, 9 October 1922 #4184.
[49] Yeats to Lady Gregory, 26 December [1922] #4239. See also Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* 310, 314-15.
[50] *SS* 1, 15.

pattern of his life and work at Ballylee over the past decade. Despite illness Yeats desperately worked on "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," a poem he had begun in Dublin by October, finishing it in Cannes in December 1927. When *The Tower* was published in mid-February 1928, Yeats was already setting about remaking his life and work. The Yeatses were moving from Cannes to Rapallo, where they would lease, to spend winters from 1928 to 1930, "a newly-built fourth-floor apartment at 12 via Americhe, Rapallo."[51] In Dublin, they sold the house at 82 Merrion Square and moved into their new apartment at 42 Fitzwilliam Square in August 1928, from where they would finally move to "his last Irish home, Riversdale," in the "Dublin suburb of Rathfarnham" in late July 1932.[52] From 1931 (especially from October) to May 1932 Yeats mostly stayed at Coole with Lady Gregory, who was terminally ill, to keep her company. It was during this last and longest stay at Coole that Yeats wrote the proleptic elegy "Coole and Ballylee, 1931." Chapter 5 addresses this final phase and closure of his tower project.

3

When poems selected from "Crossways" to *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) were published as *Selected Poems* by the Macmillan Company of New York on 28 June 1921 (Wade 128), the book contained only one of Yeats's published tower-oriented poems, the elegy for Robert Gregory. Sturge Moore's cover design for the book, which was "in black" on the "grey-green cloth," however, suggestively represented a column-like tower. The design was the same as that of the American Edition of *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (published on 26 April, 1916), which Sturge Moore had for the first time made for Yeats five years before.[53] Judging from Yeats's letter to his literary agent on

[51] Kelly 259-69.
[52] Kelly 279, 280.
[53] "Issued in buff cloth," with the design "printed in black on blue-grey paper and pasted on front cover and on spine" (Wade 112). For the reproduction of the cover of *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (American Edition) see "The Life and Works of William Butler Yeats: Online Exhibition," the National Library of Ireland (http://www.nli.ie/yeats/). Sturge Moore had

30 April 1916, not only was Yeats more impressed with Moore's next design for his *Responsibilities and Other Poems*, but he even had Sturge Moore "modif[y]" the design used by the American *Reveries* for the book's forthcoming English Edition.[54] Nevertheless, the column-like stairwell with a half-open door, against which waves are splashing and under which is the subterranean space full of heads of men and women (both young and old) and a baby, looks as if it resonated with the appearance of the tower in "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" in the book, though the design preceded the poem (which Moore referred to as "one of your very best things") by more than two years.[55] What Yeats would suggest to Sturge Moore much later, concerning the cover design for his final tower-related volume, "a suggestion of a stone stair might be possible a hooded figure coming or going—perhaps just entering," also evokes the central motif of this design.[56] The cover designs by Sturge Moore from *Selected Poems* (1921) through *The Tower* (1928)—well-known for Yeats's request for "the real object"[57]—to *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933) show the artist's paratextual collaboration with Yeats's poetic construction at each stage. The transformation of the cover designs as well as the Yeats-Moore

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also designed the colophon for Cuala, "woodcut of leaping unicorn, *Monoceros de Astris*," used in *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (the Cuala Press, published on 20 March 1916, Wade 111). See *LTSM* 190-91 for the list of Sturge Moore's cover designs for Yeats (excluding the colophons for Cuala), though it does not reflect the difference between the American edition and the English edition of *Reveries* and the relationship between the former and *Selected Poems*.

[54] Yeats to A. P. Watt, 30 April [1916] #2936: "the design I want the … American firm to use is a new one of great beauty & better suited for my American books in general than the design for Reveries. I also wish the English firm to use it. … I think Sturge Moore should be asked to do a modified form of his Reveries design (that design as it stands shows signs of haste) for the English edition of that book." The English edition of *Reveries* was published on 10 October 1916, "Issued in dark blue cloth with design in gold" (Wade 113), on the same day as the English Edition of *Responsibilities and Other Poems* (Wade 115). (The American edition of *Responsibilities* was published on 1 November, 1916, Wade 116). See *LTSM* 23 for the reproduction of the cover design of the English edition of *Reveries*. See also Yeats to Sturge Moore, [February 1916] #2872, about the cover design for *Responsibilities*: "I want to see you because I am now arranging for a volume of poems to be published in America immediately after REVERIES. I have received the agreement but I dont want to sign it without coming to some arrangement about a cover. I have a subject and I think you may be able to make me a cover which could go on another book of verse of mine also."

[55] Sturge Moore to Yeats, February 1919, *LTSM* 34, 36.

[56] Yeats to Sturge Moore, 26 September 1930 #5387.

[57] Yeats to Sturge Moore, 21 September 1927 #5030: "I am sending you some photographs of the Tower. … the Tower should not be too unlike the real object, or rather that it should suggest the real object." Sturge Moore commented on his cover design on 16 November 1927, *LTSM* 114: "I think that the Tower is recognisably your Tower and not anyone else's."

correspondence about them (which we shall see more later) illuminates the trajectory of Yeats's tower, mirroring the differences and continuity among respective representations. (See Figure 1.)

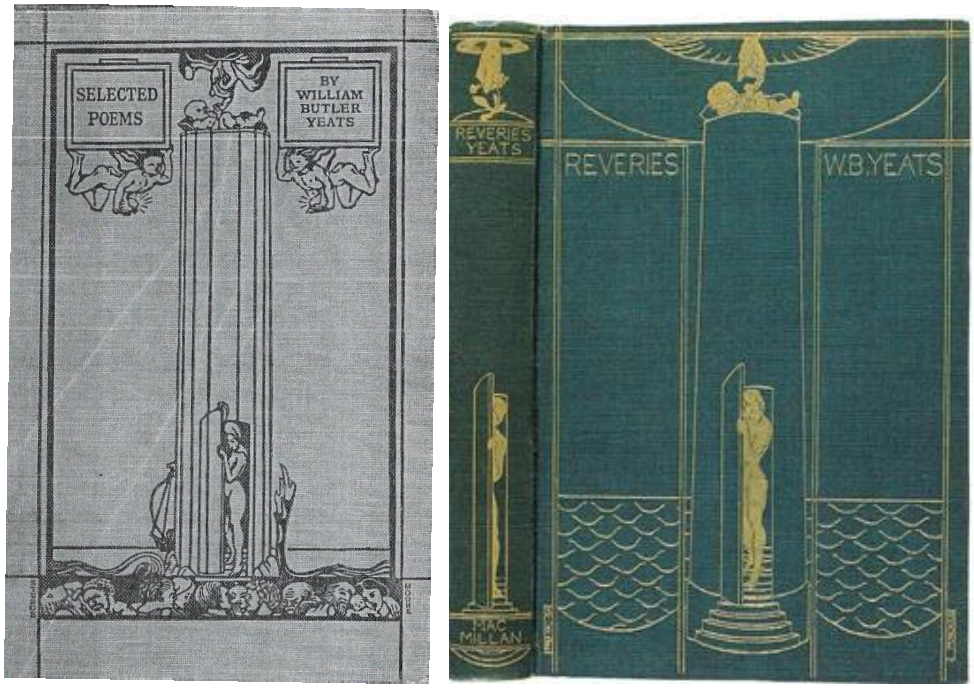
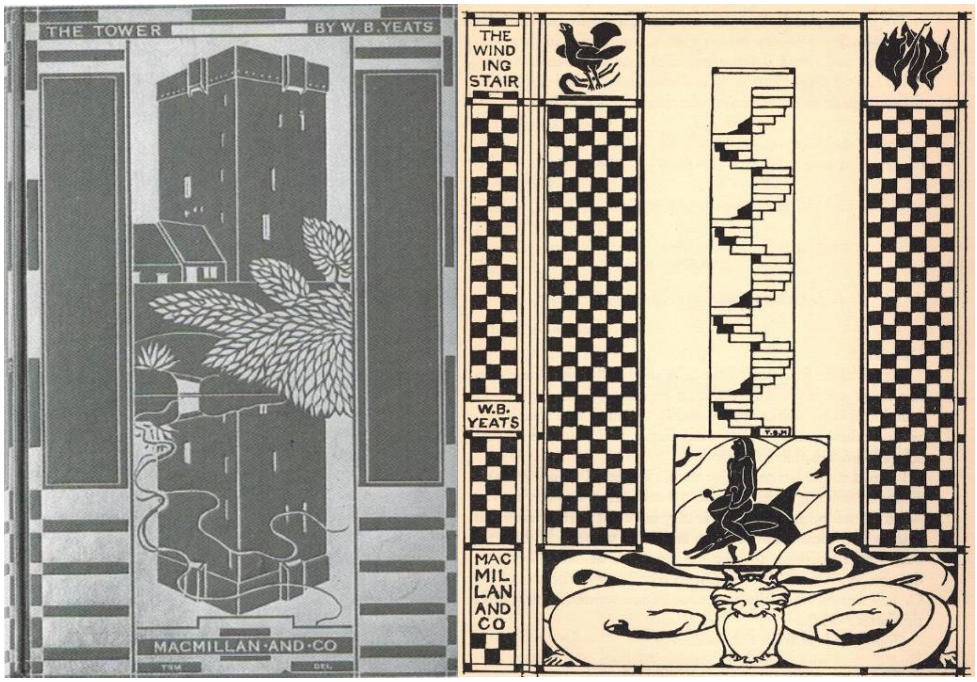


Fig. 1. *Above left*: The grey-green cloth cover of *Selected Poems* (NY: Macmillan, 1921) with the design by T. Sturge Moore in black. The same design as that for the American Edition of *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (1916). *Above right*: The dark-blue cloth cover of the English Edition of *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (Macmillan, 1916) with the design by T. Sturge Moore in gold. A digital scan of the reproduction in David Pierce, Y*eats's Worlds: Ireland, England and the Poetic Imagination*, with contemporary photographs by Dan Harper (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995) 174.

Below left: The olive-green cloth cover of *The Tower* (Macmillan, 1928) with the design by T. Sturge Moore in gold. A digital scan of the reproduction in Colin Smythe, *A Guide to Coole Park, Co Galway: Home of Lady Gregory*, 3rd rev. ed. (1973; Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1995) 48. *Below right*: T. Sturge Moore's design for the cover of *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933). A digital scan of the reproduction in *W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence, 1901-1937*, ed. Ursula Bridge (London: Routledge, 1953) 179. The cover was "in olive green cloth" with the design "stamped blind on front cover and in gold on spine" (Wade 169).



Chapters of the thesis explore Yeats's construction work over the span of seventeen years in chronological order from the project's inception with "Ego Dominus Tuus" to the close with "Coole and Ballylee, 1931." The textual building work in the poet's hands initially progressed in parallel with the actual rebuilding work on the stone tower, which was charged with metaphors for poetic building and was done, especially slowly during wartime, with "great beams & three inch planks & old paving stones" procured from "an old mill" and by the hands of "the local carpenter & masons & blacksmith" (23 July [1918] #3465). It also progressed alongside his work on the parallel building site of *A Vision* and later his work as a senator of the Irish Free State (1922-28). I will show in what follows how closely interwoven these different kinds of "building"—literal, textual, political and symbolic—were in Yeats's life and work over the decade after he set his eyes on acquiring his castle.

For the moment, we have to imagine ourselves back in 1915 on a poetic site where there is still no Yeats's tower. Preserved draft materials and published texts will give us access to his poetic workshop, or building site, and we shall observe the diachronic construction of the tower as he built it up—"layer upon layer" ("The Tower," 415), "rhyme upon rhyme" ("Blood and the Moon," 480)—into a crucial organising principle of his poetry and a focus of his life. Just as Yeats found on the oak beams in an inn-parlour at Stratford-upon-Avon

"the mark of the adze that shaped them,"[58] we will find crucial "mark[s]" of Yeats the architect, which illuminate dramatic turning points during construction and the developing poetic significance of the tower itself, as we shall see. The thesis will bring into focus the interplay of Yeats's life—the "living" and often "flooded stream"—and work, or of Yeats's poetic agency and contingency, to elucidate the process of construction. I hope this slowed-down, chronological approach to Yeats's tower will contribute to our understanding of the ways in which Yeats constructed the crucial theme and paradigm in his later poetry.

[58] "At Stratford-on-Avon," an essay dated "May 1901," *E&I* 96.

CHAPTER 1

Early Construction in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919)

Under your old wind-beaten tower…

The Wild Swans at Coole, Other Verses and a Play in Verse (Cuala Press, 1917) contained the first poem with which Yeats invested himself with the poetical ownership of the tower: "Ego Dominus Tuus."[59] When the enlarged edition was published two years later as *The Wild Swans at Coole* (Macmillan, 1919), it carried three more poems which explicitly concerned the tower.[60] These four tower-oriented poems ("Ego Dominus Tuus," "A Prayer on going into my House," "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" and "The Phases of the Moon" in order of composition")—or five if one includes "Two Songs of a Fool," though the word "tower" never appears in the poem and it is probably set in the cottage part[61] —form a sort of a sequence, a drama of a poetic builder who has launched a new project whose vast scope was to unfold step by step.

Some other tower-related poems in the 1919 volume may extend the list. "Under the Round Tower" and "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes" are suggestively set in an ancient stone tower and chapel respectively. In addition "Shepherd and Goatherd," originally titled "The Sad Shepherd" until revised for *The Collected Poems* (1933), is a prelude to the Robert Gregory elegy set in the tower.[62] The title poem for both volumes, "The Wild Swans at Coole," is set in a geographically neighbouring territory and forms a landmark pre-dating Yeats's

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[59] *The Wild Swans at Coole, Other Verses and a Play in Verse* was published on 17 November 1917. Wade 118.

[60] *The Wild Swans at Coole* was published on 11 March 1919. Wade 124.

[61] "Two Songs of a Fool" was probably written around 20 September 1918 after the Yeatses moved into the cottage at Ballylee, though George Yeats has given the information about the poem "Ballinamantane, Summer 1918, Gort" in their copy of *Later Poems*, Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 237. The poem is set in the speaeker's "house," equipped with "my hearthstone," "the house door" and "my three-legged stool" (380-81). See Yeats to his father, 17 October [1918] # 3510, Kelly 200, Ann Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* 187.

[62] "Five leaves of holograph draft" of the poem, signed "WBY. March 20.," bears the title "A Dead Shepherd," *WSC* xx, 104-17. Yeats had used the title "The Sad Shepherd" for his early piece (*VP* 67).

tower project. Set at a stage where there is still no Yeatsian tower, a prospective beginning of a new phase accompanied by some building work is mysteriously suggested at the poem's closure: "Among what rushes will they build…" (323). As if to answer the question, the elegy for the heir to Coole Park immediately follows, opening with the poet's reference to their being "almost settled in our house" (323). "The Fisherman," which belongs to a group of earlier published poems and includes no hint of the tower itself, ends with a preliminary announcement of a new type of verse: "'I shall have written him one / Poem…'" (348).[63] Its prose subject carries an image which almost prefigures "the mysterious one" and the setting of "walk[ing] the wet sands by the edge of the stream" in "Ego Dominus Tuus."[64] The fisherman motif would later transmigrate into the very poem "The Tower." These poems, where the tower itself does not figure, subliminally intimate its imminent appearance with what in retrospect looks like an implicit sensation of something heading for Ballylee. They suggest the preliminary foundations of Yeats's new architecture.

This chapter will explore the early construction of Yeats's tower by chronologically tracing the tower-oriented poems in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), while also paying attention to the circumstances concerning Yeats's acquisition of the actual tower in Ballylee. We will see each aspect of the tower constructed one by one, "layer upon layer" (415), in his poetry. A lamp, as a symbol which signals that the tower is a place for midnight sedentary labour of thought, for instance, is lit in the first tower poem "Ego Dominus Tuus" ("A lamp burns on beside the open book…" 367) and is kept burning—if mockingly "put out" at the end—in "The Phases of the Moon" ("the light proves that he is reading still," 373) as well as associated there with "The lonely light that Samuel Palmer engraved."

In the sections to follow Yeats's early tower-oriented poems collected in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) will be discussed in chronological order of composition: "Ego Dominus Tuus" as Yeats's first tower-oriented poem and

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[63] First published in *Poetry* (Chicago), February 1916. A late draft is dated "June 4 [1914]," *WSC* 140-41. See *Life2* 677n23.

[64] "Who is this by the edge of the stream / That walking in a good home spun coat / And carries fishing in his hand… / … But is one / That I can see always though he is not yet born / He walks by the edge of the stream…," *WSC* 430-31.

"The Wild Swans at Coole" as a poem which intimates a beginning of some building work elsewhere; "A Prayer on going into my House" as the first poem which treats the building as his house; "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" as a tower-warming elegy and "The Phases of the Moon" as a sequel to "Ego Dominus Tuus." We will visit the construction site and watch the building work commence in the genesis and development of his new poetic architecture in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919).

1

"Ego Dominus Tuus": the first dialogue under the tower

> *Hic*. On the grey sand beside the shallow stream
> Under your old wind-beaten tower, where still
> A lamp burns on beside the open book…

It was in "Ego Dominus Tuus," first published in *Poetry* (Chicago), October 1917, that "your … tower" suddenly loomed large in Yeats's poetry and became his poetic property. Yeats was not a tower owner in real life when he wrote the poem, though he had become one by the time he published it. In other words, "Ego Dominus Tuus" was his first tower-oriented poem written before but published after his acquisition of Ballylee Castle. "Ego Dominus Tuus" was probably written in December 1915 in London, where Yeats had his residence at 18 Woburn Buildings in Bloomsbury.[65] An extant fair copy dated "Dec. 1915" carries some revisions including the title; it appears that Yeats first wrote "The self and the anti-self," then "The Anti-Self," and finally replaced it with "Ego Dominus Tuus."[66] What is striking about "Ego Dominus Tuus," among other things, is that it testifies to the fact that Yeats had poetically appropriated the

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[65] See Kelly 182. A draft dated "Dec 5. 1915" is in the "Maud Gonne Notebook," a present from her at Christmas 1912, which Yeats used "up to the end of 1915 as a diary and journal," *WSC* xvii, 298-99.

[66] *WSC* xxi, 300-305. An earlier ink draft is titled "The Self & the AntiSelf," *WSC* 288-89. The revision in ink from "The Anti-Self" to the present title probably postdated the preserved typescript titled "The Anti-Self" and with the typed date "December 1915," *WSC* xix.

tower and started its textual construction as "your old wind-beaten tower" nearly one year before he actually began the discussions for the acquisition of the actual building on 2 October 1916. When the poem was first published, almost two years after its composition, Yeats had formally obtained Ballylee Castle.

At the beginning of "Ego Dominus Tuus," "your old wind-beaten tower" figures "beside the shallow stream" for the first time in Yeats's poetry. The tower in the poem is given its fundamental feature ("old wind-beaten"), its setting ("beside the shallow stream") and a pair of furnishings (a "lamp" and an "open book"). It is left bare and vacant otherwise. The tower in "Ego Dominus Tuus" is, as it were, anonymous. At this stage of his textual construction, it is far from obvious whether the tower has any particular physical correlative in any particular place. It is unlikely that a contemporary reader would have identified the tower in the poem as "the old square castle, Ballylee" mentioned in Yeats's 1899 essay on Raftery.[67] The tower is introduced as a place of "sedentary toil" within, while the speakers form a dialogue outside on the sand by the stream under the tower. The reference to the name Michael Robartes, a character in Yeats's works from more than two decades earlier, on the other hand, signals a work of unearthing and restoring what was buried in a new setting:

> *Hic*. On the grey sand beside the shallow stream
> Under your old wind-beaten tower, where still
> A lamp burns on beside the open book
> That Michael Robartes left, you walk in the moon,
> And, though you have passed the best of life, still trace,
> Enthralled by the unconquerable delusion,
> Magical shapes. (367)

Ille, one of the dialogists, calls to "[M]y own opposite" or "the mysterious one" and summons "all / That I have handled least, least looked upon." We may understand this in relation to Yeats's notion of "the subconscious," written in his autobiographical essay a few years later. In the passage where he recounts his

[67] *Myth* 22.

first encounter with Coole Yeats speaks of a "dark portion": "My friends believed that the dark portion of the mind—the subconscious—had an incalculable power, and even over events. To influence events or one's own mind, one had to draw the attention of that dark portion, to turn it, as it were, into a new direction."[68] *Ille* may also be talking about tapping into the "incalculable power" of "[his] own opposite" and "all / That [he has] handled least." *Ille* explains Dante's work as an epitome of this by using stony images ("fashioned from his opposite / An image that might have been a stony face / Staring … / From doored and windowed cliff," 368) and summarizes it as: "He set his chisel to the hardest stone" (369), potently though obliquely foreshadowing Yeats's own construction of the tower.[69] Yeats's writing "Ego Dominus Tuus" in London, physically away from the tower in Ballylee, itself suggests an effort to "call to [one's] own opposite" (367).

The tower at this stage is in the background against which *Ille*'s roving poetic quest is pursued on the sand under the moon. The lamp left "Burning" with a book "open" beside it gives some sense of restlessness as well as signalling that the tower is left half deserted, not fully used, though not uninhabited. In terms of Yeats's tower project, "Ego Dominus Tuus," in retrospect, shows a preliminary stage where Yeats, still away from the Ballylee tower, is "seek[ing] an image" (370), aiming to "[fashion]" (368) it from "all / That [he has] handled least, least looked upon" (367)—or to "set his chisel to the hardest stone" (369) of Ballylee, as it were. *Hic*'s question towards the end of the poem ("Why should you leave the lamp / Burning alone beside an open book…?" 370), while ritualistically repeating part of his opening words, may have served as a cue for Yeats's series of poems on the tower.

The fact that there are very few identifiable links to the actual tower in Ballylee in this first tower-oriented poem indicates that the poetic use of the particular tower was to be explored virtually from scratch. In "Ego Dominus Tuus" we are witnessing the groundbreaking construction work which would

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[68] "The Stirring of the Bones," written in 1920-22, published in 1922, *Au* (*CW3*) 280.

[69] Daniel Harris remarks that Yeats "made Dante [the tower's] first mythological architect," regarding the "doored and windowed cliff" as "Yeats's tower in its primordial form" and identifying the "stony face" as "the grim visage carved high upon" the tower's "west façade," and reproduces its photograph, 104-105

eventually establish "that building" of Ballylee "as a permanent symbol of my work plainly visible to the passer by."[70] As we will see later Yeats was to wait until as late as *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems* (Cuala, 1924) to append an explanatory note on the tower itself—when the tower was a more substantial presence in his poetry. Without explaining anything here in "Ego Dominus Tuus," Yeats launched his building work and the tower slowly began to flicker into life in his poetry.

By the time of the first publication of "Ego Dominus Tuus" (6 October 1917), Yeats had not only begun building work on the tower (9 July 1917) but had proposed marriage to Georgie Hyde Lees (26 September 1917), who he would marry in less than a month (20 October 1917).[71] It was on the very day of the first publication of "Ego Dominus Tuus" that Yeats wrote to his newly-engaged fiancée who had never been to Ballylee: "I went to Ballylee yesterday to see the men at work on the cottage — mud & litter everywhere…. They think they may get the roof on the castle sometime in November…" (to George Hyde-Lees, 6 October [1917] #3335). It is likely that this progress in real life provided him with an external context to "your tower" in the poem and prepared him for the project of potentially constructing his own tower in poetry.

The preserved proof text of "Ego Dominus Tuus" used for *Poetry* (Chicago) shows that Yeats reused the Cuala proof sheet for the periodical. In this proof text the word "stream" is printed in the first line of the poem, in place of the "sea" used in all the other preserved drafts.[72] Yeats, moreover, inserted the second "stream" (l. 71) near the close of the poem in hand on this Cuala proof when he used it for *Poetry*. Yeats made the crucial decision to revise the long-standing "sea" in his account of the setting under the tower (at both ends of the poem) to "stream" before Cuala prepared proof sheets, reflecting the actual topography of his own tower which he had acquired by then. At that stage the second occurrence of the "sea" was left uncorrected. The evidence of this recycled proof

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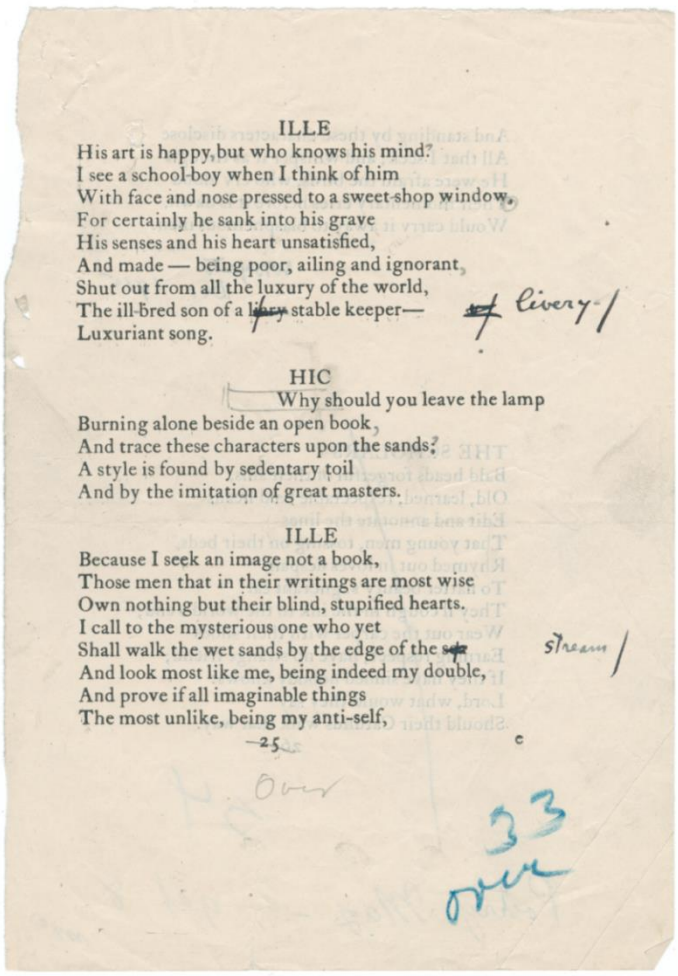
[70] Yeats to Sturge Moore, 21 September [1927] #5030.

[71] Kelly 194-95. "By the beginning of June [Lady Gregory] had taken formal possession on his behalf and sent on to him the 'seisin', or symbols of possession: a bunch of grass from the field, a handful of thatch from the cottage, a stone from the castle wall…," *Life II* 85.

[72] See for the uses of the "sea" and "stream" *WSC* 264-65, 284-85, 288-89, 296-97, 300-301, 301n, 305, 305n.

sheet shows that Yeats had already revised the "sea" in the first line to "stream" and that he made the corresponding revision of the "sea" to "stream" in the final speech of *Ille* in his own hand when he was correcting proof for *Poetry*. (See Figure 2.) This in turn was reflected in Cuala's published text: "Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the stream" (l. 71). In *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1918), for which he had originally written "Ego Dominus Tuus," the poem is dated "December 1915," as distinct from other publications, as if recording the early stage of the poem. [73]



ILLE
His art is happy, but who knows his mind?
I see a school-boy when I think of him
With face and nose pressed to a sweet-shop window,
For certainly he sank into his grave
His senses and his heart unsatisfied,
And made — being poor, ailing and ignorant,
Shut out from all the luxury of the world,
The ill-bred son of a ~~livery~~ stable keeper— livery /
Luxuriant song.

HIC
Why should you leave the lamp
Burning alone beside an open book,
And trace these characters upon the sands?
A style is found by sedentary toil
And by the imitation of great masters.

ILLE
Because I seek an image not a book,
Those men that in their writings are most wise
Own nothing but their blind, stupified hearts.
I call to the mysterious one who yet
Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the ~~sea~~ stream /
And look most like me, being indeed my double,
And prove if all imaginable things
The most unlike, being my anti-self,
—25 c
Over
33
over

Fig. 2. A digital scan of a leaf from the galley proofs of "Ego Dominus Tuus" for *Poetry* (Chicago) with Yeats's revisions in ink. The Special Collections Research Center, the University of Chicago Library.

[73] *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* was published in January, 1918, Wade 120. Although the galley proof carried the date "Dec 1915," the published text of "Ego Dominus Tuus" in *Poetry* (Chicago), October 1917 was not dated, *WSC* xii, 305. In a letter to Harriet Monroe of *Poetry* (Chicago) on 21 July 1917, Yeats noted that he wrote "Ego Dominus Tuus" to "begin [*Per Amica*] with" it and thought the poem "good but perhaps obscure" out of the context of *Per Amica*, "a commentary upon it" (#3288).

What would become one of the crucial components in the landscape of Yeats's tower, the "stream," unexpectedly appeared only at a late stage in the composition of his first tower poem. I suggest that the revision from the "sea" to the "stream" marked a crucial step—beyond, for instance, Prince Athanase's "lighted tower above the sea"—towards establishing a reflection in his poetry of his own particular tower in Ballylee. Yeats's initial setting of the tower "by the edge of the sea" in the early stages of composition resonated with Shelley's "half-ruined tower, wherein the sea … threw 'spangled sands' and 'rarest sea shells'" in *Laon and Cythna* which Yeats dwelt on in his 1900 essay on Shelley, testifying to its lineage.[74] In the essay Yeats wrote: "The tower … is, like the sea, and rivers, and caves with fountains, a very ancient symbol…" (*E&I* 87). "It is only by ancient symbols," he argued there, "by symbols that have numberless meanings beside the one or two the writer lays an emphasis upon, or the half score he knows of, that any subjective art can escape from the barrenness and shallowness of a too conscious arrangement, into the abundance and depth of Nature." Yeats was, at the turn of the century, seeking in the history of the "ancient" symbol of the tower, in Shelley's poetry and elsewhere, what he calls in the essay "mystery and shadow" in "the half-lights that glimmer from symbol to symbol" (*E&I* 87). The revision in "Ego Dominus Tuus" from the "sea" to the "stream" may therefore have been a sign of Yeats's beginning to seek "mystery and shadow" not only in "the half-lights that glimmer from symbol to symbol" but, as it were, in what he refers to as "the accidental circumstances of life."[75]

The relationship between "the barrenness and shallowness of a too conscious arrangement" and the "escape" "into the abundance and depth of Nature" by "ancient symbols" in the essay overlaps with that between *Hic*'s "modern hope" of "find[ing] myself" and *Ille*'s search for "an image." From the perspective of Yeats' tower project, *Hic* and *Ille*, at this very first stage of

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[74] "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry," *E&I* 87. Yeats also cites a scene from the same work of Shelley, which may be associated with *Ille*'s tracing the "characters upon the sand," where the heroine Cythna "[wrote] out … wisdom upon the sands in 'signs' that were 'clear elemental shapes…' and were 'the key of truths…,'" *E&I* 78. See *Early Essays* (*CW4*) 359n for the essay's history of composition, publication and revision.

[75] In the essay Yeats writes: "The poet of essences and pure ideas must seek in the half-lights that glimmer from symbol to symbol as if to the ends of the earth, all that the epic and dramatic poet finds of mystery and shadow in the accidental circumstances of life," *E&I* 87.

construction, may be understood as discussing how to construct "an image," by founding it upon the tower's "numberless meanings" as "a very ancient symbol" ("A style is found by sedentary toil / And by the imitation of great masters…") and also tapping into the "abundance and depth" of the unwritten: "I seek an image, not a book...." Indeed, Yeats would later use the word ("An image," *WS* 84-85) as a draft title for his tower poem "Blood and the Moon" as we will see. The "mysterious one" in combination with "standing" in *Ille*'s final speech, besides "walk the wet sands…" there anticipating the fisherman motif, suggests the tower:

> *Ille.* …
> I call to the mysterious one who yet
> Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the stream
> And look most like me, being indeed my double,
> And prove of all imaginable things
> The most unlike, being my anti-self,
> And, standing by these characters, disclose
> All that I seek…. (371)[76]

The "book / That Michael Robartes left" entered Yeats's poetry along with the "tower" in "Ego Dominus Tuus." Both foreshadow Yeats's work in subsequent years, though he first began to explain the "book" (eventually compiled as two editions of *A Vision*) in the paratext of notes and prefaces. In the preface to *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) Yeats commented on the reappearance of his old characters, but did not yet refer to the setting of the tower: "Michael Robartes and John Aherne … have once again become a part of the phantasmagoria through which I can alone express my convictions about the world" (852). What was remarkable about this preface was the inscription at the end, which anchored the preface and the book in a new—other than "Sligo" or "In the Seven Woods"—particular place and time: "Ballylee, Co. Galway, /

[76] Punctuations in the quotation are as they were in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919).

September 1918."[77] This implicitly marked Yeats's actual moving into his landed property on which building work would still continue. This anchor obliquely corresponded to the setting of "Ego Dominus Tuus" as well as that of its companion where Robartes and Aherne appeared. Although it does not directly mention Ballylee Castle, the inscription may be associated with the tower in four poems in the volume, making a great step forward towards rooting the tower in a particular place.

Yeats commenced negotiating for the tower in October 1916, acquired it in the spring of 1917 and began the rebuilding work in July. Meanwhile Yeats decided before 21 July on the publication of "Ego Dominus Tuus" on its own (before *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*), revised the "sea" to the "stream" and published this first tower-oriented poem in October 1917, marrying Georgie Hyde-Lees later that month. Yeats's investment in the tower would wed his textual life with his real life and bring both into focus around the poetic permanent address of Ballylee. The topographical revision of the "sea" to the "stream" in the first tower poem was paralleled by an architectural transposition of a whole stanza in "The Wild Swans at Coole" after publication, as we will see in the next section.

2

"The Wild Swans at Coole": a landmark

Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool…

"The Wild Swans at Coole" opens both volumes with that title. The poem records the stage where there is still no denominated tower around the Yeatsian landscape of Coole. It was written after the group of poems which address the subject of Maud Gonne, including "Her Praise," "The People" and "Broken

[77] See *VP* 846, 850-52. At the end of the prefaces to other books Yeats had used "Sligo, March 24th, 1895." for *Poems* (1895, Wade 15, 16) and its reprints, "In the Seven Woods; / 18 May 1906." for *Poems 1899-1905* (1906, Wade 64) and "In the Seven Woods, July, 1906." for *The Poetical Works of William B. Yeats. Vol. I, Lyrical Poems* (1906, Wade 65).

Dreams," recording her faded beauty, fallen luck, compensating inner nobility as well as his "stubborn" (356) passion for her. As if prefaced by those broodings on the difference between Maud in the past and the present, the poet in "The Wild Swans at Coole" measures changes in himself between the past and the present. Towards its end, however, he proceeds to look forward to a future phase where the displaced swans would be accompanied by building work and onlookers: "Among what rushes will they build… / Delight men's eyes…" (323). The unsettlingly open ending with this final question about the unknown location of the new swans' nest and the indefinite timescale of "awake some day" obliquely signals a new beginning. The double question of location of the new building ("Among what rushes … / By what lake's edge or pool …," 323) attracts and directs our attention to the future, before we notice it. The effect of the question was maximized when the whole stanza was transposed from the third stanza to the end of the poem after publication, as I shall discuss presently.

Yeats's earlier swans were almost confined to mythological images. "The Wild Swans at Coole" was a poem in which Yeats's swans were fleshed out. It was the first time that Yeats chose the swans at Coole as a subject matter of a poem.[78] George Moore's reference to swans at the same lake in his autobiography published in 1911 may provide a context.[79] Lady Gregory juxtaposed the two in one of her late essays on Coole, as we will see in the last chapter. In *Hail and Farewell* George Moore recollects a flight of the swans at Coole in 1899 that delighted him ("a great clamour of wings, and the snowy plumage of thirty-six great birds rushing down the lake, striving to rise from its surface…"), while Yeats at his side, according to Moore, immersed in the recomposition of his reverie over Fomorians in *The Shadowy Waters*, "would not raise his eyes."[80]

Asked "whence this flock had come, and if they were really wild swans," Yeats told Moore

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[78] Yeats had written on the woods and the "pond" at Coole in the "Introductory Rhymes" to "The Shadowy Waters" (217), but not on the lake, though the unnamed "that mysterious, always brimming lake" (356) in "Broken Dreams" suggests the one at Coole.

[79] This autobiography, *Hail and Farewell*, Roy Foster notes, "created an enduring caricature version" of Yeats, *Life2* 2.

[80] *Hail and Farewell* 190-91.

> that they were descended originally from a pair of tame swans who had re-acquired their power of flight, and that the thirty-six flew backwards and forwards from Coole to Lough Couter, venturing farther, visiting many of the lakes of Galway and Mayo, but always returning in the autumn to Coole. (*Hail and Farewell* 191)

Yeats's geographically-rooted explanation here, read with "The Wild Swans at Coole" in mind, suggests something about the ornithological origins of the final question in the poem. The mysterious question about the location of nest-building may have originated in a down-to-earth local context.

The adjective "wild" in the title was added at a late stage of composition. An extant ink draft is titled "The swans at Coole," though there are also two instances of the word "wild" used in drafts of the main text of the poem unlike the published one.[81] A two-page fair copy with revisions, dated "Oct 1916," carries the final title.[82] (See Figure 3.) The adjective in the title adds an oxymoronic tension between the migration of wild birds among lakes and their habitation in the private estate, besides evoking other connotations of the word (as in "wild geese" [290] or in "driven wild" [444]). Being "wild" and at Coole may even recall Yeats's explanation to George Moore about the originally domestic swans' regaining the power of flight, which parallels Yeats's recuperation at Coole in the late nineties and seasonal return there.[83]

Yeats made two crucial revisions in "The Wild Swans at Coole": one during the process of composition, the other during revision after publication. Combined, these alterations formed a turning point in the construction of the poem. The correction after publication consisted of the transposition of the original third stanza to the close of the poem. This architectural rearrangement

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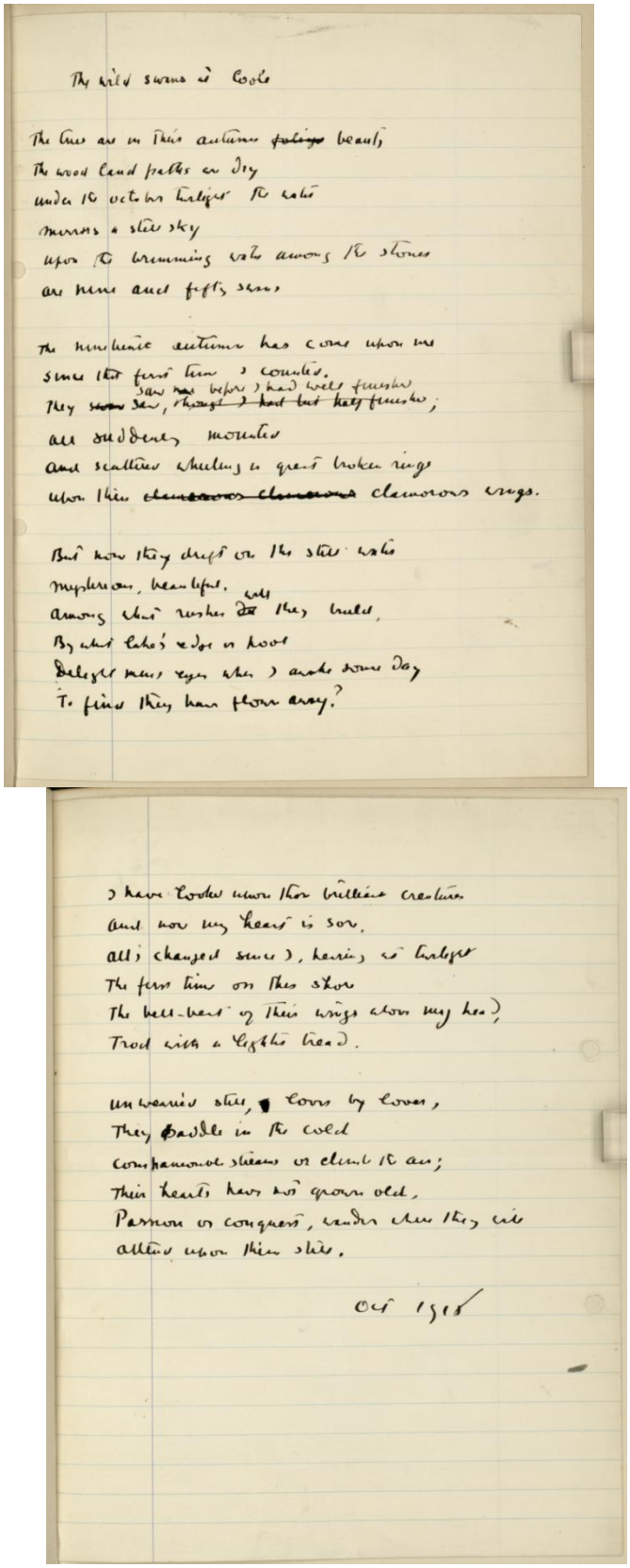
[81] *WSC* 10-11. "The wild swans fly" and "number the wild swans" are both crossed out in drafts, *WSC* 4-5, 20-21

[82] Held in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas. The Cornell edition of *The Wild Swans at Coole* lists this in the "Census of Manuscripts," noting the copy is dated "Oct 1915," which should be "Oct 1916," *WSC* xxii. In the collation of texts "no date Texas (1)" should be correspondingly "Oct 1916," *WSC* 39n.

[83] "Lady Gregory, seeing that I was ill, brought me from cottage to cottage to gather folk-belief…," "The Stirring of the Bones," *Au* (*CW3*) 283.



The Wild Swans at Coole

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry
Under the autumn twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine and fifty swans

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count.
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight
The first time on this shore
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old,
Passion or conquest, wander where they will
Attend upon them still.

Oct 1916

Fig. 3. A digital scan of a two-page fair copy with revisions of "The Wild Swans at Coole," dated "Oct 1916." The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, the University of Texas.

—as if moving a room to remodel a house and in effect remodelling the whole poem—took place between the poem's publication in periodicals (the *Little*

Review, June 1917, where the poem was exclusively dated "October, 1916," and the *Sphere*, 23 June 1917) and in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (Cuala, 1917), which was finished 10 October and published on 17 November 1917. The text of the poem Yeats inscribed for Lady Gregory on the "flyleaf of vol. 8 of his *Collected Works* (1908)," dated "July 13. 1917" (*WSC* xviii), still has the earlier order of the first published version, ending with "Attend upon them still" (the present fourth stanza). A preserved fair copy dated "Sept 1917" has the present final order of the stanzas, ending with the question "flown away?"[84] Based on this evidence we may assume that Yeats transposed the former third stanza to the end of the poem between July 13 and September 1917. The poem's "horizontal layout over three columns" in its second publication in the *Sphere*, 23 June 1917, the "characteristic format for poems" of the weekly, as Wayne Chapman points out, seems to have made the third stanza (at that stage) stand out and may have helped Yeats's later rearrangement of stanzas.[85] The revision which "invokes the poet's future," Roy Foster remarks, "signall[ed] an alteration in [his] mood between the summer of 1917 and the autumn" and "reflected a change of circumstances" (*Life2* 83). It is striking that this transpositional revision of "The Wild Swans at Coole" roughly coincided with the replacement of the "sea" with the "stream" at both ends of "Ego Dominus Tuus" already discussed.

September was the month in which Yeats proposed marriage to Georgie and was accepted.[86] During the interval between the poem's publication in June and November, Yeats had begun the rebuilding work in Ballylee and had found his own life companion, like the swans at Coole. His letter to Georgie in early October, about two weeks before their marriage when they had not yet set the date, shows that their married life was to start side by side with the building work on Ballylee: "The masons are at work at Ballylee. Lady Gregory thinks that we should get married as soon as possible & that I should bring you here before the weather grows very cold & gloomy that we may make our Ballylee plans

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[84] *WSC* xix, 39.

[85] Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 88-89, 92. The text of the poem printed in the *Sphere* is reproduced on p. 89.

[86] Kelly 194..

together while the castle looks well."[87] The same letter also anticipates the influence of their married life on his work: "you will lead me to lonely places. Let us begin at once our life of study, of common interests …."

The other crucial revision during the poem's composition has been less noticed. It was the introduction of the verb "build" into the former third stanza (the present final stanza), followed by the alteration of the tense from the present to the future. The verb "build" emerge together with "lakes edge" on the verso of an extant leaf.[88] The process of composition through which the poem finally settled down into the image of swan lovers' "build[ing]" on an "edge" of a lake, combining mating and building, has been little noticed.[89] The next verb after "build," in the penultimate line of the stanza, was also finalized at the same time. After all trials of "flee" (*WSC* 24-25), "play" and "disport" (*WSC* 28-29)—as if it were mirroring Yeats's wanderings in personal life until his settling down in his investment in Ballylee and marriage—the verb "[d]elight" was placed at the same time as "build" (*WSC* 32-33). The verb would reappear later in the crucial seventh stanza about the tower in the elegy for Robert Gregory ("the delighted eye…," 326). The poetic structure finally anchored by the words "build," "edge," "Delight" and "will" and finished by the rearrangement of stanzas seems to suggest a dialogue between the construction of the poem and that of his house and family at Ballylee. The step-by-step process of transformation can be traced in the preserved nine-leaf holograph drafts and two fair copies:

Among what rushes will their eggs
~~Where is the stream or pool~~ (NLI 13,587 (1) 1^{r}, *WSC* 10-11)

rushes laid their eggs
Among what waters low [~~?~~] nests
And by what stream or pool
They have fled when I… (NLI 13,587 (1) 5^{r}, *WSC* 24-25)

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[87] 4 October [1917] #3332.
[88] NLI 13,587(1) 7^{v}, *WSC* xiv, 32-33.
[89] Curtis Bradford, for instance, transcribes the draft in which "build" first appears in his pioneering work on Yeats's manuscripts, but does not comment on it, *Yeats at Work* 59.

Among what rushes were their eggs
~~Upon what shore or pool~~…
~~Shall disport when I~~… (NLI 13,587 (1) 6[r], *WSC* 28-29)

Among what rushes do they build
By what lakes edge or pool
Delight men s eyes… (NLI 13,587 (1) 7[v], *WSC* 32-33)

will
Among what rushes ~~do~~ they build…
(The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas, dated "Oct 1916," see Figure 3)

[the whole (third) stanza transposed to the end of the poem as the fifth stanza]
(Quinn (1) 2[r], dated "Sept 1917," *WSC* 39[90])

On the fair copy dated "Oct 1916" the auxiliary "do" is revised to "will." The verb "build" in the future tense is highlighted by the later transposition of the stanza to the close of the poem, making the poem prospective as well as recollective and as a result serve as a mysteriously suggestive prelude to his new era of building.

Above the draft lines in which the verb "build" first appears is written on the same leaf another draft of the opening stanza, where we first see dramatically increased lake water: "Upon the brimming water among stones / Are…."[91] The water level had been consistently low in earlier drafts.[92] If we may assume that they reflected the actual low-level lake water, then, putting symbolic interpretations aside, we may speculate that the season shifted from early to late

[90] A two- page holograph fair copy, *WSC* xix.
[91] *WSC* 32-33. Other key components of the stanza which entered the poem in this draft include "woodland paths," and the name of the month in "Under the October twilight the water," which is revised from "The water in the october twilight" in this draft and runs on to the next line "Mirrors [?~~th~~] a still sky."
[92] *WSC* 2-3, 4-5, 10-11, 20-21, 24-25, 28-29.

autumn during Yeats's composition of the poem and that the actual lake water had already begun to rise.[93] From a geographical point of view, Coole Lough is "an exceptionally fine example of a turlough—a word which comes from the Irish words *tuar loch*, meaning a dry lake," which "is an open expanse of water" for "much of the winter" and in "summer … is gone, reduced to a small pond."[94] The early drafts of the opening stanza carry Yeats's trials such as "grey rocks," "grey stones" and other expressions for the stones by the lake before his reaching "Upon the brimming water among the stones" (322).[95] The juxtaposition of stones and the lake water also recalls Robert Gregory's oil painting "Lake at Coole," which indeed represents Coole Lough as a "mysterious[ly] beautiful" turlough.[96] (See Figure 4.)

Fig. 4. Coole Lake, Robert Gregory. Oils. The Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery. A digital scan of the reproduction in Colin Smythe, *A Guide to Coole Park, Co Galway: Home of Lady Gregory*, 3rd rev. ed. (1973; Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1995) 34.

Before the transposition of the original third stanza to the end of the poem, the keynote of the poem was equilibrium. The key term "still" chimed in each odd number stanza, twice at both ends in the last stanza: "still sky" (first stanza), "still water" (original third stanza) and "Unwearied still" and "Attend upon them still" (fifth stanza). In association with the image of "brimming" water, the poem

[93] In one of the earliest drafts is a line "The autumn rains have not begun," *WSC* 2-3.
[94] John Feehan and Grace O'Donovan, *The Magic of Coole* 11.
[95] *WSC* 8-11, 20-21, 28-29.
[96] The painting is reproduced in colour on the back endpaper of *Life1*.

was carefully closed by the repetition (almost to the point of brimming) of "still" in the first and last line of the stanza and the couplet rhyming will / still. In the present final form of the poem, the only full stop in the middle of a stanza appears near the centre of the poem. The new third stanza, located in the centre of this poem of five verses, forms a watershed between the past and the present, allocating the subsequent two stanzas to the present and the future respectively. The poem now ends with the open-ended prospect for the future, shifting the focus from equilibrium to departure.

Besides the building project at Ballylee, there seems to have been another subtext to the swan poem. Yeats told John Quinn about the plans for his next book of verse from Cuala on 16 May 1917: "The Swans at Coole (I think this will be the title) a volume of 24 or 25 lyrics or a little more if the war ending enables me to add two poems I have written about Easter Week in Dublin. It will be published in Autumn and be among my best books…" (#3244). Although this letter's purpose was to ask for a loan for his father by listing his forthcoming books whose manuscripts he was to send to Quinn, Yeats may have been still gauging the possibility of including the Easter poems in the book. An early undated draft for the table of contents for the 1917 book, eventually *The Wild Swans at Coole* (Cuala), written on "the last pages of the Maud Gonne notebook," used "up to the end of 1915," begins with "1916."[97] The title "The Wild Swans at Coole" does not appear in this draft list where Yeats uses (part of) the titles or keywords of the poems. In this list of the poems "Ego Dominus Tuus," for instance, is referred to as "Anti-self," part of the title used up to the poem's typescript ("The Anti-Self") as seen earlier. We may assume that this table of contents predated the composition of "The Wild Swans at Coole" and, as Stephen Parrish suggests, that Yeats "briefly entertained the bold scheme" of opening the book with "Easter, 1916" and closing it with "On Being Asked for a War Poem"—ultimately substituting "The Wild Swans at Coole" for the Easter poem.[98]

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[97] *WSC* xvii, xxvi.
[98] *WSC* xxvi.

The composition of "Easter, 1916," which Yeats dated 25 September 1916, was followed shortly by the commencement of his negotiations for Ballylee Castle and his writing "The Wild Swans at Coole" on 2 October 1916.[99] The contemporaneity of "The Wild Swans at Coole" and "Easter, 1916" illuminates the aspect of the swan poem as a covert meditation inspired by the Easter Rising. "The Wild Swans at Coole" implicitly shares with "Easter, 1916" not only the key phrase "All changed" (392; "All's changed," 322) but probably the subject of the Rising. The swans' sudden flight ("before I had well finished, / All suddenly mount…") and disappearance ("To find they have flown away…") set against the protagonist's sense of being left behind may on one level invoke the nationalists' rising and passing away. The adjective "wild" in the title could, therefore, allude to "the wild geese" which "spread / The grey wing upon every tide…" and recall the "delirium of the brave" in "September 1913" (290). The year "1916" labelled to "The Wild Swans at Coole" in its first publication may have commemorated the Rising, as well as recording Yeats's embarking on the project of the tower. "Easter, 1916" had only been privately printed in the spring of 1917 and had to wait for its publication until 1920, but the poem seems to have been subliminally present in "The Wild Swans at Coole" as a contrapuntal subtext.[100] In a way, the hint of "build[ing]" when the swans "have flown away" at the close of "The Wild Swans at Coole" chimes with Yeats's remarks in the letter written a month after the Easter Rising seen earlier ("swept away" and "begin building again," #2960). At the stage of "A world seem[ing] to have been swept away" in 1916, to "build" for Yeats probably signified rebuilding a nation in Ireland, which was to be epitomized on the personal front by his rebuilding of a half-ruined tower in Ballylee—both as his symbol and as his house.

It is worth noting that the period to which the poet in "The Wild Swans at Coole" looks back is that of the beginning of his relationship with Coole and the stories of the cottagers in the neighbourhood.[101] In a passage in his autobiography, written after Lady Gregory's death, Yeats would again recount

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[99] Kelly 187.

[100] See Wade 117, *MRD* xix, Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 84-85.

[101] In drafts, however, Yeats also tried different numbers of years: "?seven years" (*WSC* 6-7) and "nine Autumns" (*WSC* 12-13, 34-35).

the epoch-making 1897 summer at Coole (the year of his first long visit, "nineteen years" before "The Wild Swans at Coole"): "Lady Gregory brought me from cottage to cottage collecting folk-lore. Every night she wrote out what we had heard in the dialect of the cottages."[102] The pattern of their folkloric collaboration forms a parallel with his collaboration with his wife George which would begin soon after their marriage in automatic writing sessions. Just as George played a role of a medium, so did Lady Gregory as a translator and scribe during their folklore collection. Both women helped him tap into the source that is not in the book, which resonates with *Ille*'s speech: "I seek an image, not a book" (370). "My object was," Yeats continued in the 1935 autobiography, "to find actual experience of the supernatural, for I did not believe, nor do I now, that it is possible to discover in the text-books of the schools … even in the subtle reverie of saints, the most violent force in history."[103] From a meta-poetic as well as biographical points of view, "The Wild Swans at Coole" is a landmark which reflects on his first visit and first phase at Coole, as it were, and implicitly anticipates his next phase in the area accompanied by some "build[ing]" work, both inside and outside the poetic text. The question "Among what rushes will they build, / By what lake's edge or pool…" (323) would be in a sense answered by "The tower set on the stream's edge" (326) in the elegy placed immediately after this poem in the enlarged 1919 volume.

3

"A Prayer on going into my House"

God grant a blessing on this tower and cottage…
No table or chair or stool not simple enough
For shepherd lads in Galilee…

Around the same time when Yeats was writing a draft for "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes" (382-84), setting it in "Cormac's ruined house" and

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[102] "Dramatis Personae: 1896-1902," *Au* (*CW3*) 298. Written in 1934, first published in 1935.
[103] *Au* (*CW3*) 298-99.

invoking its stone architecture with the repetition "on the grey rock of Cashel," [104] Yeats was also in the process of making De Burgh's ruined house his own house.[105] A fair copy of "A Prayer on going into my House," Yeats's second tower poem, is dated "April 1918." It was in this poem that Yeats for the first time directly referred to the tower and the cottage as "my house." The word "cottage" also enters his poem for the first time here. Out of all four instances of the word "cottage(s)" in his poetry, two are in this poem, one in "The Tower" and the last in "Blood and the Moon"—all tower poems. The poem in the form of a prayer formally establishes the tower and the cottage in his poetic space. The reference to "my heirs" introduces a voice of a founding father which is in marked contrast to "*Pardon, old fathers*…" (269). The entrance of "my [h]ouse" and "my heirs" in his poetry implicitly announces his marriage. In "Upon a House shaken by the Land Agitation" a big house was threatened by "Mean roof-trees" (264). Here the tower and the cottage are treated as an entity that is governed by the same discipline, corresponding to Coole's "lofty milking-shed" (341). "A Prayer on going into my House" establishes the tower and cottage as yoked together.

Any distinction between the cottage and the tower is implicitly eliminated in the poem, though "simple enough / For shepherd lads" suggests the cottage while "what the great and passionate have used / Throughout so many varying centuries" suggests the tower. This may have been because the "[h]ouse" the Yeatses were "going into" at this stage was actually the cottage part of Ballylee. Yeats had written in a letter in the previous spring (15 May 1917) about his idea to "keep the contrast between the mediaeval castle and the peasant's cottage" (#3243); the latter was to provide him with "the necessities" and "a quite comfortable and modern part." In the poem there is no room for the "comfortable and modern." The accumulated negatives ("unspoiled," "No table … not simple enough…," "handle nothing … set eyes on nothing / But…") combined with the repetition of the key term "norm" rigidly structure the house in the poem.

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[104] A draft is dated "April 1918," *WSC* 390-91.
[105] *Myth* 2005 226n8.

All his tower-oriented poems in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), except for "Two Songs of a Fool," were written before he actually moved into Ballylee Castle. In early September 1918 Yeats sent nine poems, including this one, to Clement Shorter to have them privately printed.[106] In the letter attached to the poems sent from Ballinamantane House on the Coole estate, "which the Gregorys have lent us till Ballylee Castle is ready" (#3450) and where they stayed and supervised the work on their house, Yeats wrote about the cottage and the tower, focusing on the former, probably reflecting the fact that it was the cottage quarters that they were getting ready to house them at this point. The passage which sounds as if he were supplementing a footnote shows that the poem was anticipatory:

> We are hoping every day to get into our castle where we are, as it is, constantly, looking after carpenters & the like. We shall live on the road like a countryman our white walled cottage with its border of flowers like any country cottage & then the gaunt castle.
>
> [*drawing of castle and cottage and bridge*]
>
> All work—all furniture—is being done by local labour. We have plenty of timber as we bought the hundred year old floors and beams of a mill.[107]

The image of furniture is a keystone of the poem. Actual furniture for Ballylee Castle was also a matter of concern for the Yeatses around June 1918 as he wrote to Pound. They had "ordered some of the furniture" and were "trying to get design for the castle doors from the architect," "A real work of fortification, as it is to keep thieves out when we are at Oxford" (6 June 1918 #3447). Among simple pieces of furniture named in the poem is Sinbad's "painted chest," a model of furniture of a different kind, a container of a dream. It is a previsional glimpse of his later exploration of the Harun Al-Rashid motif. This rather uncomfortable insertion of Sinbad's chest, which belongs to a different level of

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[106] *Nine Poems* was privately printed in October 1918, Wade 122.

[107] This undated letter (#3479) is placed between the letters on 4 and 6 September 1918 in *CL InteLex*.

language—a method Yeats would later repeat with the "symbolic rose" in "My House"—foregrounds the seamless continuity between description of traditional furniture such as "table" and traditional poetic forms, including ancient images ("what the great and passionate have used / Throughout so many varying centuries").[108] T. R. Henn reports that George Yeats told him that Yeats "was very much interested in painted chests of all kinds, and wished to have one at Ballylee."[109] Vivid paint which George would apply to their house would also be part of the features at Ballylee, as we learn from Yeats's correspondence. The tantalizing relationship between actual painted chests and Sindbad's "image" is typical of Yeats's double construction of his tower.

The "norm" of the house includes the dream as well as traditional forms. Chiasmically repeating the half rhyming pair ("norm…dream / … dream…norm…" 371-72) Yeats introduces an image of the *Arabian Nights* into his textual "house" as a norm which makes "room" for dreams. The seamless link between the physical and textual hinges upon the double meaning of the verbs "handle" (whose object can be subject matters as in the case of "handled least" in "Ego Dominus Tuus") and "use." It is telling that the term "norm," twice repeated in the poem but not elsewhere in his poems, derives from classical Latin *norma*, meaning a "square used by carpenters, masons, etc., for obtaining right angles" (*OED*). Supervising building work among local carpenters and waiting for the actual moving in, Yeats is effectively using the "norm" to define the form of his "house," which is a "square" tower. The word capitalized in a fair copy with revisions may suggest the weight Yeats placed upon the word (*WSC* 312-13). Transparently reflecting real life, "for portions of the year" (371) also indicates that his "house" was to be used seasonally:

> …grant
> That I myself for portions of the year
> May handle nothing and set eyes on nothing

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[108] See Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* 193: "The very discomfort one experiences in … destroying a wonderful picture is an essential part of Yeats's statement."

[109] According to T. R. Henn's account, "a magnificent example" was possessed by Jack Yeats. *The Lonely Tower* 249-50. Saddlemyer refers to their own "gilded chest," 5.

But what the great and passionate have used
Throughout so many varying centuries
We take it for the norm…. (371)

Yeats would later use the term in his general introduction to his work to explain the "contrapuntal structure" of the verse, which is composed of the rhythm of "passionate prose" and that of folk song—the latter embodying "a ghostly voice" as an "unconscious norm" (*E&I* 524). In that 1937 essay the adjective "passion" modifies both the form as well as the content of his work: "I need a passionate syntax for passionate subject-matter…" (*E&I* 522).

Only what is "simple enough / For shepherd lads in Galilee" is to be allowed. "Galilee" not only refers to the place of the ministry of Jesus, but implicitly echoes "Ballylee." The place name Ballylee itself would enter the titles of two of his later tower-oriented poems but never the main text of the poem. On the outside is "an ash tree / That shades the road." Ash is "regarded with awe in Celtic countries especially Ireland" and "together with the oak and thorn" is "part of a magical trilogy in fairy lore."[110] We have a "thorn" in the central part of the next poem we will examine. The "house"—the tower and cottage—is represented almost as a shrine (which etymologically meant a "case or chest for books or papers" *OED*) and the three adjectives "simple," "great" and "passionate" stand for the attributes Yeats will allow to "go into" both his "house" and his poetry. The poem is not only a prayer on his establishing residence in the medieval tower in Ballylee, rebuilt from ruin, but helps establish the figure of the tower in his poetry—and configure his poetry in the image of his tower.

4

"In Memory of Major Robert Gregory": a tower-warming elegy

Now that we're almost settled in our house

[110] James MacKillop, *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology.*27.

I'll name the friends that cannot sup with us
Beside a fire of turf in th' ancient tower…
Climb up the narrow winding stair to bed…

… the old storm-broken trees
That cast their shadows upon road and bridge;
The tower set on the stream's edge…

Robert Gregory was killed on the Italian front on 23 January 1918, "returning from a mission in Italy," "shot down in error, by an Italian plane," as reported later (*Life2* 117). It was about six months since Yeats had overseen the launch of rebuilding work on Ballylee on 9 July 1917 and about three months since his marriage to George Hyde-Lees on 20 October 1917 and the beginning of her automatic writing four days later.[111] Commissioned by Lady Gregory on 2 February 1918 ("If you feel like it some time—write something down that we may keep…"),[112] Yeats wrote the pastoral elegy "The Sad Shepherd," later retitled "Shepherd and Goatherd," around 20 March 1918, following his prose appreciation of Robert Gregory published in *The Observer*, February 17 (*UP2* 429-31).[113] In this first elegy for Robert, set "in some vague place," but "perhaps the Burren Hills,"[114] the place which was, according to Lady Gregory, "the 'sea face' of Coole,"[115] Yeats as the goatherd, who is now based on his own "hills," looks back to the time when the mother of the dead man and her house sheltered him when he was young and houseless: "found when I had neither goat nor grazing / New welcome and old wisdom at her fire / Till winter blasts were gone…" (340). In a passage that describes the dead shepherd's detachment from the architecture of the house that he inherited, we also hear the voice of Yeats the tower-owner, who has embarked on the project of restoring the half-ruined tower and settling down: "he alone had gathered up no gear, / Set carpenters to work on no wide table, / On no long bench nor lofty milking-shed / As others will, when

[111] *AVB* 8. *YVP1* 1, 512n1. Kelly 192-98.
[112] Quoted in *Life2* 117.
[113] *WSC* 116-17.
[114] Yeats to Lady Gregory, 19 March 1918 #3416.
[115] 5 September 1928, *J2* 314

first they take possession" (340-41).[116] This experimental dialogical elegy, which shares with "Ego Dominus Tuus" a metapoetic exploration of a new style ("a new form for me & … for modern poetry," #3416), mediates between the "The Wild Swans at Coole" and the second elegy "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory." Indeed these three poems may be read as a sort of a sequence.

It was during their stay at a hotel in Glendalough from 13 to 28 March 1918, where the couple regularly conducted automatic writing sessions, that Yeats wrote the pastoral elegy for Robert, which shared the image of the spirit's spiral movement with another poem he was working on around this time.[117] Six lines for the final stanza of the poem, "Under the Round Tower," a covert epithalamium, are found on the verso of the last leaf of five-page holograph draft dated "March 20" of "Shepherd and Goatherd."[118] At the beginning of an automatic writing session on 19 March, which primarily concerns the "movement of spirit," George reminds Yeats of the significance of the tower: "tower tower you[r thought]" (*YVP1* 391). This comment, made in the vicinity of the "round tower" at Glendalough, should have inevitably evoked the image of another tower at Ballylee, which "George had not yet seen."[119] They would continue tapping into the symbolic potential of the tower through automatic writing sessions, as a few of George's automatic drawings indicate. (See Figure 5.[120]) The juxtaposition or cohabitation of the elegy ("Shepherd and Goatherd") and the epithalamium ("Under the Round Tower") on the same leaf suggestively anticipates the forthcoming epithalamic elegy set in their long-awaited new residence. It was in his newly restored tower at Ballylee that Yeats chose to

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[116] Roy Foster reads the passage as representing the "fact that [Robert] was unprepared to take over Coole (though it was technically his possession since his twenty-first birthday)" in a way that "cannot have been entirely welcome to his wife (or his mother)," *Life2* 119. Calling Robert a "cuckoo" (l. 54), the poem may even suggest the "long-lasting Gort legend" that Robert was fathered "by arrangement … by the local blacksmith," *Life1I*169, 568n24.

[117] Kelly 198-99. *YVP1* 379-404, 540n2.

[118] *WSC* xx, 69n, 71n, 116-17. Daniel Albright calls "Under the Round Tower" a "clandestine celebration of Yeats's marriage," Albright 558.

[119] *YVP1* 395. *MYV2* 236. *AVA* (*CW13*) 293n17. George Mills Harper notes that "the tower, symbol of P[assionate] B[ody] and of conjugal union, became central to the Yeatses' search for the symbolic truth of the journey of the soul in A[utomatic] S[cript] of 1918" and that it culminated in "three symbolic sittings" at the tower in Ballylee in September 1918, *YVP1* 541n19.

[120] It was nine months after Yeats's composition of "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes" that George made the automatic drawing on 7 January 1919 (Fig. 5. Above), which suggests a double image of Ballylee Castle and the Rock of Cashel.

house his second elegy for Robert Gregory, embedding it in his second epithalamium.

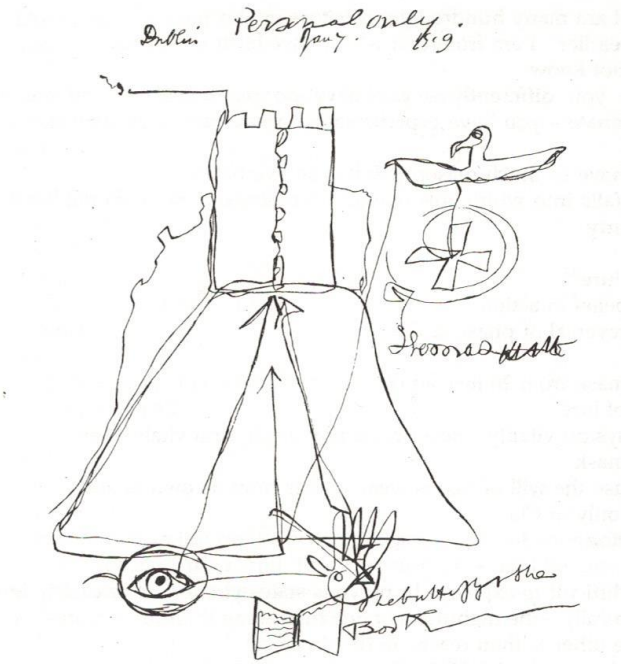
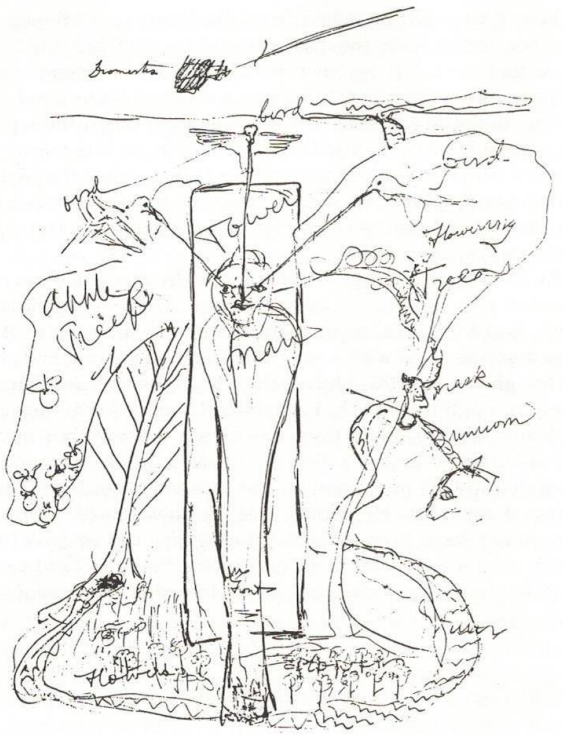


Fig. 5. *Above*: George Yeats, automatic drawing, 7 January 1919. A digital scan of the reproduction in *Yeats's "Vision" Papers*, gen ed. George Mills Harper, assisted by Mary Jane Harper, vol. 2, *The Automatic Script: 25 June 1918-29 March 1920*, eds. Steve L. Adams, Barbara J. Frieling and Sandra L. Sprayberry (London: Macmillan, 1992) [*YVP2*] 163.
Below: George Yeats, automatic drawing, 19 August 1920. A digital scan of the reproduction in *Yeats's "Vision" Papers*, vol. 3, *Sleep and Dream Notebooks, "Vision" Notebooks 1 and 2, Card File*, eds. Robert Anthony Martinich and Margaret Mills Harper (London: Macmillan, 1992) [*YVP3*] 36.



Yeats composed "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" in May and June 1918. One of the preserved typescripts is "signed in pencil 'W B Yeats / May 24. 1918.'"[121] Yeats reported to his father on 14 June 1918 from Ballinamantane House, about three months after the first elegy, that he had "just finished a long poem in memory of Robert Gregory which is among my best work" (#3450). The poem was anticipatory in that it was written ahead of their moving in and "settl[ing] in our house" (323). The elegy was first published in the *English Review*, August 1918, followed by the *Little Review*, September 1918, before its inclusion in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), when "Major" was added in the title.[122]

"In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" is a poem about settling. Opening with "Now that we're almost settled in our house" (323), the poem sets out to "settle" not only the couple in their newly rebuilt house, but the lost life of Robert Gregory in place. The poem, moreover, "settle[s]" the tower in the surroundings of (unnamed) Ballylee. It was in this third tower-oriented poem that the interior and exterior of the tower were first centrally established in Yeats's poetry. In the opening stanza the "fire of turf" and the "narrow winding stair" (its first appearance in his poetry) are built in. The juxtaposition of the title poem and "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" at the opening of *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) appears to provide an answer to the open-ended question at the close of the swan poem and celebrate the transition in his poetry—and his life—to a new phase. "The Wild Swans at Coole" ends with an unsettling; "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" is at work on settling. The title poem and the elegy connect and contrast Coole with Ballylee and also the speaker's homeless (or "towerless") status with his "almost settled" one.[123] Set against "*I have nothing but a book*" (270) in the introductory rhyme in *Responsibilities* (Cuala, 1914) mentioned earlier, the stateliness of the elegy stands out, conveyed by the

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[121] *WSC* xviii, 61n.

[122] See Yeats to Ezra Pound, 1 July 1918 (#3454): "I have asked Mrs Gregory to choose among possible English publications, & she is anxious to have copies for distribution among friends. Lady Gregory thinks she will be disappointed by delay. Could you manage September say…."; Yeats to Dorothy Pound, 12 July 1918 (#3458): "Please tell Ezra that Lady Gregory sent him that proof thinking it might prevent misprints."

[123] "We should remember that for at least half-a-century, Yeats was completely towerless," Hugh Haughton, "Yeats: A Tower of One's Own," The 49th Annual W. B. Yeats International Summer School, Sligo, Ireland, 4 Aug. 2008.

dozen numbered "'spacious' octave-stanza[s]" and the declaration in the opening line: "Now that we're almost settled in our house" (323).[124]

"In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" anchors a tribute to Robert Gregory in the place that centres on the tower. This is the first and the last occasion that the poet invites his friends to the tower, though only dead friends. This second elegy is set inside the tower, where the speaker and his wife have their own "fire"—corresponding to "her fire" at Coole in the first elegy—and welcome the newly-dead Robert among the poet's other dead friends. The poem explores a new function of the tower as a meeting place for the dead rather than the living. Jahan Ramazani points out that "Yeats obliquely suggests that the imagination may live most vigorously in the absence or death of its object."[125] "The repetition in the last lines of the first two stanzas underlines this: "All, all are in my thoughts to-night being dead" and "For all that come into my mind are dead" (324). The place that is first called "our house" (l. 1) and then "th' ancient tower" (l. 3) here is virtually identified with the speaker's "thoughts" or "mind." The space in the tower and the speaker's mind are, as it were, superimposed on each other.[126] The tower at this early stage of Yeats's construction is exclusively set out for ghosts, except for the "we," despite George's claim in her automatic script that "it [the tower] is a symbol only in life—abundant flowing life—never after life."[127]

The poem combines an elegy with an epithalamium.[128] The elegy is embedded in a "house-warming" epithalamium (etymologically meaning "upon" a "bride chamber," *OED*), which celebrates the couple's imaginary moving into the tower.[129] Yeats's correspondence conveys his excitement about moving in, though it was not until September 1918 and it was only the cottage part that

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[124] Helen Vendler points out this was Yeats's first use of "the 'spacious' octave-stanza that he adopted from Abraham Cowley's elegy 'On the Death of Mr. William Hervey,'" *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* 291.

[125] Ramazani, *Yeats and the Poetry of Death* 41.

[126] See Seamus Heaney in *Place of Writing* 24: "Within it [the tower], he was within his own mind…"

[127] 20 March 1918 at Glendalough, *YVP1* 394.

[128] Elizabeth Cullingford calls the poem "this epithalamium so mournfully hybridized by elegy," *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* 108. .

[129] Marjorie Perloff uses the phrase "the imagery of the house and the house-warming," in "The consolation theme in Yeats's 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory,'" *Modern Language Quarterly* 27 (1966) 313.

became ready for their short stay that year.[130] The poem may be read as a phantasmal tower-warming, in one respect, which could not have been fitter for the couple who had been engaged in automatic writing sessions since "four days after [their] marriage"—especially regularly while they were staying at Ballinamantane House from May to September 1918, supervising the building work and waiting to move in.[131] On the parallel building site of automatic writing, another work of their collaboration, symbolic meanings of the tower had been developing as we mentioned earlier.

In the script of the morning session on 20 March, six months before their moving into Ballylee, appear some questions that illuminate the stage where Yeats was searching to combine the form of the tower with that of the shuttle—the tower as a space to accommodate the movement of a spirit in the form of a spindle.[132] This "live" interactive script (in which Yeats's questions and George's answers appear numbered) lets us have a glimpse into the workshop of symbols or "metaphors for poetry" (*AVB* 8), as if it were the "doll-maker's house" (319): "1. Is tower symbol of P[assionate] B[ody] / 1. Yes but no connection with after death states—it is a symbol only in life… / 2. Give me symbol of PB to use with shuttle in model say / 2. There can be none … the spirit moves up & down from CB & PB in a curved line inside the spindle… / 4. What is movement of spirit / 4. [sketch of vertical twisted line] / not spiral but curved… / 6. Can you give me symbolic form of PB in connection with shuttle. / 6. There is none…."[133] George seems to be uncertain about the form of the movement at this stage, yet Yeats persistently gropes for a model of the tower combined with a shuttle. The suggested "curved line inside the spindle," however, is already suggestive of the winding stair. The first use of the "winding stair" in "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" marks the inception of this later crucial symbol.

In the process of composition, Yeats had to manage "a little thorny" negotiation with Lady Gregory and Margaret, Robert's widow.[134] As a result, the present eighth stanza (of horsemanship) "was added in proof," as Yeats

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[130] *AVA* (*CW13*) 227n57.
[131] *AVB* 8
[132] *YVP1* 394. See also the related exchanges of the previous night, *YVP1* 393.
[133] *YVP1* 394-95.
[134] Yeats to George [? 30 May 1918] # 3446. *Life2* 125.

indicated in a fair copy (*WSC* 50-51). His letter to George towards the end of May 1918 suggests the significance of the stanzas which dwell on Robert's art while reporting Lady Gregory's different perception: "It is pathetic for Lady Gregory constantly says [']it [the elegy] is his monument—all that remains.' I see that she feels that his pictures are as it were his thought but not himself" (# 3446).

If the seventh stanza (the tower and its surroundings) had immediately been followed by the present ninth stanza ("our secret discipline"), we would have had a more tower-centred elegy. We would have seen that part of the poem directly moving from the setting of the tower to "cold Clare rock and Galway rock and thorn"—invoking together Robert's style of art, especially subliminally alluding to his sepia drawing of Ballylee Castle—and to the aspect of "all lovely intricacies of a house," probably more transparently suggesting Ballylee's ongoing restoration work.[135] (See Figure 6.) This is the sole instance of Yeats's use of the word "intricacies" in the context of his tower, which would later

Fig. 6. A sepia drawing of Ballylee by Robert Gregory. A digital scan of the reproduction in Colin. Smythe, *A Guide to Coole Park, Co Galway* 48.

[135] "Other versions of the picture exist," Colin. Smythe, *A Guide to Coole Park, Co Galway* 48. A sepia reproduction of the drawing is on the front endpaper of *Life2*.

become more consciously marked by its "stark[ness]." The use here ("What other could so well have counselled us / In all lovely intricacies of a house / As he…" 327) probably reflected Yeats's consultations about the tower's rebuilding and refurbishment with friends and experts, including Margaret Gregory at early stages.[136] "[T]hat stern colour and that delicate line" of "cold Clare rock and Galway rock and thorn" not only root Gregory's genius as a painter in the "secret discipline" of the landscape, but, in combination with the seventh tower stanza, would have particularly suggested Robert's pictorial representation of the tower. The phrase "all things the delighted eye now sees / Were loved by him" (326) is probably a tribute to Robert's drawing of the castle, from which Yeats wanted to "get a photograph made."[137] When the lines in the seventh stanza establish the tower and its surroundings in Yeats's poetic space, the poet "name[s]" each component of the landscape that centres around the tower (recalling the rhetoric of murmuring "name upon name," 394) as if reconstructing it out of the details of Robert's drawing.[138] The poem adds a "nightly" drama of cattle and a water-hen in "the living stream" (393) as it were, while a cart is going over the bridge in Robert's drawing.[139]

The "delighted eye" (probably continuing from "Delight men's eyes" at the end of the swan poem) may in the first place refer to the eye of George Yeats, who had already developed the symbolic significance of the tower in her automatic writing even before visiting it; yet it also speaks directly to a reader, who "now sees" the picture in words on the printed page:

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[136] See for instance Yeats's letters about the tower to Margaret Gregory on 15 November 1916 (#3072), 18 November 1916 (# 3074) and 29 June 1917 (#3275). Yeats wrote to George about Ricketts's advice on 18 August 1918 (#3471): "I … showed him the designs. He says we should risk the wicker hoods…. He suggests our using a millstone as flagging for the castle floor. He re-touched the candlestick design; & to demonstrate a point gave me a beautiful brass-candlestick."

[137] Yeats to Lady Gregory, 1 April [1917] #3209: "I wonder if I could get a photograph made from Roberts drawing of Ballylee it might make a postcard & at any rate interest Iseult."

[138] Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory when he decided to close the deal on Ballylee despite the matter of a new road through the property (7 March [1917] #3178): "With the road through it will be the more like Roberts drawing." See also another letter to the same correspondent on 4 March [1917] #3176: "I am now greatly taken with the [?]several stepping stones & Ballylee on the road by a couple thatched cottages…."

[139] The "instruction" in the automatic script may be relevant to the appearance of birds and animals around the tower: "16. …You must let the mechanical side alone until the metaphysical is so much a part of you to have become an image…. 22. Why did I see a fish this morning? / 22. Tower antithetical / He may have been there giving you an image," *YVP1* 396.

> … all things the delighted eye now sees
> Were loved by him: the old storm-broken trees
> That cast their shadows upon road and bridge;
> The tower set on the stream's edge;
> The ford where drinking cattle make a stir
> Nightly, and startled by that sound
> The water-hen must change her ground;
> He might have been your heartiest welcomer. (326)

Compared with "an ash / That shades the road" alone besides "this tower and cottage" (371-72) in "A Prayer on going into my House," Yeats firmly establishes the tower in its immediate surroundings in the seventh stanza and also in a wider and deeper context of the "secret discipline" in the ninth stanza. The seventh stanza and also the tenth stanza (about "all lovely intricacies of a house") weave Robert's talent into the details of this tower and unite both to "cold Clare rock and Galway rock and thorn" and to "that stern colour and that delicate line." The evocation of "rock" also recalls Robert Gregory's other works, including the oil painting already discussed of Coole Lough as a turlough, one of "the most distinctive landscape features to be found in the lowland limestone country of East Galway and East Clare."[140] Placed side by side, those two works by Robert (the sepia drawing of Ballylee Castle and the oil painting of Coole Lake) seem to "[double their] might" (326) and paratextually support Yeats's developing tower project.[141] Yeats would return to the "rocky place / In Coole demesne" (490) much later as we will see in the final chapter.

In a typescript of the ninth stanza about the "lovely intricacies of a house" (in which one may hear an echo of "all the Minute Particulars of Life" from Blake's *Jerusalem*[142]) Yeats made revisions in hand from the third to the fifth lines, replacing abstract expressions with more specific details—or

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[140] *Magic of Coole* 11.
[141] See Figures 3 and 6.
[142] See *AVA* (*CW13*) 261n203. The phrase of Blake's is alluded to in "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes": "what but eye and ear silence the mind / With the minute particulars of mankind?" (384).

"intricacies"—though he eventually used the typed lines before revision (with a few changes in punctuation) in the finished poem:

> And blossoming garden path, or understood
> How to paint emblems upon wood
> Or draw out letters to be carved on stone. (*WSC* 60)

The "blossoming garden" did not make its way into his poetic tower, though it did into his correspondence. The "letters to be carved on stone" anticipates another tower-oriented poem, whose first version Yeats would send to John Quinn in late July 1918 as we shall see.[143] Upon the foundation of simple furniture laid in "A Prayer on going into my House" ("table or chair or stool"), in this elegy Yeats built "lovely intricacies of a house," signalling the progress of its textual construction.

In the prose appreciation for *The Observer*, 17 February 1918, Yeats situated Robert Gregory in the tradition of Calvert, Palmer and Blake.[144] His description there almost serves as a commentary on "our secret discipline" in the elegy: "I came to care for his [Robert Gregory's] paintings of the Clare coast, with its cloud shadows upon blue-grey stony hills…. One always understood by something in his selection of line and of colour that he had read his Homer and his Virgil and his Dante…" (*UP2* 430). In the shepherd's lines in the pastoral elegy Robert's paintings are translated into "sorrowful, austere, sweet, lofty pipe tunes" (341). Yeats had written to Quinn, with "two or three" particular landscapes by Robert in mind, in similar words on 8 Feb 1918, as if making a prose draft of the elegy: "His paintings had majesty and austerity, and … sweetness" (#3407). In the lines of the goatherd on piping, Yeats was probably alluding to Robert's painting of the Burrren Hills. Yeats had remarked in his 1901 essay "Ireland and the Arts" that "…if our painters of Highland cattle and moss-covered barns were to care enough for their country to care for what makes

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[143] 23 July [1918] #3465.

[144] *UP2* 430. Marion Witt explores the relevance of the writings of Calvert and Palmer on painting and poetry to the ninth stanza and takes "our" (in "our secret discipline") as "painters and poets," "The Making of an Elegy: Yeats's 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory,'" *Modern Philology* 48.2 (Nov. 1950), 118. JSTOR. 12 Jan. 2009 〈http://www.jstor.org/stable/435288〉.

it different from other countries, they would discover, when struggling, it may be, to paint the exact grey of the bare Burren Hills, and of a sudden, it may be, a new style, their very selves…" (*E&I* 208-209). This statement about discovering "a new style, their very selves" through "struggling … to paint the exact grey of the bare Burren Hills" could stand as a commentary on "our secret discipline / Wherein the gazing heart doubles her might" (ll. 68-69) in the elegy. Later in 1924 Yeats would append a note to this passage in the essay and refer to Robert's finding "what promised to grow into a great style" through painting the Burren, again using the key terms "austerity" and "sweetness."[145] The goatherd's lines also sound as if they were commenting on that sepia drawing of Ballylee by Robert, pre-echoing the phrase "To exalt a lonely mind" (420) in a later tower sequence "Meditations": "He had often played his pipes among my hills, / And when he played it was their loneliness, / The exultation of their stone, that cried / Under his fingers" (339).

In the elegy set in the tower Yeats defines "our secret discipline" in the context of painting—and architecture. The "discipline," combined, by making a slant rhyme, with "line," which could refer to painting, poetry and also music, marries not only Robert's art but implicitly Yeats's tower, his poetical architecture, to "cold Clare rock and Galway rock and thorn." [146] The architecture which enshrines the elegy is from time to time foregrounded throughout the poem: "our house," "a fire of turf in th' ancient tower" and "the narrow winding stair" (the opening stanza), "all things the delighted eye now sees" and "The tower set on the stream's edge" (the seventh stanza), "all lovely intricacies of a house" (the tenth stanza) and "that wind / That shakes the shutter" (the final twelfth stanza). Yeats's lines on "our secret discipline" give what he had called "what makes it [their country] different from other countries" (*E&I* 209) in "Ireland and the Arts" a local habitation and a name:

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[145] "Robert Gregory painted the Burren Hills and thereby found what promised to grow into a great style…. His few finished pictures, so full of austerity and sweetness, should find their way into Irish public galleries. / 1924." *E&I* 209.

[146] Yeats would later write in "Four Years: 1887-1891" (written in 1920-1, first published in 1921): "Have not all races had their first unity from a mythology that marries them to rock and hill?" *Au* (*CW3*) 167.

> We dreamed that a great painter had been born
> To cold Clare rock and Galway rock and thorn,
> To that stern colour and that delicate line
> That are our secret discipline
> Wherein the gazing heart doubles her might. (326)

These lines are a monument to Robert Gregory's finding "what promised to grow into a great style" or "[his] very [self]," if Lady Gregory may have viewed Robert's art differently.[147] Yeats's elegies for Robert Gregory resulted in providing a context, the bedrock of "our secret discipline," not only to Coole but the tower in Ballylee.

5

"The Phases of the Moon": the second tower dialogue

> *Robartes*. …
> He has found…
> Mere images; chosen this place to live in
> Because … of the candle-light
> From the far tower…
> The lonely light that Samuel Palmer engraved…
> *Aherne*. …
> …under the rough roof-timbers of the hall
> Beside the castle door, where all is stark
> Austerity, a place set out for wisdom…

After using historical sites of stone architecture (Glendalough and Cashel) in "Under the Round Tower" and "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes," Yeats composed his fourth tower-oriented poem, "The Phases of the Moon," in July 1918, locating "the phantasmagoria" around his own tower and investing the

[147] *E&I* 209. "I see that [Lady Gregory] feels that his pictures are as it were his thought but not himself" (# 3446).

building with a spiritual aura.[148] While staying at Ballinamantane House on the Coole estate from May to September 1918, the Yeatses conducted regular sessions of automatic writing.[149] When they finally moved into the cottage at Ballylee, they held sittings from 21 to 23 September during the short stay, "perhaps determined" to do so in Ballylee, "[c]onscious of the symbolism of place."[150] This aspect of their exploration, out of which the dialogue of Robartes and Aherne has grown, belongs, in terms of "A Prayer on going into my House," to the "painted chest" of "Sinbad," one of the two types of "norm[s]" of the "house" the poet had designated in the poem. Indeed, significantly a "gilded chest" would later be placed in the first-floor room of the tower in which they stored their "magical scripts."[151]

In terms of the textual construction of the tower, each dialogist contributes an explanation of an aspect of the tower. Robartes and Aherne, the guides to the tower, so to speak, are emblematically clothed in "*Their Connemara cloth*," recalling "The Fisherman" ("grey Connemara cloth," 348) and Yeats's poetic ideals. The prose subject of "The Fisherman," as discussed earlier, has a close connection with the final passage about "the mysterious one" in "Ego Dominus Tuus." The character Robartes, who wears "Connemara cloth" and "disclose[s]" "the phases of the moon" in the poem of that title, may indeed be an embodiment or a parody of "the mysterious one" in the first tower-related poem. The tower here, as in "Ego Dominus Tuus," is not anchored in the poem to any place name, but with the immediate surroundings of the tower having been established in the elegy, the combination of "the bridge" and "the tower" preceded by a "water-hen" and "the stream" (372) in Robartes's lines at the opening recognisably set this poem around the same tower.

Surviving three leaves of an early draft, however, suggest that neither the tower nor the "man within" was present in the poem at that stage. The opening part of this version is missing, but in the closing passage of this version we see

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[148] A preserved typescript is dated "July 1918," *WSC* 371. Yeats mentions "the phantasmagoria through which I can alone express my convictions about the world" in the preface to *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) as seen earlier.

[149] Kelly 199-200. *AVA* (*CW13*) 227n57, n58.

[150] *YVP2* 61-66, 546n79.

[151] .Saddlemyer 5.

"those crude ragged men," "the rock" they stood on and the stream into which the rock dropped.[152] This image, as Stephen Parrish suggests, may have been transformed into the one in the opening passage of the final version: "A rat or water-hen / Splashed, or an otter slid into the stream" (372).[153] Though the collocation of rock and stream is suggestive, the location of "the stream" in this early version is unknown.

Explaining "the light" in the tower (which he calls "that shadow"), Robartes establishes the tower in the poem as a place for "sedentary toil": "the light proves that he is reading still" (373). This aspect of the tower had first been set in the very beginning of Yeats's tower project, though the place was not yet in full use, with the speakers neither dwelling in nor dwelling on the tower and *Ille* seeking "an image" outside in "Ego Dominus Tuus." In "The Phases of the Moon," we find the poet persona settled in the tower, now at his "sedentary toil" (370), which is represented by "sleepless candle and laborious pen" (375). As if continuing from the light of the lamp left "[b]urning alone" (370) "beside the open book" that Robartes himself was said to have left (367) in "Ego Dominus Tuus," Robartes locates the tower intertextually within the genealogy of the ancient symbol of the tower—"the half-lights that glimmer from symbol to symbol" in the words of Yeats's essay on Shelley (*E&I* 87):

> *Robartes*. …
>
> He has found…
> Mere images; chosen this place to live in
> Because, it may be, of the candle light
> From the far tower where Milton's platonist
> Sat late, or Shelley's visionary prince:
> The lonely light that Samuel Palmer engraved,

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[152] *WSC* xvi, 346-53.
[153] *WSC* xxxv.

> An image of mysterious wisdom won by toil….
> (373, 373n)[154]

The "images" here, whose modifier is revised from "outward" to "mere" in a draft (*WSC* 316-17), suggest the tower itself as Yeats "found" it at the outset of his construction. We may recall Yeats's remarks about "some one scene" and the architectural metaphor in 1900 at the end of his discussion of Shelley's use of the image: "I think … as he [Shelley] knelt before an altar … voices would have told him how there is for every man some one scene, some one adventure, some one picture that is the image of his secret life, for wisdom first speaks in images, and that this one image, if he would but brood over it his life long, would lead his soul … into that far household where the undying gods await all whose souls have become simple as flame, whose bodies have become quiet as an agate lamp" (*E&I* 95). It is clear that "The tower set on the stream's edge" (326) had become for Yeats a comparable "one scene," "one picture" or "one image" to be "brood[ed] over" for many years since his first visit to Ballylee in 1896. Robartes's lines suggest that the man in the tower has found "images," which are, however, still "mere" or "outward" ones and need to be "brood[ed] over … his life long"—as Yeats would brood on the tower. Robartes's account of his having "chosen this place to live in" announces the poet's choice of his permanent poetic address. Even after his poetically moving into it, Yeats's newly obtained textual property was still in the process of construction—in parallel with the situation of their actual building in Ballylee. Preserved drafts document the meticulous transformation of his representations of the tower.

The first speech of Robartes's, which lays the foundations of the symbolism of the tower, indeed underwent much revision. Surviving drafts, including a fair copy, show that there was "the river bubbling up / From subterranean caverns, images that / Shelleyan like the first or natural wisdom…" in Yeats's plan of the tower at that stage of construction.[155] Shelley's "rivers and streams and wells, flowing through caves or rising in them" seem to have

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[154] The "candle light" was hyphenated and "platonist," capitalized on the poem's inclusion in *The Collected Poems* (1933).

[155] *WSC* 354-55. See also *WSC* 316-17, 324-25.

formed part of the symbolical bedrock of Yeats's tower—for, as Yeats said of Shelley, "a symbolical meaning," once found, is hard to forget.[156] In the drafts, most weight was attached to Shelley among the three precursors, Milton, Shelley and Palmer, by listing him last or twice and making him unite the tower above and the subterranean cavern stream.[157]

Based on this evidence, we may assume that, at the outset of his building the symbolic identity of his tower, Yeats first attempted to found it upon the "contrast between [the tower] and the cave" (*E&I* 87), which he had pointed out in Shelley's work in his 1900 essay, mentioned earlier. It is likely that Yeats's tower was originally planned as a binary structure: the tower ("some lonely tower" of a young scholar's in Shelley), which symbolized for Yeats "the mind looking outward upon men and things," and the underground river (a "sea-cavern" of an old sage in Shelley), "the mind looking inward upon itself" (*E&I* 87). This combination probably seemed appropriate for a quester who had "passed the best of life" (367), when he embarked on the construction of his own poetic tower.

As significant as this heritage from Shelleyan tower and cave was that from Raftery, the blind Gaelic poet of Ballylee. It was in the 1899 landmark essay on Raftery that Yeats first recorded the tower at Ballylee, as mentioned earlier. There he had featured a line of Raftery's—"There is a strong cellar in Ballylee"—and registered "the great hole where the river sank underground" in the topography of Ballylee as a commentary on the line: "[an old man] brought me to a deep pool, where an otter hurried away under a grey boulder, and told me that many fish came up out of the dark water at early morning 'to taste the fresh water coming down from the hills…'" (*Myth* 23). This picture of the tower and "a strong cellar in Ballylee"—not only the visible tower but the subterranean part—may have indeed been "some one picture" for Yeats, which he had kept and would keep on brooding over. An "otter" appears both in the Raftery essay and "The Phases of the Moon" ("an otter slid into the stream," 372), suggesting a link between the "deep pool" in the essay and "the stream" in the poem. At this

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[156] *E&I* 80. "…because I know how hard it is to forget a symbolical meaning, once one has found it, I believe Shelley had more than a romantic scene in his mind when he made Prince Athanase follow his mysterious studies in a lighted tower above the sea," *E&I* 87.

[157] *WSC* 316-17, 322-25, 354-55.

early stage of the tower's construction in "The Phases of the Moon," Yeats chose not to include the subterranean structure in the final framework and he would vacillate over its treatment once again in "Meditations in Time of Civil War," as we will see.

In the light of the grand design of his poetry, Yeats seems to have been engaged in superimposing a Shelleyan symbolic landscape over the actual Galway landscape or "[setting]" the former "amid" the latter, as he would write in "Four Years: 1887-1891" in a few years (1920-21):

> I believed that if Morris had set his stories amid the scenery of his own Wales … if Shelley had nailed his Prometheus, or some equal symbol, upon some Welsh or Scottish rock, their art would have entered more intimately, more microscopically, as it were, into our thought and given perhaps to modern poetry a breadth and stability like that of ancient poetry. (*Au* [*CW3*] 137)

The verb "nail" highlights the artificial and architectural work on the part of a poet. Construction of the tower in Ballylee was part of his project of creating "a common design" which is "associated with river and mountain" for a deliberate national unity: "Might I not … create some new *Prometheus Unbound*; Patrick or Columcille, Oisin or Finn, in Prometheus' stead; and, instead of Caucasus, Cro-Patrick or BenBulben?" (*Au* [*CW3*] 166-67). Yeats closes this autobiographical essay with his hope to "seek unity as deliberately as it had been sought by theologian, poet, sculptor, architect, from the eleventh to the thirteenth century" (*Au* [*CW3*] 167-68). It is telling that the "architect" is included in the list. The final sentence half announces that in order to seek unity in Ireland he was trying to "epitomize" his "image, or bundle of related images" with "philosophy" and "passion": "Doubtless we must seek it [unity] differently, no longer considering it convenient to epitomize all human knowledge, but find it we well might could we first find philosophy and a little passion" (*Au* [*CW3*] 167-68).

The other half aspect of the tower is established in Aherne's few lines towards the close of the poem. The tower is not only a "shadow" which is lighted by the "candle-light / From the far tower" that Robartes describes. We see Yeats working on the architectural construction of the interior of the tower

through Aherne's antagonistic mockery ("wisdom / That he will never find"). No matter whether the wisdom is never found, as the dialogists repeat, its space is constructed in the poem:

> *Aherne*. … under the rough roof-timbers of the hall
> Beside the castle door, where all is stark
> Austerity, a place set out for wisdom…. (377)

The spacious room for wisdom is "set out" with "the rough roof-timbers of the hall," "the castle door" and "stark / Austerity." The disciplined severity is emphasized by the double use of "stark" and "austerity," both etymologically meaning severe. In a draft Yeats revised "bare"—which probably partially reflected the actual state of the building at that time—to "stark" (*WSC* 342-43). Though Yeats had used the word "austerity" to describe Robert Gregory's paintings in prose, this is the sole instance of the noun in his poetry, and given a particular weight at the opening of the line as a "place set out for wisdom."

On 1 July 1918, the month of his composition of the poem, Yeats reported to Edmund Dulac his overseeing some symbolic work on the timber: "By staying here we have succeeded in getting open timbers cut with an adze to support our hall roof instead of machine sawn timber" (#3455). The texture of the actual timber "cut with an adze"—which recalls "the mark of the adze that shaped [the oak beams]" in an "inn-parlour" in Stratford (*E&I* 96)—is to be felt in Aherne's "rough roof-timbers of the hall" which "support[s]" the space in the poem. In mid-July the actual building still lacked the "front door," preventing them from moving in: "We cannot move in without a front door."[158] Yeats's first use of the postal address "Ballylee Castle | Gort | Co Galway | Ireland" in his letter to John Quinn in New York on 23 July 1918 was anticipatory: "I hope it will be true a day or two after this letter reaches you at latest" (#3465). It was in this letter from the Ballinamantane House on the Coole estate that Yeats quoted an early unpublished version of the tower inscription poem which we will review in more detail in the next chapter. The quotation was followed by a comment which

[158] Yeats to George, 15 July 1918 #3462.

reflects on his entire tower project: "I am making a setting for my old age, a place to influence lawless youth with its severity & antiquity." The tower was being built in his poetry and in Ballylee to be "seen," in one respect, as a visible example to the coming generation, not only of the "sleepless candle" like *Il Penseroso*'s ("let my lamp at midnight hour, / Be seen in some high lonely tow'r…") but of "nail[ing]" the image "upon" "Galway rock" (326). (See Figure 7.)

Fig. 7. The roof timbers of the hall and the castle door at Thoor Ballylee, Gort, Co. Galway, Ireland. Photograph by author. August 2009.

Their actual moving in was on 12 September 1918, roughly two months after he wrote "The Phases of the Moon."[159] They could, however, "but inhabit the picturesque old cottage which opens into the Castle," which was yet to be "roofed & floored" and still inhabitable, as Yeats had explained to Quinn about a week before.[160] We also learn from this letter that the cottage perhaps dates from 1657 and they "have bought all the timber from an old mill & use local carpenters."[161] Yeats stated fundamental concepts of his house that resonate with "A Prayer on going into my House": "We have two fine beds made for us here & are putting in nothing that is mere current manufacture. We shall have a wonder

[159] Kelly 200.
[160] 4 September [1918] #3478.
[161] "… (date of cottage to judge by a dated stone we have found 1657)," #3478.

house full of history & yet quite without pretence—a farmers house in dreamland" (#3478).

In his letter to Ezra Pound on 19 September 1918, one week after their moving in, we find Yeats settled into the cottage: "We have moved in. Little of house is yet habitable but we have kitchen & servants room, & our bedroom, & a sitting room with a most romantic old cottage fire-place, with a great hood and a great flat hearth that makes our two cats purr whenever they think of it" (#3483). The references in the letter to the "fire-place" and "hearth" as well as "cats" recall the setting of "Two Songs of a Fool," whose composition probably nearly coincided with this letter. Yeats drew a picture of the fireplace, hearth and hood as he did for his family and friends at these early stages of his tower period, illustrating what his "landed property—& a castle" (in the words of his father) looked like.[162] The "adjective 'great'" "intone[s] itself like a mantra" in this letter as it does in others which Seamus Heaney cited.[163] As Yeats's description of his house moves on to the hall, we hear an echo of Aherne's lines: "a hall with open timbers, and out of it is the great castle door with its 14th or 15th century arched top" (#3483). The word "castle," used in the text of the letter as well as in the heading ("Ballylee Castle…"), also entered Aherne's speech as the only instance of Yeats's use of the word to refer to his tower in his poetry.

In an early draft it is emphasized that the door of the tower opens on the road: "his door/ ~~That open upon the road~~," "~~It opens upon the common road~~" (*WSC* 320-21). There Robartes also explains the relationship between the man within and the outside world: "he shall live after his kind / Disturbed by those he speaks to or that read him / Stumble & hesitate—the eagle glance [look] / Belongs to those who have dared to hide their heads" (*WSC* 318-19).[164] This passage, which appears only in this draft, seems to continue the dialectical structure of the poet's earlier creation of the fisherman figure: "Suddenly I began, / In scorn of this audience, / Imagining a man…" (348). The opening of the finished poem where Robartes and Aherne enter the scene outside the tower

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[162] J. B. Yeas to Lady Gregory, 22 November 1916, quoted in *Life2* 87.

[163] Heaney, *Place of Writing* 23.

[164] The lines (on NLI 13,587 (21), 2^{v}) "appear to carry on from the foot of 3^{r}, facing," *WSC* 319n.

indeed half recalls or parodies the fisherman: "… trod the uneven road. Their boots were soiled, / Their Connemara cloth worn out of shape" (372).[165] The "eagle look" in the draft also suggests a link to Coole, which Yeats had represented in his 1910 poem "Upon a House shaken by the Land Agitation" as an eagle's nest (264), as well as recalling "the right twigs for an eagle's nest" (288) in the 1913 poem which concerns the construction of a building to house Hugh Lane's collection of pictures as part of a cornerstone of culture building.[166] The relationship between the tower and the world outside, which was deleted from "The Phases of the Moon," would be fully articulated in later volumes as we will see. As if to prove his claim towards the end of the earlier *Responsibilities* of there being "more enterprise / In walking naked"—"naked" resonating with bare or "stark"—Yeats moved on in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) from the style of "[making his] song a coat" (320) to the enterprise of building the tower.

Yeats's letter on 17 November 1918 (#3527), where he asks T. Sturge Moore for a cover design of *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), reveals that the book had no single focal point: "I wonder if you could do a cover design for my new book of poems 'The Wild Swans at Coole'…. The book contains all my recent poems — the Mabel Beardsley poems & so on. I wonder if the Per Amica design with a new emblem would do — a torch, a candle in waves, a hawk, a Phoenix, a moon, a butterfly, a hunch-back…." It is worth noting that among the list of possible emblems Yeats did not include the tower, though "a torch," "a candle in waves" may suggest "the candle-light" (373) in the tower. The central image in the title poem, which Moore's design would eventually feature, was not there either.[167]

In *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), the first-written tower-related poem "Ego Dominus Tuus" is followed by the fourth, "The Phases of the Moon," as if it were a sort of a sequel. This pair of expository poems, which Yeats would

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[165] See *WSC* 314-15, 322-23, 354-55 for drafts of the opening.

[166] "To a Wealthy Man who promised a Second Subscription to the Dublin Municipal Gallery if it were proved the People wanted Pictures," 287-88. See Yeats's notes to a group of poems including this one (818-20). See A. Norman Jeffares, *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats* 105-109.

[167] On this occasion Sturge Moore made a mistake "on [his] drawing—'of Coole' instead of 'at Coole'" as he wrote to Yeats in February 1919, *LTSM* 34.

later refer to in *A Vision* (1925) as poems which he "need[s] no longer write" (*AVA* [*CW13*] xii), is bound together by his second-written tower poem "A Prayer on going into my House," placed between them. "Two Songs of a Fool" is set in the protagonist's "house" by his "hearthstone," but is singularly "set out for" (377) private and domestic emotional disquietude of the poet as "a fool." The poem is fittingly placed after "The Saint and the Hunchback," probably in line with "the last crescents" of "Hunch back and Saint and Fool" (377). With the two poems on Coole and Ballylee paired at the opening and those related to the tower and the "phantasmagoria" grouped together at the end, *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) lays the cornerstone of Yeats's textual construction of the tower in book form.

CHAPTER 2

Restoring the Tower in Ballylee
in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921)

… heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower

I, the poet William Yeats…
Restored this tower…

Michael Robartes and the Dancer, finished on "All Souls' Day," 1920 and published on 1 February 1921 from the Cuala Press, contained among its fifteen pieces two milestones in Yeats's construction of the tower: "A Prayer for My Daughter" and "To be Carved on a Stone at Ballylee."[168] They continued the building work begun in the previous volume *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), but in rather unexpectedly anomalous ways as I will show in this chapter. The place name "Ballylee" enters his poetry for the first time in the title of the inscription poem. The rebuilding work on the stone tower, Ballylee Castle, begun in July 1917, meanwhile, gradually progressed. The postal address "Ballylee Castle | Gort | Co Galway," which Yeats first prematurely wrote on 23 July 1918 (#3465) and 4 September 1918 (#3478) in his letters to New York and then used after actually moving in from 13 September 1918 (#3482) to 29 March 1922 (#4107), became a compelling extratext, confirming Yeats's self-conscious construction and anchoring of the place of his own.[169]

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[168] Wade 127. Kelly 214. Unlike the case with *The Wild Swans at Coole*, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* was not issued from Macmillan in the form of a "full 'trade' collection" (*Life2* 192). Macmillan's *Later Poems*, published on 3 November 1922 (Wade 134), collected Yeats's poems from *The Wind Among the Reeds* to *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. In the title "A Prayer for My Daughter" "My" was capitalized in the table of contents both in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* and in *Poetry* (Chicago). This typography will be used in this thesis for its focus on the chronological aspect of Yeats's creation. As the heading of the text the title was in capitals. "My" was first decapitalized in the table of contents for *Later Poems*. The title of the inscription poem did not contain "Thoor" until *Later Poems* (406).

[169] The address is also found in his letter on 17 July [1926], #4896.

Among the poems collected in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* the earliest written is "A Meditation in Time of War," probably composed in November 1914,[170] followed by "Easter, 1916," dated "September 25th, 1916." Only twenty-five copies of the Easter elegy had been privately printed in 1917 and the poem had not entered his previous book of verse, for political reasons including the Hugh Lane picture controversy.[171] "Easter, 1916" was finally settled in this Cuala book after its first publication in the *New Statesman* on 23 October 1920 and its appearance along with other nine poems in the *Dial* (New York) in November 1920—which were, Conor Cruise O'Brien says, in the context of the "autumn of 1920," with the "Black-and-Tan terror … at its height," "probably the boldest [political act] of Yeats's career."[172] The first publication of "A Prayer for My Daughter" was the earliest among the poems in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. It had first appeared in the *Irish Statesman,* 8 November, 1919 and in *Poetry* (Chicago) in the same month. The majority of the poems included in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* had first appeared in periodicals in November in the following year 1920, while three were first published in the book. One of them was the inscription for the tower, the poem which Yeats had decided to include in the book at the last minute.

The early unpublished version of the inscription poem "To be Carved on a Stone at Ballylee" had actually been composed by as early as 23 July 1918, when Yeats quoted it in his letter to John Quinn as mentioned in chapter one. His holograph revisions on one of the typescripts of the 1918 elegy for Robert Gregory contained a possibly relevant passage ("How to … / … draw out letters to be carved on stone…" *WSC* 60) as also noted earlier. Two years later, the poem, with its ending radically transformed, was added in Yeats's hand to the third set of Cuala's page proofs of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. The other

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[170] Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats* 290. Wayne Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 238. A draft of the poem is found below a separate entry dated 9 November 1914 in the "Maud Gonne Notebook," which contained drafts of many poems collected in *The Wild Swans at Coole*. *MRD* xvi, 194-95. *WSC* xvii.

[171] The poem was privately printed by Clement Shorter (Wade 117), probably in April 1917. See Tom Paulin, "Yeats's Hunger-Strike Poem" in *Minotaur: Poetry and the Nation State* 138-39. For discussions of the publication history of Yeats's poems about the Easter Rising, see also Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 78-96, and *Life2* 64-66, 182, 189-90.

[172] Conor Cruise O'Brien, "Passion and Cunning: An Essay on the Politics of W. B. Yeats," *In Excited Reverie* 239.

tower-oriented poem in the book, "A Prayer for My Daughter," though composed from an early stage in the same type of what Helen Vendler calls "non-*ottava rima* octave-stanzas" as used in the Gregory elegy which is set in the tower, contained no direct references to the tower until the typescript.[173] The poem ultimately located the tower, when it finally emerged, in a geographical perspective including the Atlantic. A close examination of these unpredicted and dramatic developments of the two poems in the making reveals the characteristic dynamism of Yeats's tower construction in progress in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*.

1

"A Prayer for My Daughter": the defence against the wind

> …heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,
> And under the arches of the bridge…
>
> …may her bridegroom bring her to a house
> Where all's accustomed, ceremonious…

i

"A Prayer for My Daughter" is generally roughly understood to have been "completed in June [1919] at Ballylee,"[174] yet little is known about the dates and details of the last stages of its composition. On 1 April 1919 Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory from Dublin: "I am at work on my poem a[bout] Anne" (#3593). Starting "A Prayer" for his daughter born on 26 February 1919 (#3575) by 1 April, Yeats probably finished it after they arrived in Ballylee for the second summer in mid-June that year and dated it "June 1919."[175] Writing Lady Gregory again from Dublin on 5 July, while temporarily away from Ballylee, he enclosed "a copy of Anne poem" (#3627). The letter also reports the ongoing

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[173] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 293.
[174] Hone 317. See also A. Norman Jeffares, *A New Commentary* 206.
[175] Ellmann dates the poem "Feb. 26-June 1919," 290. See Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 238.

work on the building at Ballylee: "I shall not return for a few days as Rafferty can not finish plastering the roof in the servants room till Thursday."

"A Prayer for My Daughter" is a landmark in Yeats's poetic construction of the tower. This aspect of the poem, however, has much less been discussed than, for instance, that of its gender politics.[176] What is unique about "A Prayer for My Daughter," as a poem prominently set in the tower, is the fact that the building made its appearance in the poem at a very late stage of composition, unlike any other tower-related poems of Yeats's. This has generally been overlooked even in criticism focused on Yeats's manuscript materials. The evidence that "A Prayer" was transformed into a poem centred around the tower late in the process of composition testifies to the fact that Yeats, unexpectedly, constructed the tower in the poem, not as planned but rather as he went along. The tower emerges in the poem in the compositional process as if it were virtually replacing Coole and this marks a watershed of Yeats's poetic construction of the tower. The preserved materials of the poem, in a way, reveal that Ballylee was symbolically established, independent of Coole, through his writing of "A Prayer for My Daughter."

The tower is not present in the surviving early drafts of the poem, one of which is dated April 1919.[177] The opening stanza in the earliest preserved (and cancelled) draft begins not with a storm but with a cradle, which is, as it were, heavily guarded with words and on which special emphasis is laid: "In her three hundred year old cradle, hid / By its deep hood & broidered cover lid / My month old child is sleeping…" (*MRD* 168-69). The child there is almost mystically multiply covered and protected from the world around her—with the traditional "cradle" which survived and carries the weight of time, the "hood" which is "deep," the "cover lid" which is consciously "broidered" and also with her sleep. The feature of the cradle, "three hundred year old," does not just probably reflect

[176] See Elizabeth Cullingford, *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* 130-39. Marjorie Howes, *Yeats's Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness* 115-20.

[177] "April ~~May~~ 1919,"*MRD* 174-75. An alternative reading of this date is "April ~~14[?]~~ 1919," Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 67.

Anne's actual cradle Yeats mentions in his correspondence[178] but recalls one of the "norm[s]" set in his first prayer concerning the tower in the previous volume—"Throughout so many varying centuries…" (371)—where Yeats, still childless, had written "God grant a blessing… / … on my heirs…."[179] At this early stage of composition the cradle was used as a focal point not only for the first stanza but also for the second stanza where we find "the tower" in the published text: "~~As I stand now beside And weighed the wind around beside~~ this cradle-hood…" (*MRD* 168-69).[180]

In those early drafts the poem comprised twelve stanzas, rather than ten as in the published text. The original last three stanzas (from the tenth to twelfth stanzas) were spaciously set out for the poet's instructions for his imagined grown-up daughter's future rambling in the Coole demesne, which, in effect, served as his self-elegy (*MRD* 174-75, 182-89). In the tenth stanza in the preserved earliest draft the speaker directed his daughter to "walk alone," a quarter of a century later, "Through Coole Domain & visit for my sake / The stony edges of the lake, / Where evry year I have counted swans, & cry … / ~~Aloud that all is well but cry it not~~ / ~~Too loud for that is a still spot~~ / That all is well till all that s there / Spring sounding on to the still air…" (*MRD* 174-75). The subsequent stanzas drafted on the same leaf were also less about the daughter herself than about "the scenery" which the speaker "has held most dear," his haunting the place as a "shade" ("~~it is certain that~~ I shall ~~appear~~ … ") and the friendship and cooperation fostered there ("My friend & I paced to & ~~fro~~ fro / Hurrying thought driven…")—suggestive of "The New Faces," a poem Yeats had written in December 1912 but had kept unpublished at this stage in compliance with Lady Gregory's wishes. These three stanzas, virtually an elegy on his life at Coole, also reveal the poem's link with "The Wild Swans at Coole"—not only through the reference to the counting of the swans but through the repetition of the word "still"—and with the two elegies on Coole which would be written much later.

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[178] "Anne lying … in her seventeenth century cradle…," to J. B. Yeats, 16 July 1919 #3634. See also Yeats's postscript to a letter to his sister Lolly: "I have just seen Anne's cradle, quite charming. You should go in for painted furniture." 29 August 1921, #3970.

[179] See Kelly 199.

[180] See also *MRD* 178-79, 180-81.

"The New Faces" ("Neither catalpa-tree nor scented lime… / Our shadows rove the garden gravel still…," 435) and the closing stanzas of "A Prayer" in early drafts share a particular tree—catalpa—and the idea of the poet's ghost haunting Coole. The name "catalpa," which would eventually occur only in "The New Faces" among Yeats's published poetic texts, appears in some drafts of the early eleventh and twelfth stanzas of "A Prayer": "Upon the gravel by the Katalpa root."[181] The last section ("The Bust of Macaenas") of Lady Gregory's late essays *Coole* (1931) would contain her description of that tree, which shows her particular affection for it, as well as that of the "gravelled walk," as if to finally echo and implicitly provide a commentary on "The New Faces" nearly two decades after Yeats's composition of the poem.[182] Writing "A Prayer," Yeats seems to have at first integrated some components of the still unpublished poem "The New Faces" into the closing stanzas—which, Wayne Chapman remarks, was "virtually a unique case in his poetry" as "his attempt to mine material from a poem that he chose not to publish over [Lady Gregory's] objection."[183] The link between the two poems suggests that Yeats's prayer for his daughter partly overlapped in his mind with his tributes to Lady Gregory and Coole Park. The preserved drafts show that Yeats repeatedly revised those early closing stanzas, which would, however, eventually be deleted altogether. "The New Faces" would finally be first published in 1922 in Cuala's *Seven Poems and a Fragment* (and then in *The Tower*) and some elements of the original last three stanzas of "A Prayer" would be transformed and feed into his later elegies for Coole.

Even after those Coole stanzas in early drafts were removed from "A Prayer," the "norm[s]" of Coole Park, as it were, subliminally remained in the poem in terms of the ideal images of the daughter. The "flourishing hidden tree," "some green laurel / Rooted in one dear perpetual place" and the "spreading laurel tree," themselves rooted in the centre (stanza six) and at the close (stanza

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[181] *MRD* 182-83. See also *MRD* 174-75, 184-85.

[182] *Coole* 42-45, quoted in Jeffares 237. See *A Guide to Coole Park* 21, for instance, for the photograph of her sitting under the catalpa tree, taken in 1927, which is reproduced in many books.

[183] Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 67. See also pp. 67-68 for his discussion of "Yeats's … attempt to adapt ["The New Faces"] to the stanzas of ['A Prayer' in an early version]."

ten) of the finished poem, anticipate Yeats's later representations of Lady Gregory in "Coole Park, 1929": "pride established in humility" and "that laurelled head" (488-9). A "laurel," whose foliage being "an emblem of victory or of distinction in poetry…" (*OED*), was, according to Lady Gregory's later description of the tree ("…that delicately leaved laurel painters lay on a poets brow…," *Coole* 44), under the "pleasant shadow" of the "catalpa" at Coole. Yeats would also recast the published last stanza of "A Prayer" later in the fifth stanza of his final elegy for Coole, using the adjective "dear" again: "A spot… / Seemed once more dear than life; ancestral trees, / Or gardens rich in memory glorified / Marriages…" (491).

We first find the new tenth stanza, which centres around "a house" and replaces the former three closing stanzas, in a preserved typescript dated "June 1919," which was used by the printer for *Poetry* (Chicago) as a copy text (*MRD* xiii, 190-93). In the new last stanza in the typescript, which is the same as the published text in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, the speaker prays that his daughter will be brought as a bride to "a house / Where all's accustomed, ceremonious…" (*MRD* 193).[184] It is also in this typescript that we first find the tower in the second stanza—the house into which the daughter in the text was born.[185] As there are no extant drafts immediately preceding the typescript, we cannot document the emergence of "the tower" and "a house" in the second and the tenth stanzas respectively before the typescript.[186] We may speculate that the new last stanza and the tower in the second stanza perhaps entered the poem correspondingly. The possibly correlated emergence of the tower and the house would signal a close relationship between them.

It is likely, I suggest, that it was after their arriving at Ballylee in mid-June 1919 that Yeats made each revision in the second and the tenth stanzas in the drafts. The image of "a house" in the new tenth stanza, as well as that of the

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[184] In the "definitive" edition of his poems published in 1949, upon which the variorum edition is based, the hyphen is deleted from "bride-groom" (405).

[185] It may have been symbolically true that "In the reconstructed Tower, Yeats' daughter was born…" (Henn 31-32), but it was actually about four months after her birth in Dublin that Anne Yeats was first brought to Ballylee (Kelly 203, 205).

[186] See Jon Stallworthy, *Between the Lines* 43. Those drafts are not preserved despite the fact that "Many fair copies … have been torn in two, their intended destination being the waste basket, from which they were rescued by Yeats's wife, George" and "The surviving manuscripts of … 'A Prayer for My Daughter' are most complete," *MRD* xix, xxii.

tower in the second stanza, may have reflected that of the "house" (Ballylee Castle) where the poet—"still a bridegroom of sorts,"[187] having married less than two years before—finally brought his wife to settle in for the summer, around the very time when he was finishing the poem for their first child. The epithalamic last stanza, in this respect, may have concerned not only the poet's daughter, but by implication his wife—and possibly subliminally served as "a paean to the house he was preparing for his young wife," as Seamus Heaney "discern[ed]."[188] The prayer in the poem, which comprises the poet's meditations on happiness based on the soul's "radical innocence" as well as his ideal images of women, set against doomed ones modelled on Maud Gonne and Iseult, is in part an implicit tribute to the mother of the child as well as to Lady Gregory. His wife was also, in a way, like "a flourishing hidden tree" in the poem, secretly "dispensing round" the "magnanimities" of "her thoughts" through automatic writing.

Let us now turn to the opening of the poem. In the earliest preserved draft of the first two stanzas is found nothing concrete but the "three hundred year old cradle," "beside" which the speaker "stand[s]" (*MRD* 168-69). There is no topographical reference except the abstract "every ~~scowling~~ howling quarter" in the first stanza. There's no "tower" in the second stanza, unlike the published text, and the poem is, symbolically, anchored by the "Coole Domain" in the closing three stanzas at this early stage. The next preserved draft of the first stanza, which is halfway to the final version, opens with a storm and introduces into the former abstract poetic space a nearly final geographical perspective with "Gregory s wood," "one bare hill" and "wind / Bred on the Atlantic" (*MRD* 180-81). There is, however, still no "tower" in the second stanza and the poem ends with the scene at Coole. The multiple modifiers concerning the cradle ("three hundred year old," "deep" and "embroidered") have been removed, but the cradle still serves as a focal point—not only of the first stanza ("Under this cradle hood and coverlid…") but of the second stanza ("Considering that this cradle old may be / Some other father has ~~had like revery~~ had like reverie / When the wind rose…" *MRD* 180-81). The cradle symbolizes heritage which links the speaker

[187] Heaney, *Place of Writing* 24.
[188] Heaney, *Place of Writing* 24.

to "Some other father." It seems likely that this early focus on the "cradle" and also the "coverlid" partly originated from Yeats's fascination with the real "objects"[189]—Anne's "seventeenth century cradle" and the cot cover which Yeats wanted to have his sister Lilly make based on Sturge Moore's design illustrating Yeats's "infinite fold."[190]

It is in the typescript that we first find the tower established in the first half of the second stanza ("… heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower…"), having replaced "this cradle old" in the two versions of preserved holograph drafts.[191] The function that the cradle had been made to serve—as a vehicle of tradition and continuity—seems to have been transferred onto the tower. The introduction of the abstract word "obstacle" ("there is no obstecle [*sic*]…," *MRD* 180-81)—which etymologically means a "thing that stands in the way" (*OED*)—in the second preserved draft of the first stanza seems to have partly prompted the emergence of "the tower" in the next stage of composition as an embodiment of the "obstacle." The vertical tower which has been added to the geography of "Gregory's Wood"[192] and "one bare hill" stands out as an "obstacle" to the horizontal "roof-levelling wind" in the published text.

Collation of the typescript and the preceding drafts suggests more about the formation of the tower. In the earliest preserved draft, which is crossed out, of the opening two stanzas, the purpose of the wind is "To level all things" (stanza 1) and the speaker beside the cradle "Thought the ~~storm [?beating]~~ the world fell stone upon stone…" (stanza 2).[193] The "cradle" and the metaphorical "wind" in the second stanza in the draft immediately preceding the typescript among preserved materials, combined with the "storm that seems to shake mankind" in the first stanza in the same draft (*MRD* 180-81) as well as with the

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[189] In the preface to *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* Yeats comments on a writer whose "thought changed into settled conviction": "[the writer] is no longer looking for candlestick and matches but at the objects in the room…," 853.

[190] In 1915 Yeats had Sturge Moore make a design for a table centre, which illustrated "my line 'The infinite fold'" (#2826). Yeats wanted to use it for the cot cover. See his correspondence in 1918, #3463, #3466, #3467 and #3527. The phrase "the infinite fold" occurs in his six-line song in *The Countess Cathleen* (1892), *VPl* 129.

[191] *MRD* 168-69, 180-81, 190-91.

[192] To be revised to "wood" since in *Later Poems* (1922).

[193] *MRD* 168-69. In the next draft of the second stanza, also cancelled, we find "a popular tempest," in association with a key word "opinion" which reappears in the eighth stanza, *MRD* 178-79.

deleted image of the debris of the world which "fell stone upon stone" in the earliest preserved draft of the second stanza, seem to have transformed into "… heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower…" in the typescript. The "roof-levelling wind" in the first stanza smoothly leads to the wind against the tower in the second stanza in the typescript, with the two synergistically and seamlessly conveying physical and metaphorical winds, after his tentative trial of contrasting them in the previous draft.[194] This compositional process which has led up to the establishment of the tower against the "sea-wind" in the second stanza foregrounds his poetic agency of constructing the tower where there was no building in the poem. The writing of "A Prayer," which has as a result become one of Yeats's prominently tower-oriented poems, in this respect, dramatizes Yeats's symbolic construction of the tower, anew with his own hands, after the initial stage documented in chapter one.

This crucial point in the compositional history of "A prayer" has strangely been neglected in the criticism of Yeats's draft materials. Focus on the most noticeable revision—the new tenth stanza being "grafted" in place of the original last three stanzas[195]—may have led the late emergence of the tower in the second stanza to be overlooked. One of the "considerable changes" Yeats had made during the two-month period between "April 1919" (the date of a manuscript draft) and "June 1919" (the date of a typescript), which transformed and finally anchored the poem, was therefore the establishment of the tower, with its defensive function featured, against the "sea-wind" to the east of "Gregory's Wood and one bare hill" in the poetic geography.[196] The relationship between the "sea-wind" and the tower seems to be implicitly in parallel with "a wind that blows / Across the bitter sea" and the "Rose Tree" (396) placed in the middle of the book. The replacement of the cradle with the building enables the violent clash between the "sea-wind" and the tower, which naturally leads to "excited

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[194] The "storm that seems to shake mankind" was distinguished from the "haystack & roof [?levelling] wind": "Nor by that storm am I perplexed / But by the storm that seems to shake mankind…," *MRD* 180-81.

[195] Stallworthy 44.

[196] "Between these dates ["April 1919" and "June 1919"]," Stallworthy notes, "considerable changes were made, but as I have seen no manuscripts of this period through which to plot the poem's progress, I can only make comparison with the typescript and the printed text," 43. He makes no reference to the appearance of the tower during this period.

reverie." The word "grafted" which Jon Stallworthy employed concerning the new tenth stanza would become even more resonant when we dwell on the implications of Yeats's "grafting" of the tower in the second stanza, his "grafting" of his lineage on to the tower, the ruin of the "Old English" heritage which stands on the territory of the now falling Anglo-Irish ascendancy, as well as of his "grafting" a new compact closing stanza (which focuses on rootedness) in place of three stanzas set in the spacious Coole demesne.

Thomas Parkinson also focuses on the deletion of "the reworked, nearly finished stanzas [X, XI, XII]" as "the most dramatic evidence" provided in the poem's manuscripts "of Yeats's ruthless sacrifice of personally meaningful imagery," without recording its virtual replacement with the image of the tower.[197] Parkinson explains the revision as "strengthen[ing] the focus of the poem as a prayer for the daughter and not himself" and "drop[ping] the references to place that make the voice most clearly his own" (*MRD* xxiv). Wayne Chapman, who also discusses the deletion of "the Coole stanzas" from "A Prayer," views the revision exclusively in the light of those stanzas' relation to Yeats's two earlier poetic texts concerning Coole and attributes "Yeats's decision" of the cuts to his "fear[ing]" his "repeating" "The Wild Swans at Coole" and "perhaps deciding" that "The New Faces" "was more successful" as it was.[198] What has so far been overlooked is, I suggest, that it was indeed the creation of a place that could "make the voice most clearly his own" that Yeats was working upon at this stage of the poem's composition. Those two probably correlated late revisions made between the "April 1919" draft and the "June 1919" typescript—the replacement of the Coole demesne with "a house" and the "graft[ing]" of the tower in the second stanza—have resulted in symbolically transposing the "one dear perpetual place" from Coole to Ballylee, making "A Prayer for My Daughter" rooted in his own place.

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[197] In the introduction to the Cornell edition, *MRD* xxiii.

[198] Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 68: "it seems unlikely that Lady Gregory's [negative] reaction to … [his drafts of] 'The New Faces' played a great part in [the cuts]…. It is more likely Yeats made the cuts because he feared that he was repeating himself…. …he had already cut [the Coole stanzas] from two versions of ['A Prayer'] that she saw, perhaps deciding at last that the 1912 poem ['The New Faces'] was more successful than what he had tried to make from it."

In the previous year 1918, after staying and waiting at nearby Ballinamantane House for months, the Yeatses had moved into the cottage quarters at Ballylee on 12 September, staying there only for a short time. At that stage, "the Castle" was not ready yet. It was probably during the summer of 1919 that Ballylee Castle began to function as his writing place—though it would take a few more years before they could sleep in the tower itself.[199] In 1919 they spent a substantial part of the summer from June to September at Ballylee for the first time, while going back and forth between there and Dublin or London. In a letter to his father on 16 July 1919 Yeats described the place where he had probably recently finished "A Prayer for My Daughter":

> I am writing in the great ground floor room of the castle — pleasantest room I have yet seen, a great wide window opening over the river & a round arched door leading to the thatched hall
>
> [Drawing of open door and hallway]
>
> …. I mean to represent a great door, then a stone floor & stone roofed entrance hall with door & winding stair to left, & then a larger thatched hall, beyond which is cottage & kitchen…. I am writing at a great trestle table which George keeps covered with wild flowers. (#3634)

The "adjective 'great'" still "intone[d] itself like a mantra" in this letter as in the previous year.[200]

Yeats had meanwhile received an invitation from a university in Tokyo to lecture there for two years about a week before the letter. After "hesitating" (16 July 1919 #3634), Yeats "accepted subject to reasonable terms etc." (9 August 1919 #3643), though he eventually decided not to go, primarily because the "offer from there grew vaguer & the expense of going is immense…" (22 March 1920 #3711).[201] Two days after receiving the invitation, Yeats had written to his wife: "I am wondering what you think of Japan— just time perhaps to finish

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[199] See his letter on 5 June 1922 #4133.

[200] Heaney, *Place of Writing* 23.

[201] See also for instance his letters on 1 September [1919] #3648 and 15 November [1919] #3676.

the system away from all distractions…" (11 July 1919 #3631). In his correspondence to John Quinn on the same day, on the other hand, Yeats reflected on the "difficulty" of leaving Ballylee, which was at a crucial early stage of construction:

> It would be pleasant to go away until the tumult of war had died down, & perhaps Home Rule established…. … would I mind if Shinn Fein took possession of my old Tower here to store arming or the young scholars from the school broke all the new windows. I think my chief difficulty in accepting will be my Tower, which needs another years work under ones own eyes before it is a fitting monument & symbol & my garden which will need several years, if it is to be green & shady during my lifetime. Ballylee is a good home for a child to grow up in — a place full of history & romance with plenty to do everyday. (#3632)

Material reality and symbolic significance coexist as if on a Möbius strip in this description of Ballylee. It is striking that Yeats plainly states at this early stage that he is making a "monument & symbol" when constructing the tower. Ballylee was not only "a good home for a child to grow up in." It was to prove "a good home" for his verse to be written in, set in and to dwell on, providing it with "history & romance" as well as "custom" and "ceremony."

The stone building itself would need more than "another year[']s work." The ongoing construction work around this period is to be glimpsed in his letter to Ezra Pound (16 July 1919 #3633): "I shall come back [from Tokyo in a few years] to find Ballylee finished so far as structure goes & all trees planted. It is beautiful now but untidy here & there; & a man is at this moment painting the windows a brilliant blue…." Yeats would indeed continue to work on the tower in his writing for more than another eight years. The Yeatses did not go to Japan, but after leaving Ballylee in September 1919 and returning to Oxford, where they

had begun to be based since 1918, they did not return again to the tower, even after his 1920 lecture tour in America, until the spring of 1922.[202]

ii

The first two stanzas of "A Prayer for My Daughter" establish Yeats's poetic tower in the contemporary West of Ireland against the sea wind, looking ahead towards the future. The tower is located in the bird's eye view of the area, with its proximity to the sea highlighted with "… wind, / Bred on the Atlantic" and "the sea-wind." Building upon the mythological geography and geology of "cold Clare rock and Galway rock and thorn" that provided common bedrock to Coole and Ballylee ("In Memory of Major Robert Gregory") and "the uneven road" the interlocutors had trod, soiling their boots and wearing out their "Connemara cloth" ("The Phases of the Moon"), Yeats in "A Prayer" "set" his tower "amid the scenery of" Co Galway—in the words he would use in an autobiographical essay a few years later, explaining his belief in his twenties about the way of "giv[ing] … to modern poetry a breadth and stability like that of ancient poetry…," as quoted in chapter one.[203]

At the end of the poem the new-born child's future marriage and even her offspring are envisioned, suggesting cyclic continuity as well as half overlapping with Yeats's own marriage and their new "house." Thanking Harriet Monroe on 26 May [?1919] (#3611) for her letter, Yeats had commented "Yes the child is a great joy for she fills the future," following it with "I shall send you some poems presently." At this stage Yeats had already written some early drafts of "A Prayer," which may have been among the "some poems" in his mind. "A Prayer" would eventually be first published in her *Poetry* (Chicago) in November that year (1919). Yeats also explained to Quinn on 14 June 1919, shortly before their arrival in Ballylee, his sense after "having a child" of having "ones own life" "prolong[ed]" and "ones family" made "more venerable": "One thinks of oneself as perhaps living to 1970 or even with luck to the year 2,000. (That would be Annes 91st [*sic*] year) … ones Grandfathers are all great grand fathers. It almost

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[202] See Kelly 197-98, 205-18.

[203] "… if Morris had set his stories amid the scenery of his own Wales…," "Four Years: 1887-1891," *Au (CW3)* 137.

enobles ones ancestors as if it were a Chinease Emperror…" (#3616). Two decades earlier in 1899, congratulating George Russell "on the birth of [his] son," Yeats had expressed the possible impact of the experience of having a child on a poet: "I think that a poet, or even a mystic, becomes a greater power from understanding all the great primary emotions & these one only gets out of going through the common experiences & duties of life."[204] In early cancelled drafts of the first two stanzas of "A Prayer" are found phrases which suggest the effects of Yeats's having a child on his perspective: "While I ~~that have been indifferent long must~~ cast / ~~My gaze~~… My sight towards every ~~scowling~~ howling quarter / ~~And~~ To judge what ~~wind~~…" (*MRD* 168-69); "Nor am I the first father that has stood / And judged ~~the~~ her time beside this cradle hood…" (*MRD* 178-79).

His sense of familial continuity had undoubtedly been magnified by the suggestion through the automatic writing sessions about their child's relationship with Anne Hyde, "a seventeenth-century countess of the house of Ormond."[205] The "Renaissance-style archaism of the sentiments, as well as the formality of language and structure," Roy Foster reminds us, "should be read in terms of the belief (which [at the time of his composition of "A Prayer"] possessed him) that his daughter represented the reincarnation" of Anne Hyde.[206] The formality of the poem was also itself a defence against "Mere anarchy" ("The Second Coming") in the first place. Roy Foster notes the poem "reflects his apprehension at a world descending into formless anarchy," "though it is constructed as a formal ode…." It was, rather, I suggest, because of that "apprehension" that the poem was "constructed as a formal ode," "in the manner of his poem in memory of Robert Gregory."[207] The poetic form, adopting the stanza from a seventeenth-century elegy as noted in chapter one, and the image of the tower are inseparably combined in each poem as a defence against disintegration.

For readers of Yeats's oeuvre, the image of the tower in "A Prayer" may tend to be overshadowed by those in later tower poems. Some critics, for

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[204] 6 March 1899 *CL2* 370-71.
[205] *Life2* 116, 139, 141, 144, 153, 156. *MYV1* 154, 209-11, 218. *YVP1* 258-59, 362, 379.
[206] *Life2* 153.
[207] *Life2* 151.

instance, seem to have taken it for granted that the speaker in "A Prayer" "walked and prayed" on the battlements—where the poet theatrically stands or walks in his later tower poems—while no specific reference to the place where he "walked and prayed" is made in the poem.[208] At the stage of "A Prayer," the battlements of the tower had not yet been introduced in Yeats's poetry. The hour's walk and prayer entered the poem as late as in the typescript, suggestively alongside the emergence of the tower in the poem (*MRD* 190-91). At the end of the present opening stanza the poet records that "for an hour I have walked and prayed / Because of the great gloom…." After its chiastic repetition which begins the second stanza, itself suggesting the poet's repetitive movement to and fro, we encounter as the setting of his walking and praying the tower and its surroundings in the "scream[ing]" "sea-wind" in close-up:

> I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour
> And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,
> And under the arches of the bridge, and scream
> In the elms above the flooded stream … (403)

The combination of the wind and "the flooded stream" may remotely recall that of the winds and "heavy flooded waters" (to the latter of which the speaker there compares "our bodies and our blood") in Yeats's early song,[209] in contrast to which also stands out the presence of the tower as a focal point and a defence in the scene in "A Prayer."

In terms of the history of Yeats's representation of the tower in his poetry, the interlocutors in the first tower-oriented dialogue were walking on "the grey sand"—"beside the shallow stream" at that time—under the "old wind-beaten tower." The first part of Yeats's letter to his father quoted earlier, written in July 1919, the month following the composition of "A Prayer," allows us a glimpse of his life during their first long stay at Ballylee:

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[208] See, for instance, Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 301: "… as, on the battlements of his tower, he progresses through his prayer."

[209] First published untitled in the story 'Kathleen-Ny-Hoolihan" in 1894 (206n). Later titled "The Song of Red Hanrahan" on its inclusion in *In the Seven Woods* (1903) and retitled "Red Hanrahan's Song about Ireland" in *The Poetical Works of William B. Yeats*, Vol. I (1906).

> I have been driven by rain from the river bank where I have been writing & catching a distant glimpse of a young otter fishing I suppose for trout. …. Anne & George were there too, George sowing & Anne lying wide awake in her seventeenth century cradle. (16 July 1919 #3634)

The peaceful family life on the "river bank" with their daughter "wide awake in her seventeenth century cradle"—instead of "sleep[ing] on"—interrupted by "rain" in the letter is in a striking contrast to the setting by "the flooded stream" in the poem.[210]

"A Prayer" sets the scene in the first two stanzas while the rest of the poem consists of the prayer itself. The speaker has "walked and prayed" "for an hour"—perhaps somewhere near the tower—during which he has been driven into "excited reverie" by the raging storm around him and has imagined

> That the future years had come,
> Dancing to a frenzied drum,
> Out of the murderous innocence of the sea. (403)

This image anticipates the "barbarous clangour of a gong" in a later poem (to be written around April 1921) which would eventually be called by the year of the composition of "A Prayer": "The Nineteen Hundred and the Nineteen" (430).[211] Having "walked and prayed" "for an hour," he is now supposed to be writing this poem of the "prayer," back in the tower at his table beside "this cradle," while

> Once more the storm is howling and half hid
> Under this cradle-hood and coverlid
> My child sleeps on… (403)

"A Prayer for My Daughter" could also be read as another epithalamium, on which Yeats had previously worked in the tower-warming elegy "In Memory

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[210] In the first preserved (and cancelled) draft of the first stanza is found "… to day / Her laughter ~~she~~ proved her heart to be gay…," *MRD* 168-69.

[211] See Yeats to Lady Gregory, 10 April 1921 #3900, *T* xlii.

of Major Robert Gregory" about a year before. Unlike "An Image from a Past Life" included in the same book, "A Prayer" expels terrible beauties, Helen and Aphrodite, from the house of the poet's married life where the daughter as "innocence and beauty" is born as well as from the future house of the imagined grown-up daughter.[212] The type of woman the poet wishes his daughter to be in the poem—one who has "natural kindness," is learned in "courtesy," capable of being "happy" and is brought to "a house" of "custom" and "ceremony"—suggests Lady Gregory as well as his wife George. Two months after marriage, Yeats had written to Lady Gregory about George, comparing the two: "My wife is a perfect wife, kind, wise and unselfish. I think you were such another young girl once. She has made my life serene and full of order" (16 December 1917 #3375). Shortly after his daughter's birth Yeats in a letter described his wife and the baby as being "well" and "happy," the latter of which would be one of the key words in "A Prayer."[213] His wife was young enough to be his daughter—married to Yeats, 52, at the age of 25 (the same age as the imagined grown-up daughter in early drafts[214])—and would be called "a girl" in a later tower poem ("My Descendants"), but he says she made his life "serene and full of order," as Lady Gregory once did. The "custom" and "ceremony" of his actual house appears to have owed a great deal to George, as his letters suggest here and there: "I am writing at a great trestle table which George keeps covered with wild flowers…" (#3634).

Thematically "A Prayer for My Daughter" is a contrast with two predecessor Romantic poems with which it shares some elements. The setting of the storm and the treatment of "custom" and "ceremony" as a mould of "innocence and beauty" in Yeats's poem is in a striking contrast to Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" (dated "February, 1798"), where the speaker, beside his "cradled infant," in the middle of the night "with … strange / And extreme

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[212] Elizabeth Cullingford notes that "His prayer for his daughter is subtextually a love poem to his wife, a tribute to the woman won that praises her by disparaging the 'woman lost'…," 131-32. Foster points out that the "fifth stanza … may be read as a development of the Maud-versus-George trope which preoccupied … so many sessions of automatic writing…," *Life2* 152. Helen Vendler reads "A Prayer" as "Yeats's hidden poem about his mother" and regards her life as "the mistaken life that principally shadows and motivates the poem," 298.

[213] "George & her child are well & I think happy…," to Ezra Pound, 9 March 1919 #3583. See also #3633 (16 July 1919).

[214] "Say when you are five & twenty…, " *MRD* 174-75. See also *MRD* 184-85.

silentness," meditates on the nurturing of the sleeping child, wishing the baby to "wander like a breeze / By lakes and sandy shores…" and "thy God" "shall mould / Thy spirit." The clash of "the haystack and roof-levelling wind, / Bred on the Atlantic" against the tower, in Yeats's poem contrasts with Shelley's stance to the wind in "Ode to the West Wind" (written in 1819), where the poet invokes the West Wind, calling on it to inspire him and serve as a vehicle of his verse: "Scatter … / … my words among mankind." "Frost at Midnight" and "Ode to the West Wind" each also include a tower in the landscape recollected or imagined respectively: "the old church-tower" in the former and "old palaces and towers" in the latter.

Formally, it is telling that Yeats adopted the same stanza form for the Robert Gregory elegy and "A Prayer" and would also employ the same stanza later in part two of "The Tower"—all tower-oriented poems.[215] We may say the architecture of Yeats's tower was partly formed in Cowley stanzas. The sturdily built poem itself is indeed a model of a "house / Where all's accustomed, ceremonious." The style of the poem itself embodies "courtesy" which the speaker wishes his "daughter" to have. In his 1907 essay Yeats had paralleled "courtesy" and "self-possession" and compared them to "style" in the arts in that "both arise out of a deliberate shaping of all things, and from never being swept away, whatever the emotion, into confusion or dullness…" ("Poetry and Tradition").[216] The images of the tower and the house in the poem may meta-poetically represent, in the words of his essay, the "deliberate shaping" of the "free mind"—free from enslaving "hatred"—through "courtesy," "custom" and "ceremony," as a defence against "being swept away…." With this freedom under "formal control"[217] achieved through the style of "A Prayer" Yeats seems to be demonstrating "the standards of manners in their subtlety" as its "creator" as he had advocated in that essay (*E&I* 253).

Yeats's argument about "style" in that essay "Poetry and Tradition" also anticipates the passages on the "soul" in "A Prayer." Using the key adjective

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[215] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 291, 293.
[216] *E&I* 253. Jeffares quotes the passage, 206.
[217] See Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 305: "the impression … that we are encountering a free-associating discourse that paradoxically exhibits total formal control…."

"self-delighting" which he would use for the "soul" in "A Prayer," Yeats had argued that a writer "has a continual deliberate self-delighting happiness—style, 'the only thing that is immortal in literature,' as Sainte-Beuve has said…—and builds this up into a most personal and willful fire, transfiguring words and sounds and events" (*E&I* 253-54). Yeats's metaphor of a writer's "building" of "style" (which is "immortal") "up into a most personal and willful fire…" may suggest building in the most literal sense—and the link between the two (textual building and actual building) in his textually constructed tower.

The meditation on how to give birth to "innocence and beauty" and protect the soul's happiness in the midst of violent storm of the times is implicitly in contrast to that on "terrible beauty" born out of political violence in Ireland, with the collocation of "beauty" and "born" (406) inevitably evoking the refrain in "Easter, 1916" ("A terrible beauty is born") contained earlier in the book. The "wind" is "[b]red on the Atlantic," while a "rough beast" "[s]louches towards Bethlehem to be born" in "The Second Coming." The prayer for the poet's "daughter" in this respect may partly overlap with his prayer for the future years, which in his "reverie" "had come," of Ireland that was being "born" through the Easter Rising, the Anglo-Irish War and the Irish Civil War, "[o]ut of the murderous innocence of the sea." The daughter and the "future years" are in a way treated as twins in the poem. The use of a tree—"the spreading laurel tree" representing the rooted life of the daughter—would later lead to that of a "chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer," visualizing the "Unity of Being" ("Among School Children," 446), and also to the employment of Burke's metaphor of a state ("the State a tree…," "Blood and the Moon," 481). Those images may have been taking root in this poem's idea of being "rooted."

Four poems concerning the Easter Rising, beginning with "Easter, 1916," were tactfully grouped together in the centre of the book, the last of which immediately followed by another closely-related political poem "The Leaders of the Crowd." In January 1920 Yeats referred to them as "a little group of verses, suggested by the Irish Rebellion" and weighed the risk of publishing them: "I doubt if you would care to risk these in the present disturbed state of Ireland; I

haven't made up my own mind as to whether I ought to risk them."[218] With the "Irish youth" being "in its inflammable state," Yeats had concluded the letter with the prospect of his publishing them only in his "sisters expensive little books where they can do little harm," not "feel[ing] at the present moment that [he] should separate the other poems from them." Later that year, however, it turned out that Yeats did "separate" "Easter, 1916" from the others, publishing it singly in the *New Statesman*, 23 October 1920, "at the critical moment" of "the political situation in Ireland" and "Anglo-Irish relations," including the hunger strike of Terence MacSwiney, "the Sinn Fein lord mayor of Cork."[219] In releasing the Easter poems in the American periodical *Dial*, November 1920, however, Yeats avoided "separate[ing] the other poems from them" and published a group of "Ten Poems": six other poems along with those four Easter poems, from which the group gains, as he had told Squire, "weight & fire" (#3704).[220] It is telling that "The Second Coming" was first published on this occasion together with the Easter poems. In *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* Yeats placed those four rebellion poems consecutively in about the middle of the book and virtually enclosed them with poems such as "An Image from a Past Life" and "The Second Coming," benefitting both groups. The latter group of poems concerned Yeats's philosophy, which had been being developed through their automatic writing sessions and were highlighted with his long notes to those two poems as well as with the preface to the book.[221]

The sequence of "A Prayer" immediately following "The Second Coming"—a pair chained with a shared symbol of a cradle ("Under this cradle-hood… / sleeps on" and "stony sleep / … a rocking cradle") and the references to

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[218] A dictated letter to the editor of the *London Mercury*, J. C. Squire, 11 January 1920 #3704.

[219] *Life2* 66, 181, 190. "The tension mounted inexorably over the weeks leading up to the death of … Terence MacSwiney… on 25 October. …. Liberal opinion in Britain was becoming increasingly worried about the Irish policy of the Lloyd George government. The *New Statesman* took a leading part in the campaign in support of Terence MacSwiney, and it was there that WBY decided to publish 'Easter 1916' at last…," *Life2* 181-82. See Tom Paulin, 133-50.

[220] *MRD* xvi-xvii, xx-xxi. Yeats also published "The Rose Tree" along with "An Image from a Past Life" and "The Second Coming" in the *Nation* (London), 6 November 1920 and "On a Political Prisoner" together with "Towards Break of Day" and "A Meditation in Time of War" in the *Nation* (London), 13 November 1920 respectively. See Wade 127 for each poem's list of publications before *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. See Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 96.

[221] *VP* 823, 853.

"ceremony" and "innocence"—is found unchanged in extant sets of Cuala's page proofs, where Yeats added "To be Carved" in ink after "A Prayer" in one set and placed "A Meditation in Time of War" between the two in the next.[222] The Easter poems and "The Leaders of the Crowd" provide "The Second Coming" and "A Prayer" with the contemporary historical background. Those political poems are, in their turn, contextualized by the pair—one about "fall[ing] apart" and the other about "custom" and "ceremony"—and look as if enwound in the cyclic movement of historical gyres at the critical moment of change. With the pair following, after two intervening pieces, the Rebellion poems, the word "born" ironically rings in "Easter, 1916," "The Second Coming" and "A Prayer," and the metaphors of Easter and the Second Coming resonate with each other.

Michael Robartes and the Dancer closes by declaring his restoration of the tower in Gort, Co Galway, but also contains three poems which concern Sligo. "On a Political Prisoner" was written in January 1919,[223] several months before "A Prayer," and contains the recollected image of a woman's riding under Ben Bulben (397), making it in part a companion piece to "A Prayer" as a meditation upon a life of a woman of political "opinions." "Towards Break of Day," begun in December 1918, calls the "waterfall" upon Ben Bulben's side "'a thing so dear'" (398).[224] The key word "dear," twice repeated in this poem on Sligo, seems to link the poem to "A Prayer," where the word is also found ("Rooted in one dear perpetual place…," 405), as if the word used for Sligo was transferred to Galway.[225] "Under Saturn," dated "November 1919," which may be read as yet another epithalamium, introduces his wife to the place of his ancestors. There is no direct reference to Sligo in "A Prayer" itself, yet the "linnet" might possibly be another implicit and perhaps ironical link. The bird was part of the

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[222] The poem was moved from before "The Second Coming," *MRD* xv.

[223] Kelly 202-203. *MRD* 98-99.

[224] Kelly 202. *MYV1*191, 198-202. See the automatic script on 24 December 1918 and 7 January 1919 for fragmentary images related to the poem such as "waterfall & stag" and "touch – desire to grasp," *YVP2* 150, 162. *MRD* xiii, 112-31. The word "dear," having replaced "beloved" in earlier drafts, is first found in a fair copy with revisions, *MRD* 126-27.

[225] Yeats would write in "The Stirring of the Bones" (written in 1920-22, published in 1922), *Au (CW3)* 283: "Certain woods at Sligo, the woods above Dooney Rock and those above the waterfall at Ben Bulben … are so deep in my affections that I dream about them at night; and yet the woods at Coole … are so much more knitted to my thought that when I am dead they will have, I am persuaded, my longest visit…."

picture of "peace" ("… evening full of the linnet's wings…," 117) in the most popular early poem of his on the theme of building in Sligo: "I will… / …a small cabin build there…" (117). It was a different kind of building "of clay and wattles made," founded on the contrast with the "pavements grey" in London. Yeats's poetic building project, in a way, had its genesis back in "Innisfree" and in Sligo. No matter how ambivalent Yeats may have felt towards this early poem about building,[226] "a small cabin" element was still resonant in his expressions regarding Ballylee Castle in his correspondence in 1918—such as "an ideal poor mans house" or "a farmers house in dreamland. [227]

The presence of Sligo in these poems in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* may have been influenced by the reference to Ben Bulben in the prophesy made through George's automatic writing concerning their first child as an "Avatar"—supposed to be born to "a family associated for five generations with the sacred mountain of Ben Bulben."[228] Yeats's writing of Sligo at this stage of his construction of the tower in Ballylee also looks as if it were to compensate for "a child's vow sworn in vain / Never to leave that valley his fathers called their home" recollected in "Under Saturn" (391), the tone of whose final rhyming words is unmistakable: "again / vain" and "come / home." Besides "Easter, 1916" (dated "September 25th, 1916), "Under Saturn" (dated "November 1919") and "A Prayer for My Daughter" (dated "June 1919") are the only poems dated in the book, which draws attention to their link. "Under Saturn" may be read as a sort of a palinode of "A Prayer," which establishes his "house" in the tower it roots in the locality of Ballylee.

Explaining to his father about his project of restoring the "old tower in Galway" Yeats had written: "I have always a great longing for the country—having lived so much in Sligo I suppose" (13 February 1917 #3157). When they were preparing to move out of 4 Broad Street, Oxford to their new house at 82 Merrion Square, Dublin in 1922, Yeats would also refer to the house in Sligo: "I

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[226] See Marjorie Howes, "Yeats and the postcolonial," *Cambridge Companion* 222-23. *Life2* 418.

[227] "… I dream of making a house that may encourage people to avoid ugly manufactured things—an ideal poor mans house," to Maud Gonne 13 May 1918 #3438. "We shall have a wonder house a house full of history & yet quite without pretence—a farmers house in dreamland," to John Quinn 4 September 1918 #3478.

[228] *Life2* 129. See *YVP2* 67-70.

think constantly that our children will have that spacious home I lacked after I left Sligo…" (to Lady Gregory, 1 March 1922 #4082).[229] It seems likely that "that spacious home" in Sligo, Merville, the house his grandfather on his mother's side purchased and had to sell later,[230] always had its space in his mind. Yeats's reference to Sligo, in answering to Lady Gregory's suggestion of his purchasing Ballinamantane House instead of Ballylee because of the latter's dampness, about a month before the start of tower's rebuilding work, however, serves to express his passion for Ballylee as well as Sligo: "Ballynamantine would not please me at all. If I did not get Ballylee I would probably have built a thatched cottage on a site I chose long ago in Sligo…" (16 June 1917 #3262).

2

"To be Carved on a Stone at Ballylee": the epitaph on the tower

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.

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Yeats inserted the above six-line poem in blue ink on the last page of Cuala's third set of proofs of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*.[231] He entered the poem with the title "To be carved on a stone at Ballylea" after the printed text

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[229] Writing from 4 Broad Street, Oxford in 1920 about their need in the near future to find "another old house" to move to, Yeats had told Lady Gregory about his wishes to have his daughter, unlike her parents, "settled in a house" during childhood (27 September [1920] #3785): "We want Anne, before she begins to remember, to be settled in a house where she can live till maturity if not always. We both feel we have lost so much by changes of place in our childhood. We want to buy our house that our children may have it after us." See also Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* 5.

[230] David Pierce, *Yeats's Worlds: Ireland, England and the Poetic Imagination* 11-13. *Life1* 20.

[231] NLI 30,209. See *MRD* xv, 200.

of "A Prayer for My Daughter," the final poem of the book at that stage. Below the handwritten text of the poem Yeats added the message to the editor:

> Can you get in above. Put in any where you like but preferably at end. No matter if you cant get it in. I shall want a proof [.][232]

Yeats may have "want[ed] a proof" in any case to see those lines in print before having them actually carved on a stone plaque, though it turned out that Yeats did not have it done in his lifetime—probably because of the poem's transformation. The preserved page proof visually documents Yeats's last minute insertion of the poem in hand, itself an inscription, of a poem about placing of written "characters" in another medium.[233] (See Figure 8.) This

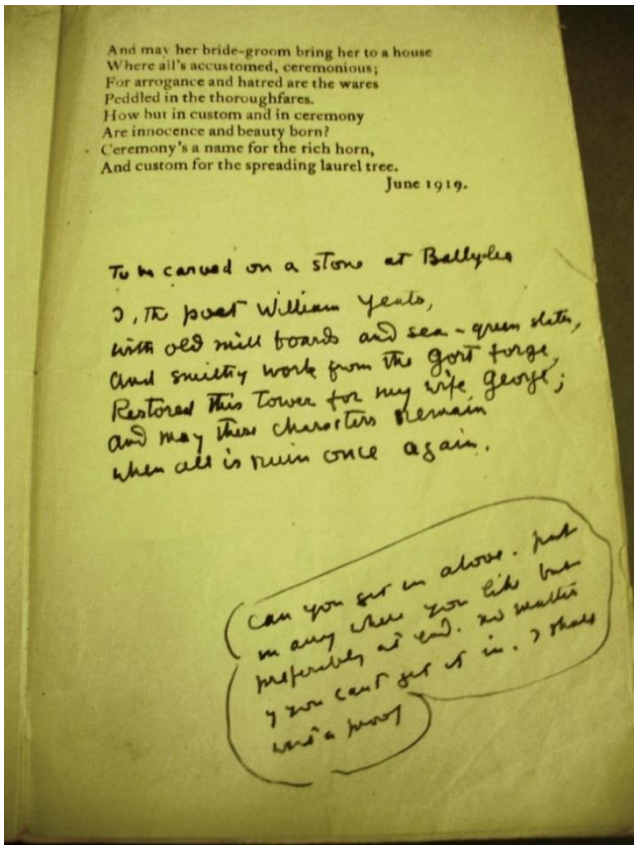

Fig. 8. Yeats's holograph entry in ink of "To be Carved on a Stone at Ballylee" and his note to the editor below the printed text of "A Prayer for My Daughter" on the last page of the text of the poems (p. 23) in the third set of Cuala's page proofs, NLI 30,209. Photograph by author. August 2009.

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[232] NLI 30,209. See *MRD* 200n.

[233] See for a similar case of his inscription of "A Meditation in Time of War" on "the last page of typescript for *The Dial*," accompanied by his message to the publisher, *MRD* 196-97, 197n.

inscription poem would eventually be, fittingly, printed alone on the verso of the last leaf for the text of the poems in the Cuala's book.

By the time of this holograph entry the poem had in fact undergone a most radical revision which reversed the closing perspective of its early version. Three drafts of the early version of the poem are extant, while there are no surviving drafts of the final vision, mysteriously again, which may allow us to trace how Yeats worked upon the reversal of the poem. With no drafts dated, the only clues we have to the dates of the poem's composition are that of the letter where Yeats quoted a draft of the early version (23 July 1918) and the approximate dates of Cuala's page proofs.

The first dramatic turn in the poem's compositional process is in fact identifiable after the earliest extant draft in seven lines which contained four agents of the tower's construction. That earliest draft, which I would like to call the first version here for the sake of argument, began with Yeats and George as co-agents of restoration ("William Yeats & his wife George… / Restored this Tower…") and ended with another pair: "What Rafferty built & Scott designed."[234] It recalls his calling the tower "our" house ("… we're almost settled in our house...," 323) in the elegy for Robert Gregory, which was written in May and June 1918, probably a little before this draft, while the tower was being made habitable. The opening subject becomes singular ("I the poet William Yeats…") in the next two preserved drafts in eight lines—the text quoted in the July 1918 letter and the other which is not in Yeats's hand and carries the count of the number of letters—which I would call here the second version.[235] The inscription of his own name, which is the first instance in his poetry, ritualistically preceded by the first person singular pronoun and the job title "the poet," is remarkable even in view of his other performative declaration "I write it out in a verse…" ("Easter 1916") in the same book.[236] The enumeration of the architect and the builder may have in part prompted the

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[234] *MRD* 200.

[235] *MRD*198-200. "Evidently thinking of an inscription to be carved, the writer (who was not Yeats) counted the number of letters in each line…," *MRD* 199n.

[236] See Hazard Adams, *The book of Yeats's Poems* 144: "He names himself for the first time in the Book, as if he were engaged in a ceremony that accomplishes identity." Adams identifies a "new tone of self-assertion" in "To be Carved," 147.

introduction of "the poet"—especially when the name of the builder ("Rafferty"), which Yeats often spelt "Raftery" in his correspondence, was probably inevitably associated with the legendary local poet Raftery.[237] It also seems likely that Yeats was echoing "Raftery's poem about himself" which he had quoted in his 1906 essay ("Literature and the Living Voice"): "I am Raftery the poet, / Full of hope and love…" (*Explorations* 202). The possibly implicit incorporation of Raftery's poetic tradition into the poem is, as it were, in parallel with the recycling of materials such as "the stone-work" from "Three old outhouses" for the building.[238]

When he quoted the second version of the draft of the poem in his 23 July 1918 letter to John Quinn, Yeats in effect provided a commentary on the poem, in such a way as to anticipate his use of notes to later tower-oriented poems:

> We are surrounded with plans. This morning arrived designs from the drunken man of genius Scott for two beds. The war is improving the work for being unable to import anything we have bought the whole contents of an old mill, great beams & three inch planks & old paving stones; & the local carpenter & masons & blacksmith are to work for us.... (#3465)

The enumeration of "the local carpenter & masons & blacksmith" who "are to work for us" as well as the named architect Scott also anticipates Yeats's ideal image of "all, artist and poet, craftsman and day-labourer" "accept[ing] a common design" (*Au [CW3]* 167) which he would advocate in a few years in an autobiographical essay ("Four Yeats: 1887-1891") from 1920 to 1921.

"On a great stone beside the front door," Yeats had introduced the text, "will be inscribed these lines":

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[237] See *Life2* 85: "the Gort builder was Michael Rafferty, whom WBY decided must be related to Raftery…." See also Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* 167: "Yeats and Gregory both persisted in calling Raftery…."

[238] "Three old outhouses to supply the stone¬work." To Olivia Shakespear 15 May [1917] #3243.

"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 [a] lay a curse
If they should alter for the worse,
From fashion or an empty mind,
What Rafferty built and Scott designed." (#3465)

After the poem Yeats added a commentary on the builder: "Rafferty is the local builder…." All draft versions of the poem construct the tower with carefully chosen building materials in the first four lines. The distance between the subject and the verb "Restored" may suggest the time and effort the work of restoration required. The second half of the poem takes a dramatic turn between the second version quoted above and the third final version. The focal point in the latter half of the first and the second draft versions is the tower the architect designed and the builder built. In the third version the closing focus has been shifted to the poet's achievement: "these characters."

In the third final draft version which makes the published text, the first four lines are directly followed by this closing couplet:

And may these characters remain
When all is ruin once again.

The poem has come to feature the poet's solitary work, attributing the agency of the tower's restoration only to the poet himself, deleting the names "Rafferty" and "Scott." It ends by focusing on self-referencing "characters," the carved / printed letters of words on the plaque / page and perhaps on the readers' minds, which "may" "remain," unlike the material tower, "When all is ruin once again." The crux of the final version is the exquisite balance and intricate relationship between "this tower" and "these characters," which may be read as being in apposition to each other: "I, the poet William Yeats… / Restored this tower… / And may these characters remain…."

The two contrasting versions of the second half of the poem in a sense make a diptych that tells a story of a cycle of building and falling to ruin. Yeats replaced the former linear and temporal image of the tower with a circular uroboric image of restoration and ruin in the final version, where the passage of time is compressed and the projection of "ruin" immediately follows the four lines on the accomplished work of restoration. The first two draft versions (found in three preserved drafts) end with a curse to be laid on those who "alter for the worse" what has been designed and built (*MRD* 198-200). The curse shares the tone with the one in "A Prayer on going into my House," which had probably been written a few months earlier than the July 1918 letter. The final version had the prospective "ruin" incorporated in itself, resonating not only with the cyclic history visualized in "The Second Coming" but with the Beckettian as well as Blakean penultimate poem in the book, "A Meditation in Time of War."[239]

The revision has resulted in declaring the superiority of the "characters"—the poem—to the stone architecture. The "characters," built by the poet, may be able to "remain" when the material part of the restored stone tower inevitably eventually falls into "ruin once again." The internal slant rhyme of "ruin / again" underlines the cyclic movement of rebuilding and crumbling—a universal theme which T. S. Eliot would treat at the beginning of "East Coker" (1940) in *Four Quartets*.[240] As "Gort forge" and "George" alliterate and rhyme, so do "remain" and the three words "ruin once again," stressing the oxymoronic as well as synonymous pair "remain" and "ruin." The published poem may function as a proleptic elegy and a meta-epitaph for the tower. In Yeats's oeuvre the final section of "Under Ben Bulben," where is to be embedded Yeats's self-epitaph—the "words" "cut" on "limestone"—would make a pair with "To be Carved" as poems which concern inscription on stone.

Except for the "smithy work from the Gort forge," settled there in all the drafts, Yeats kept revising or reusing building materials of the tower:

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[239] See Albright 627, 677.

[240] "In succession / Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended, / Are removed, destroyed, restored…. / Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires…. / Houses live and die: there is a time for building… / And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane…," *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* 177.

…wood from Coole & good brown sedge (*MRD* 200)
…common sedge and broken slates (quoted in the letter, *MRD* 200)
…wood from Coole & broken slates (*MRD* 198-99)
…old mill boards and sea-green slates, (final version, *MRD* 200)

When the poet's name was made to end the first line in the second draft version, the "slates" was adopted at the end of the second line to form a rhyming pair: "Yeats / slates." The twice-tried "wood from Coole" was replaced with the "old mill boards" in the final version. Yeats had listed, though not in the quoted poem itself, the recycled materials from "an old mill" in the July 1918 letter as seen earlier. This revision signals another compositional turning point, which contributed to deciding the make-up of the tower in the poem. Had the "wood from Coole" been kept as part of the building materials, it would have helped to establish the tower as a sort of a satellite construction of Coole. Its replacement with the "old mill boards," which may refer us back to the "little mill"—and also perhaps to the local legend of Raftery and Mary Hynes—that Yeats had registered in his 1899 essay on Ballylee (*Myth* 22), may feature the tower's independent establishment in its own locality of Ballylee.

The revision concerning the modifiers of the "slates"—from "broken" to "sea-green"—in the final version may have possibly been influenced by unexpected problems and delays Yeats had encountered in the ongoing restoration work upon the stone tower. The circumstances of the material construction work, indeed, may have also motivated the radical revision of the poem's ending. The uncontrollable circumstances affecting the actual tower's restoration work Yeats had experienced during the two-year interval between the composition of the poem's early version in the summer of 1918 and the publication of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* may have prompted Yeats to radically shift the concluding focus of the inscription—from the stone tower to the words themselves—and also to include it as an independent poem in his book of verse. We do not know the date of Yeats's holograph insertion of the poem in the third set of the Cuala's page proofs. Yeats sent the book's preface and notes to his sister Lolly (Elizabeth Corbet Yeats) on 22 June 1920, together with detailed suggestions about the printing of the diagram in the note to "The Second

Coming."[241] It seems Yeats was working on the preface shortly before sending it to her. His much revised holograph draft of the preface in black ink carries the date "June 16. 1920" (which is absent from the typescript).[242] We also know that Yeats sent to his sister some corrections to another poem in the book ("Solomon and the Witch") as late as in [undated] September 1920 ("… I do not think it will upset page…" #3787). It was presumably the fourth set of the page proofs that Yeats was sending her on this occasion, where we find some corrections made to "Solomon."[243] We may therefore assume that it was between 22 June 1920 and September 1920 that Yeats entered "To be Carved" in hand in the third set of the page proofs.

Yeats reported to Lady Gregory on 26 June 1920 from London, just four days after his sending Lolly the preface and the notes, about a mysterious delay in the construction work ("the workmen, who were to have begun work at Ballylee two weeks ago … cannot begin for another month…") and also a possible problem with what he had previously explained to her as the "beautiful slates of different colours and sizes" (28 February 1920 #3709): "I hear too … that the foreman did visit Ballylee & stood ag[h]ast before our very beautiful, very expensive, many coloured & many sized slates, bought on the advise of Lutchen's office & declared they were no right slates or some such term…" (#3742).[244] As opposed to the unexpected delays or unwanted changes in the construction work of the stone tower, in the published inscription poem the tower is single-handedly constructed by the poet, using the "sea-green slates" as well as self-referentially featuring the "characters." We may speculate it was after he

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[241] "…here is preface & here are the notes. There is a diagram to be inserted in the second note at the place marked. You will have to get a zincotype made from it," #3741.

[242] NLI 13,588 (16).

[243] *MRD* xv, 38n, 39n.

[244] See also #3767: "If slates not enough [Scott] will put stone slabs, or paving stones around lower part of roof. This he thinks should have been done in any case as while walking round parapet, or sitting upon it, one is liable to break slates…" (To George Yeats, 9 August 1920). Yeats was still waiting for a "slater" in the spring of 1922: "…in April a slater comes from England to put on the thick ancient-looking slates which we have got," #4082. He then wrote to Quinn on 5 June 1922 "the slates were bought two years ago for the Castle which has to be concreted over instead, for our builder declares that no slate would withstand the storms," #4133. The concrete roof was, however, yet to be put in place as late as on 29 January 1924: "…I put aside the proceeds of my last 'lecturing tour' for that purpose [Ballylee] … in part for the concrete roof, for we still live, when there, protected not very perfectly by stone floors alone," #4464.

heard the "beautiful slates" they had purchased called by the "foreman" "no right slates" for the storm-beaten tower's roof that Yeats made the revisions. Being the sole agent of the construction of the tower with "characters," Yeats changed the adjective modifying the "slates" in the poem from "broken" to "sea-green" and deleted the other agents working on the actual tower from the poem. The colour "sea-green," which stands out among the other almost colourless materials of the building in the poem, probably partly represents their actual "very beautiful, very expensive, many coloured & many sized slates" and also derives from the image in the 1900 "De Burgh" Version of *The Speckled Bird*: "the lichen-covered battlements of the old tower rising above the slates, which are of a curiously blue-green colour."[245] Now that the tower has geographically been established in "A Prayer for My Daughter," the adjective "sea-green" is also a reminder of its proximity to the Atlantic. The poem was finalised when the "sea-green slates" as well as the "old mill boards" were installed, while the names "Rafferty" and "Scott" as well as "Coole" disappeared, leaving Yeats the sole named restorer—architect and builder.

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By having the lines to be carved on a stone plaque on the tower's wall printed on a page at the end of the book, Yeats connected his book of verse and the stone building, with a possible implication of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* as a poetic equivalent of the tower. The poem closes the book as if it were an epilogue, printed alone on the last page of the poems, with the notes following on the subsequent pages. Placed at the end of the verses in the book, the phrase "this tower" in the poem could even suggest the book *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, and "these characters," the printed words in the book. Having the title "To be Carved on a Stone at Ballylee"—which is itself not "[t]o be carved" on the plaque—printed on a page distinguishes printing from carving

[245] In the opening passage appears a description of a Norman tower, which prefigures the colour of the slates in the inscription poem: "one sees, as soon as one has turned the corner of the hill, the lichen-covered battlements of the old tower rising above the slates, which are of a curiously blue-green colour," *SB* 115.

as well as superimposes the image of stone on paper and that of carving on printing.

The stone plaque was "not erected in his lifetime"—another intriguing anomaly about the inscription poem, since it was originally to have it carved on a stone that Yeats began the composition ("On a great stone beside the front door will be inscribed these lines…," #3465). The radical transformation of the poem itself, however, explains why Yeats did not have it carved on a stone at Ballylee Castle. The revised published version which predicts the future ruin and focuses on the survival of "these characters," unlike the first unpublished version which features "What Rafferty built & Scott designed," and despite the poem's title, was more appropriate to be printed in his book of verse than inscribed on a stone at the restored tower. The plaque was only posthumously "designed," "carved" and "set up in 1948 under the direction of the board of the Abbey Theatre."[246] The carved lines contain five full-stops, possibly for some technical reasons, which is radically different from the punctuation in Yeats's text (three commas, a semi-colon and a full-stop at the end).[247] Given Yeats's emphasis on "a complete coincidence between period and stanza" (*E&I* 522), this anomaly ironically testifies to the fact that the inscribed plaque was outside Yeats's authorial control.

As seen earlier, "A Meditation in Time of War" was transposed to the position between "A Prayer" and "To be Carved"—mediating the two tower-oriented poems in the book—on the fourth set of page proofs of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* after Yeats added "To be Carved" in the third set.[248] While written probably in November 1914 before Yeats's first tower-related poem, "that old grey stone" and "the old wind-broken tree," placed between "A Prayer" and "To be Carved," may evoke the tower—as if "that old grey stone I sat" prefigures the image of the tower when "all is ruin once again."

In the context of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, the announcement of the restored tower is inevitably set against the background of "Easter, 1916" as well as the vision of "Mere anarchy" in "The Second Coming." It was on 2

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[246] Hanley and Miller, *Thoor Ballylee* 26.

[247] See for reproductions of the carved stone Hanley and Miller, *Thoor Ballylee* 25 and "The Life and Works of William Butler Yeats: Online Exhibition," the National Library of Ireland (http://www.nli.ie/yeats/).

[248] *MRD* xv.

October 1916, indeed just a week after the date given to "Easter, 1916" ("September 25th, 1916."), that Yeats began his negotiations for the purchase of Ballylee Castle, as we have seen earlier. In the middle part of the book we encounter the Easter poems as if they were the "stone" which is "in the midst of all" (393). We also see the poet numbering and naming the martyrs of the uprising as if to pick up the shattered pieces to restore them: "I write it out in a verse…." With "A Prayer" Yeats reinstalled the tower in his poetry and closed the book with a monument of his restoration of the tower in Ballylee. In *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, the metaphorical "living stream" (the "flux of life"[249]) interposed in "Easter, 1916," where the "long-legged moor-hens dive, / And hens to moor-cocks call," may subliminally overlap with the one by the tower, which, having been registered in the Robert Gregory elegy together with a "water-hen" in the previous book of verse, appears in "A Prayer" later in the book as "the flooded stream." "As I write I can see the river," reported Yeats in the summer after he finished "A Prayer," "where two water hens have just passed through the big window…" (to J. B. Yeats, 9 August 1919 #3643).

Yeats was probably conscious of his letters' being collected and potentially serving as commentaries on his work, especially so when he wrote to John Quinn, who was a New York lawyer and an art collector. The letter to Quinn we have seen earlier, sent about a month after the Easter Rising from the Woburn Buildings, London, summarises Yeats's reactions to the historic event: the sense of the world's having been "swept away," his remorse which would later make a rhetorical question in "Man and the Echo" and his "planning a group of" Easter poems. His "planning" those poems means he is setting about "begin[ning] building again":

> This Irish business has been a great grief. We have lost the ablest & most fine natured of our young men. A world seems to have been swept away. I keep going over the past in my mind & wonder if I could have done anything to turn these young men in some other direction. At the moment I feal as if I shall return to Dublin to live,

[249] *Life2* 61. See Yeats's dictated letter to an Irish writer Ernest Boyd on 20 January 1915 (#2586) for the contrast between "rigidity" and "the flowing & living world," *Life2* 61, 684n52.

> to begin building again. … I am planning a group of poems on the Dublin rising but cannot write till I get into the country…. (23 May 1916 #2960)

It was indeed in a letter to the same addressee about two years later that Yeats quoted an early version of "To be Carved," following it with the comments on his construction of the tower: "I am making a setting for my old age, a place to influence lawless youth with its severity & antiquity…" (23 July 1918 #3465). Yeats was building his tower in his chosen place to edify—etymologically meaning to make a dwelling (*OED*)—"our young men" and "lawless youth" in the public realm and his "daughter" in the more personal domain. "If I had had this tower of mine when Joyce began to write I dare say I might have been of use to him, have got him to meet those who might have helped him..." (#3465) continued Yeats, probably with an intention of gaining Quinn's support for the younger writer. Yeats in his fifties as the possessor of the tower with its "severity & antiquity" is implicitly contrasted with Joyce here, an equivalent of the "most remarkable" "lawless youth." Yeats's reference to Joyce in conjunction with the tower is intriguing, especially when we remember the way "Joyce began to write."

Joyce had contrasted his protagonist's ideas with Yeats's "Michael Robartes remembers Forgotten Beauty"[250] towards the finale of his first novel published in 1916 (*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*): "Michael Robartes … presses in his arms the loveliness which has long faded from the world. Not this. Not at all. I desire to press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world."[251] As if half echoing this, Yeats in the July letter celebrated Joyce's achievement in *Ulysses*, which had begun to appear in serial form in the *Little Review* in March 1918: "It is an entirely new thing…." The "smithy work," one of the selected materials of Yeats's tower, locally anchored in the "Gort forge," may counterpoint Stephen's declaration at the very end of *A Portrait*: "I

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[250] Joyce used the poem's original title in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899). Yeats revised "Michael Robartes" in the title to "He" in *The Poetical Works of William B. Yeats. Vol. I, Lyrical Poems* (1906).

[251] *Portrait* 280.

go … to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race."[252] The "sea-green" of the "slates" may also contrast with Joyce's symbolic use of the colour, that of the "bitter waters" in the first episode of *Ulysses*, [253] which was itself an intricate allusion to Yeats's own phrase "love's bitter mystery" in his early poem ("Who Goes with Fergus?"). Yeats would again comment on Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922, when, significantly, he was on the verge of leaving Oxford for Ireland in time of the Civil War: "I am reading the new Joyce…. It has our Irish cruelty & also our kind of strength & the Martello Tower pages are full of beauty…" (to Olivia Shakespear, 8 March 1922 #4085).

The dramatic turning points I have tried to trace in the compositional processes of each of Yeats's two tower-oriented poems in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* in this chapter suggest that Yeats did not necessarily have a clear grand design for his construction of the tower from the outset but that it evolved as he went along. The preface to *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* still does not refer to the tower but serves instead as an oblique prelude to the introductory story in *A Vision* (1925)—where the tower would be mentioned ("On a walking tour in Connaught we passed Thoor Ballylee where Mr Yeats had settled for the summer…")—whose imminent publication is hinted at.[254] At the end of the preface is simply printed "W. B. Yeats," with no date or name of the place accompanying. It seems likely that after *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* Yeats began to work more consciously on the symbolic construction of the tower as a poetic project.

It was after the publication of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* that Yeats invented the name "Thoor Ballylee." When he first published "To be Carved on a Stone at Ballylee," Yeats was still calling his tower "Ballylee Castle," the name by which the building had been commonly known. When *Later Poems* (Wade 134), volume one of Yeats's collected works, which included poems from *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) to *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921) was published by Macmillan on 3 November 1922, Yeats had added "Thoor," the

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[252] *Portrait* 282.
[253] *Ulysses* 8.
[254] *VP* 853. "Introduction By Owen Aherne," *AVA* (*CW13*) lxii.

noun originating from "the Irish *tor, tur*"[255] meaning a tower, to the title of the poem: "To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee."[256] All subsequent printings of the poem would include "Thoor" and it would turn out to be the only instance of the name "Thoor Ballylee" in his published text of poems.

It was on 30 March 1922, when Yeats wrote to Harriet Monroe in Chicago from Coole, a little before moving to Ballylee, that he first used the new name of his own invention as his postal address: "Thour Ballylee | Gort | Co Galway."[257] Yeats wrote to thank her "sympathetic letter" about his father's death, a significant "point of passage in [his] life."[258] Yeats inscribed the address in the experimental stage, marking as it were a semi-official launch of his reinvented place, and closed the letter with a sense of his settling in Ireland as well as his uncertainty about the political situation in the coming months and years:

> I have just arrived here & as we have taken a house in Dublin − 82 Merrion Square − I am not likely to leave Ireland again except for brief travel. Whether I have come home to civil war or country quiet I cannot yet know. (#4110)

After this letter Yeats used "Thoor Ballylee" as his postal address from 18 April 1922 (#4114) until July 1927 (#5013) in his preserved correspondence. [259]

Yeats explained his address to Olivia Shakespear in the following month, revealing the self-consciousness of its naming:

> What do you think of our address — Thoor Ballylee? Thoor is Irish for Tower & it will keep people from suspecting us of modern gothic

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[255] Jeffares 209.

[256] Wade 134, *VP* 406.

[257] #4110. According to *CL InteLex* Yeats spelt "Thour" here. Yeats used on the same day "Ballylee | Gort | Co Galway" in his letter to George Russell (#4109).

[258] *Life2* 212.

[259] The "Thoor Ballylee" address is also last found on his letter to Sturge Moore on 15 September 1927 (#5026), which was after he left Ballylee for Dublin. For some letters, including those written in transitional periods when he was inventing a new name or not long before his departure from Ballylee, Yeats just wrote "Ballylee | Gort | Co Galway" (on 30 March 1922 [#4109]) or "Ballylee | Gort" (on 25 June 1927 [#5010] and 25 August 1927 [#5020]).

> & a deer park. I think the harsh sounding "Thoor" amends the softness of the rest. (23 April 1922 #4117)

In May 1922 (#4118) Yeats wrote again in a postscript to the same recipient: "How do you like our address? 'Thoor' means 'Castle' or rather 'tower' & is less pretentous [*sic*] than 'Ballylee Castle'."[260] It sounds as if he were weighing his readers' response to the name of his own devising. His commentary plainly explains why "Ballylee Castle" did not enter the title of the poem and why he later added "Thoor" before "Ballylee." The revision suggests how delicate the business of naming is in this poem about names. The poem incorporates "Yeats" and "George"—the only instance of his naming his wife in poetry—in the walls of the tower in the poem, as it were, by rhyming their names with the named place ("Gort forge") and a building material ("slates") respectively. The assonance in "boards," "Gort," "forge," "Restored" and "George"—and also in "Thoor" later—weaves the lines together like a spell and helps anchor the symbolic tower.

We witness the crucial agency of Yeats, "I the poet," in the process of re-creating the place through reinventing its name and using it in his work. In *Later Poems* (1922) not only did Yeats add "Thoor" to the title of the inscription poem, printed as the last poem in the book again, but inscribed the name of the place and the date at the end of the preface (853). As a result, *Later Poems*, which collected his poems from *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) to *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), begins with the inscription "Thoor Ballylee" at the end of the preface and ends with the poem titled "To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee." The inscription "Thoor Ballylee, / May 1922." in the preface, in retrospect, seems to signal the beginning of a new phase—of his full-scale tower-writing. Indeed, it was in the following month that Yeats would start his first tower sequence which we will dwell on in the next chapter.[261]

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[260] The rechristening, Roy Foster notes, was "to avoid the modernized ring (and Anglo-Irish associations) of 'Castle', though 'Thoor' was in itself a rather idiosyncratic Anglicization of the Irish *túr*," *Life2* 213.

[261] See Kelly 219, 220, 222.

CHAPTER 3

Building in the Explosion: "Meditations in Time of Civil War," *The Tower* (1928)

The Tower (1928) was the first book of Yeats's new poems published from Macmillan since *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919). The volume, "rapidly seen as a supreme achievement," was constructed with his three books of poetry that had been published from the Cuala Press over the several years following *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (Cuala, 1921).[262] Each of them—*Seven Poems and a Fragment* (1922), *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems* (1924) and *October Blast* (1927)—contained a sequence: "Thoughts upon the Present State of the World" (retitled "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" in *The Tower*), "Meditations in Time of Civil War" and "The Tower" respectively. The latter two of these, "Meditations in Time of Civil War" and "The Tower," centre around the building which Yeats had renamed Thoor Ballylee by the end of March 1922. They constitute the crucial part of Yeats's tower-oriented poems, which by then had undoubtedly become his major poetic project. Yeats had, in retrospect, been constructing the tower in poetry over the years, accumulating poem upon poem and adding or exploring a new aspect on each occasion. With the composition of "Meditations" (from spring to October 1922) and "The Tower" (from summer to autumn 1925), Yeats was reaching a climactic stage of his tower building.[263] Placing three sequences consecutively in the reverse order of composition, Yeats built them up, as it were, into a greater sequence at the beginning of *The Tower*.[264] The overture, "Sailing to Byzantium," one of the last-written pieces in the volume, invites us on a voyage to his self-consciously designed symbolic edifice, where his tower would finally become the sustained architectural focus of his work.

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[262] *Life2* 362.
[263] See *T* xliv, xlviii, xlix, *J2* 30.
[264] See Michael North, *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound* 58: "the sequence of sequences…." Rob Doggett, *Deep-Rooted Things* 98-100.

Ever since their first moving into Ballylee in September 1918, it was usually during their actual stay there that Yeats wrote tower-oriented poems.[265] Not only would Yeats have "fled to Ballylee to write" verses,[266] as Foster observed, but he went there to write verses about Ballylee—probably because of the "spirit in the place."[267] The absence of the tower from "Thoughts upon the Present State of the World" (later "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen"), the first-written of the three sequences in the opening of *The Tower*, in this respect, may have possibly resulted from the fact that the "present state," the poem's subject itself, had forced him to write it in Berkshire, southern England, far away from Ballylee.

It was probably not until the end of March 1922 that Yeats returned to Ballylee after he had left there in September 1919.[268] The Yeatses were on a lecture tour in America from January to May 1920, during which Junzo Sato, a young Japanese diplomat working at Portland, Oregon, gave Yeats a sword "wrapped up in embroidered silk," which "had been for 500 years in his family."[269] The rest of 1920 and the following 1921, during the Anglo-Irish War, they were mainly based in Oxford (at their house at 4 Broad Street, on which they had taken out a lease in May 1919). Yeats reported to Lady Gregory on 26 June 1920 that he heard "workmen, who were to have begun work at Ballylee two weeks ago," could not "begin for another month," which would prevent their visit there: "George and I running over for a couple of weeks when the work is done, done it is at all before winter and the railway trouble permits…" (#3742). It was in the same letter that Yeats referred to a foreman's negative comment on their "very beautiful" slates ("no right slates") we have seen in Chapter 2. On 9 August 1920 Yeats saw the architect Scott in Dublin to discuss the work on Ballylee (#3767). In late December, however, learning that the Black and Tans had broken into and done a great deal of damage to the tower, he worried about

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[265] Theodore Ziolkowski lists "1919, 1922, 1926, and 1927" as "the periods of extended stay," omitting 1925, the year Yeats wrote "The Tower," *The View from the Tower* 68.

[266] Describing the period around 1926, Foster remarks "… his preoccupations, as ever, were translated into the verse which he had fled to Ballylee to write…," *Life2* 314.

[267] "At Stratford-on-Avon," *E&I* 97.

[268] Kelly 206-18.

[269] Yeats to Edmund Dulac , 22 March 1920, #3711. See *Life2* 167.

"when [they] can afford to make the house habitable again" (to Lady Gregory, 30 December 1920 #3837).

Although there is some uncertainty about the dates of the composition of "Thoughts,"[270] Yeats wrote on 9 April 1921 he was "writing a series of poems ('thoughts suggested by the present state of the world' or some such name)" and had "written two" of them, which might comprise "many more" (to Olivia Shakespear #3899). In that letter from Berkshire (where the Yeatses stayed from early April to late June 1921, letting their house at 4 Broad Street) Yeats referred to the situation in Ireland as a "storm"[271] but still wrote how they—George pregnant with their second child—were "nerving ourselves however to go to Ireland … at the first sign of lull in the storm there as George pines for Ballylee…" (#3899). Written in 1921, the poem, "a lamentation over lost peace and lost hope" (#3899), was dealing with "the present state" of Ireland, which had been involved in the guerrilla War of Independence since 1919. Kept away from Ballylee since September 1919, a few months after finishing "A Prayer for My Daughter," Yeats was actually composing "Thoughts" in Berkshire, while thinking of going to Ballylee.

Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory the next day that he was "in the middle of the third" section of the sequence (10 April 1921 #3900). It is this particular "Platonist" section, which evokes the tower indirectly, that Roy Foster describes as "announc[ing] the essential qualities which would eventually define 'late Yeats' …" (*Life2* 195).[272] I would argue that the imminent achievement of what Foster calls the "uniquely authoritative tone of 'late Yeats,'" with its "challenging combination of intimate meditation and public voice" (*Life2* 198),

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[270] Scholars' dating varies. Richard Ellmann (*IY* 291) dates the poem "1919-22," though it was first published in 1921. Norman Jeffares (*A New Commentary* 229) dates it "1919," perhaps following the date Yeats added to the poem in *The Tower*. Daniel Albright (*Poems* 256) gives it a date "1920-21." See also Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 238. Cornell edition says it was composed "by early April 1921" (*T* xlii). Roy Foster states the poem was "composed over the two years up to its publication in 1921," *Life2* 196.

[271] Wade appends a note to "the storm there" in the letter: "… Riots, burnings, strikes and unrest generally prevailed, and life in the country was by no means safe," *The Letters of W. B. Yeats* 667n1.

[272] Expressions such as "secret meditation," "labyrinth," "ancient habit," "laborious life" and the "half imagined, the half written page" as well as the allusion to Shelley ("[s]ome moralist or mythological poet") in the third section of the poem evoke the tower in "The Phases of the Moon." They also seem to develop into "written page," "laborious stair" and "half read wisdom of daemonic images" in "Meditations."

depended profoundly on the tower, which was reaching its completion during the period that followed "Thoughts." The tower would provide him with the space and the stage for both "intimate meditation" and "public voice." Yeats's comment "I do not know what degree of merit they ["Thoughts"] have or whether I have now enough emotion for personal poetry…" (#3900) shows Yeats weighing the relationship between "public voice" (*Life2* 198) and "personal poetry" on the threshold of the new phase in his work, beginning with his next sequence based in the tower.

Before discussing his composition of "Thoughts," Yeats consulted Lady Gregory about their going to Ballylee under the unstable circumstances of Ireland: "I wish you could tell me if you think we should find a quiet life, if considering all things you think it would be wise to take her there. If you do we would go at the end of May…" (#3900). In the end the worsening state of Ireland prevented them from returning to Ballylee at all in 1921.[273]

On 1 February 1922 Yeats received a wire from the builder Rafferty "saying that he starts work on Ballylee tomorrow, which should mean the practical finishing of the place" (to Lennox Robinson #4061). The political situation in Ireland had greatly changed since their previous extended stay in Ballylee in 1919, when he wrote "A Prayer for My Daughter." The Anglo-Irish War had started soon after their leaving Ballylee in September 1919 and ended with the Anglo-Irish Treaty in January 1922, triggering the Civil War.[274] The Yeatses returned to Ballylee in April 1922. The tower at Ballylee welcomed them with its bedroom ready for the first time and this stay turned out to be the longest. On the verge of Civil war, it was as if Yeats had obtained and restored the Norman keep to defend himself.[275] Or rather, as if the war had revived the original function of the building. It was during this nearly six-month stay that Yeats worked on the most sustained imaginative construction of the tower in his work as Thoor Ballylee with "Meditations," his first tower-oriented sequence and the foundational piece of his tower enterprise. Written there in the Civil War, the

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[273] *Life2* 198.
[274] Kelly 217.
[275] Roy Foster notes that "From this appropriate stronghold the Yeatses watched as the country around them threatened to regress into the very anarchy which the tower's ancient walls had been built to withstand," *Life2* 213.

sequence foregrounds the aspect of the tower as a fortress, already introduced to Yeats's tower with "A Prayer for My Daughter" as seen earlier. When the Yeatses left Ballylee in late September 1922, heading for their new house at 82 Merrion Square, Dublin, which had been bought with a mortgage in February that year,[276] Yeats looked "rather sad," Lady Gregory records, "between the flood at Ballylee [caused by the bombing of the bridge] and the firing in Dublin" (*J1* 396). His commitment to constructing the tower (in every sense) must have been reinforced by this sense of architectural destruction across the country.

This chapter will focus on the earlier of the two tower-oriented sequences which stand next to each other in the book Yeats called *The Tower*: "Meditations in Time of Civil War" (417-27). The poem was probably mainly written between 8 June and 9 October 1922 and first published in January 1923 in the *London Mercury* and the *Dial*.[277] "Meditations" was his first tower sequence and the first poem about the tower after he had renamed it "Thoor Ballylee." The preserved nearly fair copy testifies to the fact that Yeats considered heading the sequence itself "Thoor Ballylee."[278] (See Figure 9.) It was on the poem's inclusion in *The Cat and the Moon* (Cuala, 1924) that Yeats appended a note where he first referred to his tower with its full name: "These poems were written at Thoor Ballylee in 1922, during the civil war…" (827). In the Cuala book, "Meditations" was immediately preceded by a poem which features a tower in Troy ("Leda and the Swan"), as if the line—the "broken wall, the burning roof and tower" (441)—were a mythical prevision of the tower in Ballylee in the following poem.[279] "Meditations" was followed by "The Gift of Harun Al-Rachid," a narrative poem which covertly acknowledges his wife's contribution to his philosophical search, for which the tower was a prominent symbol.[280] "Leda and the Swan" and "The Gift of Harun Al-Rachid" would both be

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[276] See Yeats's correspondence on 14, 17 and 23 February 1922 (#4070, #4071, #4075) and Kelly 218, 222.

[277] See Yeats's letter #4181 and Kelly 219-22, 24.

[278] *T* 160-61.

[279] Written probably in early September 1923, the poem was first published in *The Dial*, June 1924, *T* xliv.

[280] "Probably composed summer 1923," *T* xliii. The poem was placed in the penultimate position in *The Tower*, preceding "All Souls' Night" and making another pair with it. The poem was included in "The Narrative and Dramatic" section in *Collected Poems* (1933), *T* 669-70.

included in Yeats's parallel philosophical project: *A Vision* (1925), another work of symbolic architecture.

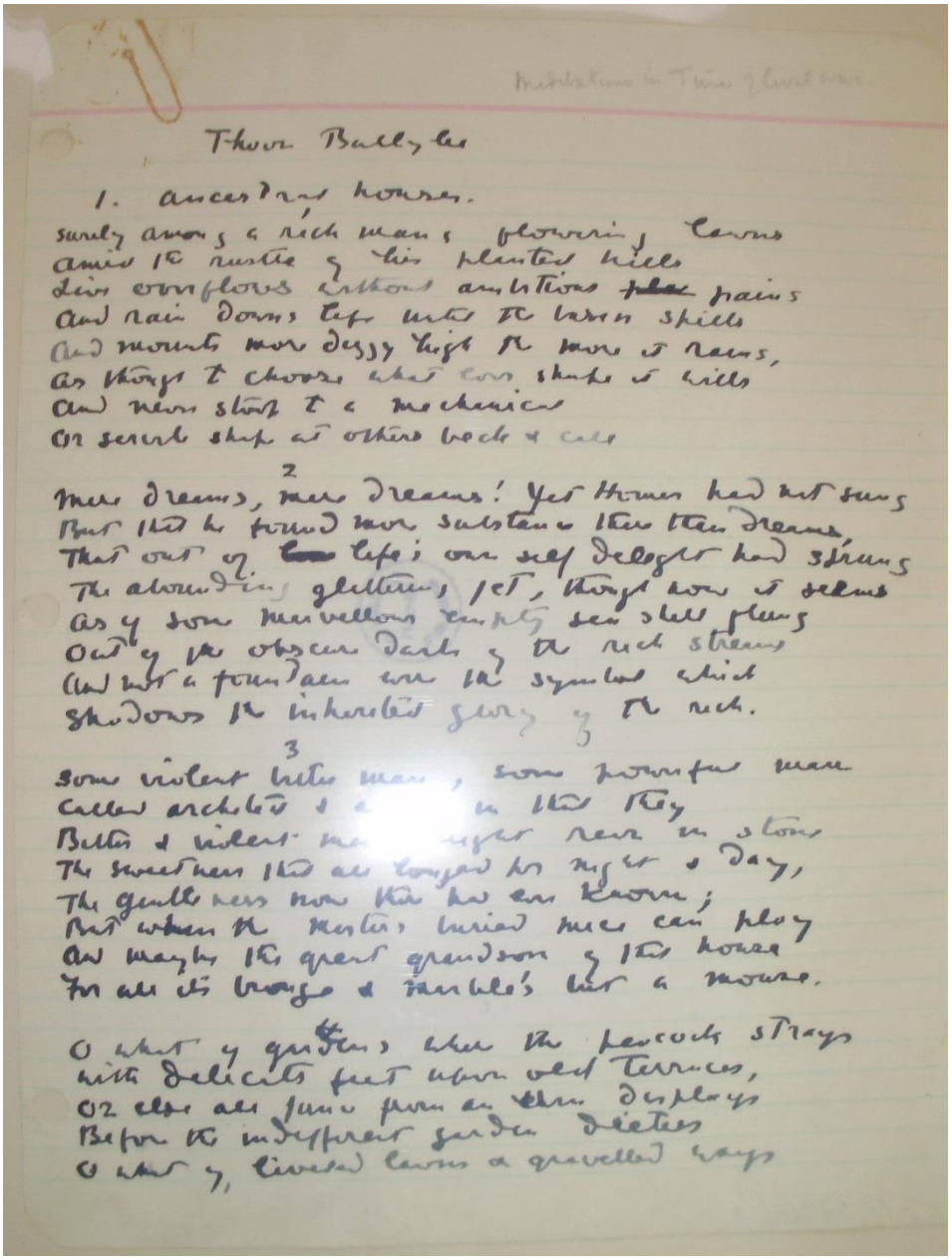

Fig. 9. The first leaf of a nearly fair copy of "Meditations in Time of Civil War," headed "Thoor Ballylee." NLI 13,589 (6). Photograph by author. 24 March 2010. (See *T* 160-61.)

"A Prayer for My Daughter" could well serve as an overture to his Civil War sequence. In "A Prayer" Yeats had dwelt on hatred and love, bitterness and sweetness, against the background of the increasingly violent howling storm between the end of the Great War and the intensification of the guerrilla warfare of the Anglo-Irish War. "A Prayer" had envisioned "a house / Where all's accustomed, ceremonious…," a nest of "innocence and beauty." In fact Yeats's

reading the poem during the Civil War to an American journalist Charles O'Malley and his family at Coole on 6 July 1922—an episode vividly recalled by O'Malley's daughter and quoted by Roy Foster—may have been no coincidence.[281] Yeats was then in the midst of writing "Meditations" and developing the vision of the tower as a stronghold against "intellectual hatred," political violence and anarchy, which he had begun with "A Prayer," now actually seeing, and not imagining, how "the future years had come, / Dancing to a frenzied drum, / Out of the murderous innocence of the sea…" (403).

Yeats's textual construction of his tower progressed dramatically during his longest stay in Ballylee in the summer of 1922. "Meditations" is where "the practical finishing of the place" in his poetry took place.[282] Yeats virtually shows us all around the tower. Unexpectedly, however, the sequence has not been duly recognized as the culmination of his construction work over the years—seven years textually, five years architecturally. Yeats's poetic construction progressed, as before, in parallel with the actual reconstruction of the building. The bedroom, whose completion almost coincided with the outbreak of the Civil War, offered Yeats a place of retreat to meditate on the tower during the political conflict and on the conflict viewed from the tower. The room not only enabled them to "sleep in the Castle" (5 June 1922 #4133) for the first time but served as "also, for the most part [his] study..." (7 June 1922 #4136). The reconstruction of the actual tower had continuously been delayed by the consecutive wars: "We a[re] settled here now & our tower much near[er] finishing so that we have a large bed-room with a fine wooden cealing, but it will be another year so little labour is there to be got even if our money permitted before we shall be complete…." (23 April 1922 #4117).[283]

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[281] *Life2* 216, 706n32. See also *J2* 370.

[282] "We have just had a wire from Rafferty saying that he starts work on Ballylee tomorrow, which should mean the practical finishing of the place…," to Lennox Robinson, 1 February 1922 #4061.

[283] To Olivia Shakespear. Yeats also reported to the same correspondent on the condition of the unfinished room on the top floor: "As yet we have no strangers room mainly because there is so little labour to be had. It will be the room above this, a beautiful room high in the tower. It is ready but for furniture & door…," 7 June 1922 #4135.

The unstable and violent circumstances virtually confined Yeats to Gort during his composition of the sequence.[284] Through writing "Meditations," himself rooted in the tower, Yeats completed founding Thoor Ballylee as his principal poetic site. Apart from "Ancestral Houses" and the visions in the last section, the view of the protagonist in "Meditations" is claustrophobically confined to the inside or the immediate surroundings of the tower, reflecting the circumstances under which the poet was writing during the Civil War, "closed in" his tower, with "no clear fact to be discerned." It was as late as at this stage of the virtual completion of his textual construction that Yeats began to use paratextual notes to anchor his poetry in the place itself, in contrast to earlier prefaces and notes about Michael Robartes and John/Owen Aherne.

In order to offer a close-up account of this crucial stage of his writing in and about the tower, we will now look into the compositional history of "Meditations" before focusing on each component of the sequence and their interrelationship. The many implicit and explicit cross-references between sections reinforce the structure of the poems as a tower complex, as it were—an architectural structure made of seven parts.

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The sequence, headed "Thoor Ballylee" (*T* 160-61) in the nearly fair ink draft, was ultimately given the title "Meditations in Time of Civil War," foregrounding the historical context of the poem. It was in *The Tower* that Yeats dated the sequence "1923," while keeping the reference to "1922" in the note ("… written at Thoor Ballylee in 1922…"). The title and dates anchor the poem in particular time and place. The sequence, however, looks back in history and forward into the future rather than being exclusively focused on the contemporary civil war. It may have partly been due to the fact that at an early stage of his composition Yeats had actually begun the poems on the tower and on

[284] Yeats, for instance, could not go to Dublin on 29 June, for "'There was a bridge destroyed near Mullingar,'" *J1* 365-66.

the Civil War separately. They eventually resulted in a single sequence, with poems which deal with the immediate reality of the war limited to only two of the seven sections (the fifth and the sixth). This may anticipate war poems Yeats outlined in his later 1936 introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935*: "passive suffering is not a theme for poetry" (xxxiv).

When he began "Meditations" Yeats had just finished *The Trembling of the Veil* and had revised his poems and plays for *Later Poems* and *Plays in Prose and Verse*, the first two volumes of Macmillan's collected works."[285] At the end of each preface in these three volumes Yeats inscribed the place name he had decided upon: "W. B. YEATS / Thoor Ballylee, / May 1922."[286] The last two poems in *Later Poems*–"A Meditation in Time of War" and "To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee" (with "Thoor" added to the title)—are printed side by side on facing pages (352-53), unlike in Cuala's *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. The layout helps to make "grey stone" and "Under the old wind-broken tree" evoke the tower in its most bare form, perhaps akin to "When all is ruin once again," mentioned on the opposing page—even though "A Meditation in Time of War" probably predated Yeats's acquisition of the tower and was probably written sometime after 9 November 1914.[287]

The death of John Butler Yeats on 3 February 1922 may well have influenced the meditations on inheritance which run through the sequence, especially Section IV. Having been a "prodigal father," living among his friends in New York and being financially supported by his eldest son, J. B. Yeats left "a vigorous mind" ("My Descendants") as well as some portraits, letters and memoirs. His death came not long after his final refusal to come back to Dublin despite the urgings of Yeats and his sisters.[288] Asking his father's friends John Quinn and Jeanne Robert Foster to send his father's "personal possessions" in New York back to Ireland and dividing them with his siblings as well as

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[285] *The Trembling of the Veil* was "issued to subscribers in October 1922" (Wade 133). *Later Poems* and *Plays in Prose and Verse* were each "published on November 3, 1922" (Wade 134, 136).

[286] "May 1, 1922" in *Plays in Prose and Verse* (Wade 136).

[287] A heavily corrected draft of the poem appears under the journal entry signed and dated "WBY. Nov. 9, 1914" in the so-called "Maud Gonne notebook" (NLI 30,358: the notebook "bound in brown leather, inscribed 'from Maud Gonne / Xmas 1912—' used by WBY for journal entries, miscellaneous notes, and drafts of poems"), *MRD* xvi, 194-95.

[288] See Brenda Maddox, *George's Ghosts* 172-79.

preparing his father's letters and memoirs for publication, Yeats must have been dwelling on inheritance. He told John Quinn "My sister Lilly has a sort of magpie's nest where she hoards family treasures…" (to John Quinn, 7 February 1922 #4067) and informed his sister Susan Mary Yeats (Lilly) that "I asked Mrs Foster some time ago to send all our father's personal properties—books, drawings etc—to you…. Please keep them until we can all meet. I shall want some things for Anne & Michael to inherit…" (14 March 1922 #4090).[289]

Yeats gave an account of his father's death to Lady Gregory on 23 February 1922 (and to Olivia Shakespear on 1 March 1922 #4081):

> He told stories about Samuel Butler & Sarah Pursur, & then said "Remember you have promised me a sitting in the morning" this to Mrs Foster & with that fell asleep, & died in his sleep… (to Lady Gregory #4075).

This episode seems to represent "a vigorous mind" and recalls John Butler's own words which Yeats had quoted from "one of his last letters"—"Death is only an inconvenience and hardly that to a man of 78…" (7 February 1922 #4067). Yeats also explained that his father "ha[d] been so long a mind to [him]" and referred to his letters as "full of vigorous thought" (#4075).

In the same letter to Lady Gregory Yeats also spoke about his new property in Dublin in terms of inheritance: "We have paid for the house by a bank mortgage … so the house will be so much extra estate for Anne or Michael to inherit…" (#4075). In his letter on 29 March 1922 to Jeanne Robert Foster Yeats's acquisition of the "18th century" Merrion Square house and Thoor Ballylee stand out against his father's bohemian life in New York:

> If you ever come to Ireland we shall be able to put you up comfortably, either in the great Tower…or in Dublin where we shall live at 82 Merrion Square from September next - I hope there

[289] In the same letter Yeats also writes about his meeting "an Artist Raeburn Middleton in Glasgow" and the story the man told him of "the first Sligo Middleton—our great grandfather," closing the letter with "You can put this in our book of ancestors. It will delight Michael…," #4090.

> to surround myself with my fathers sketches for my high 18th century rooms walls need much to cover them. (#4106)

The newly acquired bare walls are also in a striking contrast to "great chambers and long galleries, lined / With famous portraits of our ancestors" in the first section in "Meditations" ("Ancestral Houses," 417). These extracts from Yeats's letters in the period immediately following his father's death—and shortly before his composition of "Meditations"—testify how much the idea of inheritance was, naturally, on his mind. The passage about "a vigorous mind" in Section IV ("My Descendants"), though never directly referring to his father, may be read as an implicit tribute to him.

Around 14 February 1922 the Yeatses purchased a Georgian mansion "built in 1740" at 82 Merrion Square in Dublin.[290] The first section of "Meditations" may have partly reflected Yeats's acquisition of the house, an instance of what he called in "Ancestral Houses" "the inherited glory" of the Anglo-Irish. Their moving from Oxford to Dublin was remarkable in that they were now to spend the whole year in Ireland. The idea of returning to Ireland permanently, giving up their house in England, may have prompted Yeats to meditate upon the origins and history of the Anglo-Irish. Moving into the Merrion Square house with the rooms "very high & the mantelpieces beautifully carved" (#4181) in late September 1922, when the Civil War was at "the final & most dreadful stage" (9 October 1922 #4184), Yeats in a letter regretted the lost "crowded social life" (#4181) in such a way as to evoke the "marvellous empty sea-shell" in "Ancestral Houses": "At moments these great stately rooms make me sad for they must have been made for a time when social life was so rich & so copious, and conversation so varied…" (to Lady Gregory 30 September 1922 #4177).

"Meditations" was composed under the special circumstances of the Civil War, when Yeats was based in Ballylee and frequently visiting Coole. Lady Gregory's journals record Yeats's compositional progress on the sequence, providing us with a crucial link between Yeats's biography and its composition.

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[290] Yeats's letter on 4 October 1922 #4181.

According to her record, Yeats began Section I ("Ancestral Houses") while staying at Coole from 8 to 16 June and was still working on it at Ballylee on 21 June (*J1* 363,364). Yeats had closed a letter on 7 June 1922 with a reference to the "houses of the gentry" as victims of "the coarse broom of political violence": "For the moment at any rate all other houses of the gentry [than Coole and Tyrilla] stand empty, sometimes protected by IRA sometimes occupied by irregulars…" (#4135). These circumstances may have inspired him to meditate on the vicissitudes and the "violence" and "bitterness" at the root of those houses.

About ten days later on 2 July Lady Gregory writes that Yeats "went on re-making the poem about Ballylee he had begun to make here. In the stanza with the waterhens, he has made them 'stilted' and some other changes. It will be a fine poem…" (*J1* 368). Interestingly, the solitary waterhen in the published poem ("My House") is in the plural in her account—although with no early drafts of the section preserved we cannot be sure whether it was in the singular from the beginning. Her reference to "the poem about Ballylee he had begun to make here" suggests that Yeats had already read or shown her Section II "My House" before 2 July. She records on 8 July that "he is making a poem about the bees, calling to them to make their honey at Ballylee" (*J1* 373). This would eventually be Section VI "The Stare's Nest by My Window." The poem comprised three stanzas when Yeats inscribed it, dating "July 14 1922," in Lady Gregory's copy of his recently published *Seven Poems and a Fragment* (June 1922).[291] This is the only dated extant draft of "Meditations," few of whose early drafts are preserved, which was probably due to the wartime difficulties. The absence of early drafts and dates of composition for "Meditations" makes Lady Gregory's journal all the more significant in our enquiry. According to her, when Yeats visited Coole on 19 July, he "ha[d] written another stanza to his Ballylee poem" (*J1* 378). This may have been the fourth last stanza of the above "poem about the bees."

Yeats himself writes in his correspondence on 27 July 1922: "I am writing verse, a long poem (long for me) about Ballylee. Four parts of (say) two dozen lines each. I have written three of the parts. I have also written a lyric about the

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[291] Wade 132. *T* xviii, 158-59.

civil war…" (to Olivia Shakespear #4153). The letter shows that at this stage on 27 July Yeats thought of the "long poem … about Ballylee" and "a lyric about the civil war" as separate and the former was planned as a four-part poem. The "lyric about the civil war" was probably the "poem about the bees" mentioned in the 8 July entry in Lady Gregory's journals. It would make Section VI of the published sequence, whose preserved early draft is titled "Civil War" (*T* 156-57).

In his 15 August letter we find Yeats still distinguishing the two subjects—the tower and the civil war—concerning his poems in progress: "… a series of poems about this Tower, & on the civil war at which I look (so remote one is here from all political excitement) as if it were some phenomenon of nature…" (to T. Sturge Moore #4159).[292] The comma after "Tower" makes it ambiguous how separate the poems "about this Tower" and "on the civil war," yet the parallel placement of the "Tower" and "the civil war" seems to be signalling a difference in the relationship between the two groups from that in his 27 July letter quoted above.

On the next day (16 August 1922) Lady Gregory records that Yeats was "still making his poem on Ballylee, he likes connecting it with the Rising, says 'Lyric poetry is such a fragile thing it ought to have its roots in history, or some personal thing'" (*J1* 385). During this longest summer in Ballylee, Lady Gregory read him from her ongoing memoirs, whose title she had decided on by 5 November 1921 (*J1* 307): *Seventy Years*. Yeats commented on the "historical importance" of Lady Gregory's memoirs that would eventually become *Seventy Years* (1974): "It will be a very rich book, with some chapters of historical importance, but all objective, extracts from old letters, diaries and the like…" (to John Quinn 5 June 1922 #4133).[293] She had recorded her reading Yeats the second and third last chapters on 25 June 1922: "I read him my Folklore of the War, and the Rising and he liked it very much, a relief…" (*J1* 364). This means that Yeats had a chance to review the Easter Rising during the time of his writing

[292] There is no comma transcribed after "Tower" in the same letter, *LTSM* 46: "…about this Tower and on the civil war…."

[293] See *Life2* 216-17 for the context of Lady Gregory's publishing her memoirs: "Since … November [1921] she had been occupying Coole as a leaseholder from her unsympathetic daughter-in-law, with full responsibility for its upkeep. Desperate to make money, she was at work on the memoir…. She read it to WBY, who offered criticism which she began 'interjecting into the text, like a Greek chorus'…." See *J1* 307.

"Meditations." It may have possibly contributed to, in Lady Gregory's words, Yeats's "lik[ing] connecting [his poem on Ballylee] with the Rising" and his idea of rooting lyric poetry "in history, or some personal thing" as well as his decision to integrate his poem on Ballylee and the one on the Civil War. Yeats may have possibly been writing Section V at this stage, intending to combine his two, so-far separate, groups of poems. Compared with his uncertainty about his "passion for lyric poetry" as well as about the "merit" of "Thoughts upon the Present State of the World" about a year before (#3900), this comment of Yeats's on lyric poetry and "history, or some personal thing" suggests his confidence in finding a "norm" to measure his verse, as it were, through writing "Meditations" in the tower at Ballylee during the Civil War.

An incident on 19 August 1922 intervened, as Yeats would later write in the note to the poem: "Before they ["Meditations"] were finished the Republicans blew up our 'ancient ridge' one midnight…" (827). Gregory's 20 August entry in her *Journals* records the exchanges Yeats had with one of the Irregular soldiers: "'Are you going to blow up the bridge?' 'Yes'" (*J1* 387). There is preserved an ink draft of a three-stanza poem which deals with the incident on a letter sheet with their new address from late September 1922 ("82, MERRION SQUARE S. / DUBLIN") printed (*T* 154-55). We cannot date this draft, but the letter sheet with the Merrion Square address suggests it was written after their moving into their new house late September. The Irregular soldiers' blowing up of the Ballylee bridge directly connected the Civil War with his tower and this threatened to intrude upon the textual property he named "our 'ancient bridge.'"

This poem would not enter the sequence after all, yet the content of the draft's last three lines ("From the stream s jagged edge / Somebody cries 'good night & thanks' / As though we had given our bridge…," *T* 154-55) would eventually make its way into the notes Yeats would append to the sequence. The

note conveys a nonchalant manner on each side—the soldiers and Yeats—perhaps in accordance with his ideas about the "right way of seeing war": [294]

> They forbade us to leave the house, but were otherwise polite, even saying at last 'Good-night, thank you,' as though we had given them the bridge. (827)

The differences and the shared content between the draft of the poem, the notes and Gregory's journal document the ongoing exchange between poetry and biography. By putting the ancient bridge in quotation marks, Yeats is referring to the textual bridge in "My House" ("An ancient bridge, and a more ancient tower…") in the note. "Before they were finished" highlights that their bridge was blown up during the poem's composition, suggesting its inevitable impact on the sequence in progress. We have little information about the compositional history of the published version of the fifth section, but the fact that the draft headed "V. The Road" is the most corrected of all seven parts (*T* 176-79) in the late ink draft of the whole sequence suggests that this section was the last to be finalised.

It seems likely that Yeats planned to integrate what he had called "a long poem … about Ballylee" and "a lyric about the civil war" into a sequence, by composing—possibly in August before the incident—a poem, which is probably set in the period preceding the blowing up of the bridge and grapples with the contemporary circumstances in which he was writing, as section five to follow his original four-part "poem … about Ballylee." The earlier written "lyric about the civil war" would serve as section six and the enlarged sequence would be closed with an epilogue of prophetic phantasmagoria set upon the top of the tower. The integration of "a long poem…about Ballylee" and "a lyric about the civil war"—though the latter poem (later Section VI) was itself deeply rooted in Thoor Ballylee—was another breakthrough in Yeats's poetics. His multi-

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[294] "… Connaught Rangers just returned from the Boar War who described an incident over and over, and always with loud laughter…. That too may be a right way of seeing war, if war is necessary," *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* xxxv.

functional tower provided a vivid way of incorporating the contemporary war into the sequence.

Yeats's letter from 82 Merrion Square to Olivia Shakespear on 9 October 1922 informs us that the sequence by then had the present title and was probably finished: "I spent the summer correcting proofs & writing a series of poems called 'meditations in time of civil war' which I shall send to the 'mercury'. Now I am busy writing out the system…" (#4184). On 11 November 1922 in his new house in Dublin Yeats read to Lady Gregory Section VII, "his just finished poem," which had been "drawn … from his philosophy, and so from vision" (*J1* 408). On 21 November 1922 the first publication of "Meditations" was being arranged between *The London Mercury* and Yeats's literary agent A. P. Watt (#4214).

Preserved records concerning the composition of each section of the sequence, though limited, suggest that he wrote most of it during his stay in Ballylee (from early April to late September 1922), in the same order as the finished poem, except for Section I, which may have been "written in England in 1921" (*New Commentary* 223), and Section VI, which had been written as a separate poem "on the civil war."

2

I. "Ancestral Houses"

> Some violent bitter man, some powerful man
> Called architect and artist in…

"Ancestral Houses" is distinct from the rest of the sequence, dwelling not on the tower itself, but on the houses of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy and the relationship between architecture and political history. A heavily corrected draft for the present final three lines of the section is preserved, followed by a draft of the first stanza headed by the Roman numeral I (*T* 152-53). This leaf might suggest that the lines above the draft of the first stanza served as a sort of a "subject" for the poem, of the kind Yeats sometimes wrote before composing a poem, and that "Ancestral Houses" developed out of it: "… / O what if all that

most delights mankind / And seems to magnify diminishes / ~~Taking our greatness with our bitterness~~…" (*T* 152-53).

Section I may have originally been "written in England in 1921,"[295] "inspired by Garsington," where the Yeatses stayed on 6 March 1921 and on 16 March the following year, or by an Irish big house.[296] "Ancestral Houses" is the first time architecture of those houses features in Yeats's poetry.[297] Their purchase of the 82 Merrion Square house in Dublin in mid-February 1922 may have influenced this. When Yeats worked upon the poem during his stay at Coole from 8 to 16 June in 1922, as recorded by Lady Gregory, however, Coole must also have contributed to the poem in no small measure. Lady Gregory found Yeats still "going on with the poem he began here [at Coole] 'The rich man's house stands in its flowery lawns'" when she visited Ballylee on 21 June (*J1* 364).

A passage in Yeats's 1909 journals connects one of his poems on Coole to "Ancestral Houses." What seems to be his seminal thoughts about what would be called "life's own self-delight" (l. 11) is to be found in his journal entry dated "August 7 [1909]," written below a draft of a poem later titled "Upon a House shaken by the Land Agitation" (264), his first Coole poem to focus on the house itself in a crisis: "They [life's own values] should have been there before the strain began, before it became necessary to let the work create its values. This house [Coole] has enriched my soul out of measure, because here life moves without restraint through spacious [gracious] forms. Here there has been no compelled labour, no poverty-thwarted impulse."[298] These thoughts about "spacious [gracious] forms" and "life's own values" (*Mem* 226), written more than a decade before, find expression in the first stanza of "Ancestral Houses":

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[295] Jeffares, *A New Commentary* 223.

[296] Kelly 214, 218. *Life2* 217, 707n34. Donald Torchiana, *W. B. Yeats and Georgian Ireland* lists a few houses, attributing the information to "Mrs. W. B. Yeats" (313n47): "… in the last three stanzas he recalls the origins of Coole, the Tudor manor house, Garsington, and, more than likely, a mansion similar to Carton or Castletown near Celbridge in Co. Kildare," 313.

[297] Describing Urbino Yeats uses "their great window" (352) in "The People" (*The Wild Swans at Coole*).

[298] *Mem* 226. The adjective before "forms" is probably "gracious." See the Cornell edition of *"In the Seven Woods" and "The Green Helmet and Other Poems"* xiv, 202-203: "This house has enriched my soul out of measure because here life ~~creates~~ moves without restraint ~~her own fruit & flower~~ through gracious forms."

"Life overflows without ambitions pains… / … never stoop to a mechanical, / Or servile shape, at others' beck and call…."[299] Lady Gregory's status at Coole since November 1921 as a "leaseholder from her unsympathetic daughter-in-law"[300] may have underlain the passage about "mice" as a manifest sign of degradation in the third stanza: "But when the master's buried mice can play…." (418).[301] "Ancestral Houses," in this respect, is a sequel to "Upon a House shaken by the Land Agitation," which Yeats had composed "on hearing the results of reduction of rent made by the courts" in 1909.[302]

"Ancestral Houses" begins with the ideal images of life that "overflows without ambitious pains" and "mounts more dizzy high the more it rains" and of the "abounding glittering jet" that "had sprung" "out of life's own self-delight," which are also shared by "A Prayer for My Daughter" in its images such as the "self-delighting" soul and the "magnanimities of sound" of the daughter's voice.[303] As if it were in part a disillusioning sequel to "A Prayer," however, "Ancestral Houses" exposes the "violence" and "bitterness" at the foundation of the sweetness "rear[ed] in stone." The third stanza tells how the building of such houses began when "Some violent bitter man, some powerful man / Called architect and artist in…." The house at Coole was one of those built in late eighteenth century after the purchase of the estate by a Robert Gregory. The "rich man's flowering lawns" and "his planted hills" evoke the land he was found "improving with great spirit" and "making plantations," as recorded by Arthur Young in *A Tour of Ireland* (1780).[304]

The final two stanzas catalogue the ancestral gardens and houses, posing a question about the inextricability of the greatness and violence or bitterness. In an early draft Yeats wrote: "Because our greatness is our bitterness" (*T* 152-53).

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[299] 417, 417n. The comma after "mechanical" in line seven was deleted in *The Collected Poems* (1933).

[300] *Life II* 217.

[301] See Torchiana 313: "The third stanza contains a veiled glance at Coole…."

[302] *Mem* 226.

[303] Yeats had used a similar image of a fountain in his 1901 essay on Shakespeare's historical plays, concerning the "lyricism" of Richard II in contrast to "utilitarianism": "… that lyricism which rose out of Richard's mind like the jet of a fountain to fall again where it had risen…," *E&I* 102, 108. See Albright, *Poems* 643.

[304] See Colin Smythe, *A Guide to Coole Park* 37-42, including a quotation from *A Tour of Ireland*.

This is the second written *ottava rima* poem of Yeats's, following the first section of "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen."[305] Yeats would later dwell on Coole again in *ottava rima* as we will see. The rise and fall of the forms created by the Anglo-Irish are epitomized in this poem about architecture:

> What if the glory of escutcheoned doors,
> And buildings that a haughtier age designed,
> The pacing to and fro on polished floors
> Amid great chambers and long galleries, lined
> With famous portraits of our ancestors;
> What if those things the greatest of mankind
> Consider most to magnify, or to bless,
> But take our greatness with our bitterness? (418)

The uprooting precariousness latent in this "great" (repeated in the stanza) ancestral architecture represented in *ottava rima* is conveyed by the stanza's being composed of one-sentence question which hinges on "But" in the last line. The juxtaposition of the ancestral houses and the "more ancient tower" which Yeats tried describing in his unfinished novel finally surfaced in this personal and historical sequence.[306]

II. "My House"

An ancient bridge, and a more ancient tower…

"Ancestral Houses," which deals with collective heritage of the Anglo-Irish, contains no first-person pronouns besides the first-person plural possessive "our" in the refrain.[307] The following "My House," with its assertive first-person

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[305] See Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 290 for the list of Yeats's *ottava rima* poems.

[306] The "1900 Version" of *The Speckled Bird* 115: "It is one of those square houses, without any architectural quality, which the Irish gentry built so plentifully when they began, during the first half of the eighteenth century, to weary of the old Norman towers in which they had lived for centuries. It was built, like so many others, against the old tower…."

[307] Those two first-person pronouns "?my" and "I" found in the transcript of the early draft of the first stanza may both actually read "it," *T* 152-53.

singular possessive "My" prominent in the title, stands out against this background. Setting "My House" against "Ancestral Houses," Yeats highlights the unique discipline of the house and its founders in the face of "adversity." Lady Gregory's comments during its composition suggests that she found the poem concerned with the move "from large estates to small" because of "virtue."[308] The contrasts are striking, for instance, between the image of "slippered Contemplation" (Section I, 418) and that of the "man-at-arms" (Section II, 420) or between "levelled lawns and gravelled ways" (Section I, 418) and "stony ground" (Section II, 419). Resurrecting the "man-at-arms" as a predecessor, the third stanza subliminally refers us back to the contemporary Civil War that surrounds the poet, giving him an image of a lone warrior singlehandedly fighting against "adversity"—of which the Civil War is a part.

"My House," as Seamus Heaney notes, begins with "a pile-up of nouns" which build a room of a stanza "like builder's blocks in a course of stonework … without the benefit of mortar"[309] of verbs and conjunctions. The noun-phrase construction progresses until the first three lines of the second stanza, introducing eight items in the first stanza and five in the second. The accumulation in the opening line of the key adjective "ancient," which modifies the tower for the first time since the elegy for Robert Gregory ("Beside a fire of turf in th' ancient tower…"), immediately sets the tower against "modern gothic" (#4117) as well as against the Big Houses in "Ancestral Houses"[310]:

> An ancient bridge, and a more ancient tower,
> A farmhouse that is sheltered by its wall,
> An acre of stony ground,
> Where the symbolic rose can break in flower,
> Old ragged elms, old thorns innumerable,
> The sound of the rain or sound
> Of every wind that blows;

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[308] "I told him [Yeats] he would be employed by the landowners who are moving from large estates to small to write poems showing they did it from virtue and not from necessity," *J1* 368.

[309] Heaney, *Place of Writing* 26.

[310] Yeats used the adjective once for Coole before his tower project in the closing rhyme of *Responsibilities*: "under that ancient roof / A sterner conscience and a friendlier home…" (321).

The stilted water-hen
Crossing stream again
Scared by the splashing of a dozen cows;

A winding stair, a chamber arched with stone,
A grey stone fireplace with an open hearth,
A candle and written page…. (419)

The "wind" was beginning to affect the tower at the close of the Robert Gregory elegy ("how bitter is that wind / That shakes the shutter…") and the raging storm was "scream[ing] upon the tower" in "A Prayer," allowing the architecture to reacquire its original function of a fortress, as we have seen. "The sound of the rain or sound / Of every wind that blows" in "My House" here reflects the fact that the tower is exposed to the elements, as Yeats wrote shortly after arriving in Ballylee that spring ("Here we are in a howling storm & have to keep emmense fires of turf & logs…," 19 April 1922 #4116), as well as suggesting the tower's susceptibility to the world around.

The stanzaic form of "My House" is in marked contrast to *ottava rima* of "Ancestral Houses," making "My House" stand out in the sequence and manifesting the poet's agency which can "choose whatever shape it wills" ("Ancestral Houses") as it were. In the ten-line "labyrinthine" stanza used in "My House," which Helen Vendler points out Yeats had invented for "All Soul's Night" and also used in Parts II and III of "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," the lines alternating between pentameters and trimeters "[g]raphically" compose a stanza form which may suggest "a double gyre."[311] The form Yeats created to represent the state of being "Wound in mind's wandering / As mummies in the mummy-cloth are wound" (474) in 1920 accommodated historical gyres in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" and founded the tower, through which the stair winds, in his poetic property in "My House."

The uneven shape of the stanza may also correspond to the "ragged elms" and "thorns innumerable" outside, which are in sharp contrast to the "planted

[311] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 69-72.

hills" and "levelled lawns" in "Ancestral Houses." The flora and fauna in each of the first two poems in the sequence represent the characteristics of each type of house respectively. The "flowering lawns," "levelled lawns," "planted hills," "the peacock [which] strays / With delicate feet" and also "mice" in "Ancestral Houses" are in contrast to "the symbolic rose," "Old ragged elms," "old thorns innumerable," "The stilted water-hen," "a dozen cows" and "a score of horse" in the past in "My House."

The laying of the outside components of the property in noun phrases in the first stanza of "My House" is comparable to the corresponding enumeration in "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" ("the old storm-broken trees…," "The tower…" and "The ford…"). The listing of "all things" which "Were loved by him" in the elegy, with the tower resting upon the passive "set" ("The tower set on the stream's edge…"), reflected the state of the property when Yeats acquired it in 1917. In "My House," however, as the possessive pronoun in the title claims, he sets out each constituent part of the property in the unique stanza of his own invention. "My House" introduces us to his own house, transformed from the property to which the poet first took his bride in the epithalamic elegy. In the actual tower, meanwhile, Yeats "called … in" (418) carpenters to work upon it during this stay in 1922.[312]

With the prime role of "My House" being founding his house, the perspectives of the poem, especially in the first and the last stanzas, are focused on the substructure or the "bottom" in accordance with the etymology of the word "found": the "stony ground" and "stream" in the first stanza; "here" and "this tumultuous spot" in the last stanza. The first version of the poem's published text comprised four stanzas, with the original third stanza—deleted on the poem's inclusion in *The Tower*—probing deep underground:

> The river rises, and it sinks again;
> One hears the rumble of it far below
> Under its rocky hole.

[312] See for instance Yeats's letter on 10 May 1922 (#4122): "only spare room is at the moment a carpenters shop & will be so for some time to come as all manner of gates and doors are being made."

> What Median, Persian, Babylonian,
> In reverie, or in vision, saw
> Symbols of the soul,
> Mind from mind has caught:
> The subterranean streams,
> Tower where a candle gleams,
> A suffering passion and a labouring thought?
> (420n)

The representation of the "soul" as the river rumbling "far below / Under its rocky hole" that "rises" and "sinks again," paraphrased as "A suffering passion" in the last line, is in a clear contrast to that of life to "[overflow] without ambitious pains" or that of "life's own self-delight" out of which "[springs] / The abounding glittering jet" in the first poem of the sequence. This was the second time that Yeats tried to integrate the underground part into the landscape of the tower in his poetry. As we have seen in the first chapter, Yeats had included in the picture of his tower "the river bubbling up / From subterranean caverns, images… / … the first or natural wisdom…"as late as in a heavily revised fair copy of "The Phases of the Moon" (*WSC* 354-55).[313] Yeats would finally come back to the substructure of the place for the last time in "Coole and Ballylee, 1931," as we will see in chapter five.

To the readers of "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" and other earlier tower-related poems discussed in previous chapters, the site of the tower may seem already too familiar. Yet, it is in "My House" that the tower is first represented by the synecdoche of a "wall"—a feature which plays a central role in the sixth poem in the sequence—and that its relationship with the "farmhouse" is included in the picture: "A farmhouse that is sheltered by its wall…." It is also in this poem that the garden enters his textual property: "An acre of stony ground, / Where the symbolic rose can break in flower." This is far removed from the domestic "flowers & vegetables" mentioned in his correspondence when he writes that George "is planting … in great abundance in our acre of land"

[313] See also *WSC* 316-17, 324-25.

([undated] May 1922 #4118) or refers to "[George's] garden where there are roses" that continues to keep her busy (27 July 1922 #4152). The land, on the other hand, was actually "stony," as Yeats reports in his correspondence: "The stone for the cottage has been digged out of our garden…" (5 June 1922 #4133). When finalising the contract with the Congested Districts Board in March 1917, Yeats had called the grounds as "a barren acre."[314]

The word "symbolic," intruding into the seemingly natural description of the tower and its surroundings, foregrounds the textuality of the place.[315] The "symbolic rose" evokes Yeats's esoteric studies, embodied, for instance, in Sturge Moore's rose-patterned cover design for *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1918), as well as the nationalistic symbol of the rose in his early poetry such as "To the Rose upon the Rood of Time" (100-101), "To Ireland in the Coming Times" (137-39) and "The Secret Rose" (169-70). The violence implied in "break in flower" also recalls "'… shake the blossom from the bud / To be the garden's pride…'" in one of his Easter poems "The Rose Tree" (396). The relationship between the tower and flower would be elaborated in the fourth poem of the sequence.

The "elms" were first introduced in "A Prayer for My Daughter" ("In the elms above the flooded stream") and "thorns" in "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" ("Galway rock and thorn"). Yeats described his circumstances on 7 June 1922, the day before he visited Coole and probably began the sequence:

> In spite of Irish disturbance which has been bad enough within few miles of us, we are in tolerable tranquillity. … From my window I can see river banks fringed now with elm, now with whitethorn, and beyond that rocks and whitethorn everywhere." (to H. P. Grierson #4136)

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[314] Yeats to Lady Gregory, 2 March [1917] #3174: "I will take it [Ballylee] with the road a cross if necessary … I think it should be much less as I buy in that case a barren acre (lessened by a public road) & a heap of stones of no use but to myself."

[315] Paul de Man cites this as an instance of the "explicit" type of Yeats's various techniques for the "dual role of the emblem image," *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* 194: "he openly tells us that a natural object in a landscape is *also* to be read emblematically…."

This becomes "Old ragged elms, old thorns innumerable" in the poem. The "whitethorn" or "May flower" in his letters[316] becomes "old thorns" when it enters the permanent picture of his poetic tower, deprived of the flower and its colour "white"—the colour "ubiquitous in his early poetry."[317] The passage about "Galway rock and thorn" in the elegy for Robert Gregory seems to be relevant to Yeats's picture of the tower in "My House" embodying "that stern colour and that delicate line / That are our secret discipline / Wherein the gazing heart doubles her might…" (326).

A semi-colon finally appears in the seventh line in the first stanza of "My House," yet follows another noun phrase, a long one which contains creatures. It is the third time that a solitary "water-hen" appears or is mentioned around the tower, after "The water-hen must change her ground…" ("In Memory of Major Robert Gregory") and "A rat or water-hen / Splashed…" ("The Phases of the Moon"): "The stilted water-hen / Crossing stream again / Scared by…." The word "again" may itself signal its recurrence. The adjective "stilted," which Yeats added when he revised the draft, according to Lady Gregory (*J1* 368), recalls the modifier "long-legged" in "Easter, 1916" as well as his reference to "stilts" in his conversation about floods in Ballylee with the British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith at the end of November 1916: "I think I may manage with stilts below…" (*J1* 17). The water-hen, a familiar figure around the tower, also provides the landscape with the sense of motion of living "minute by minute" (393). It originally "plunged in stream again" until it was revised to "Crossing stream again" in *The Tower*. The revision may have corresponded to the deletion of the original third stanza about the subterranean streams from the poem, both keeping the focus on the water above ground.

Essential components continue to be accumulated in the form of noun phrases until the first three lines in the second stanza where the interior of the tower is portrayed:

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[316] "… the country all white with the May flower full of beauty" (to Olivia Shakespear, 7 June 1922 #4135); "… out of doors with the hawthorn all in blossom all along the river banks everything is so beautiful that wherever else one goes it is to leave beauty behind one" (to John Quinn, 5 June 1922 #4133).

[317] Terence Brown, "Yeats and the Colours of Poetry," *Yeats Annual 18*, 62.

A winding stair, a chamber arched with stone,
A grey stone fireplace with an open hearth,
A candle and written page…. (419)

We are led up the winding stair and ushered into a chamber. It was probably modelled on the room he was using as "my bedroom which is also, for the most part my study" (7 June 1922 #4136) at this stage: "I am writing in a great vaulted room near a fire of turf & logs" (7 April 1922 #4113). The letter contains details about the actual room "on the first floor of the Tower," where "is an open fire turf, and a great elm wood bed made with great skill by a neighbouring carpenter, but designed by that late drunken genius Scott; and over my head is a wooden ceiling made according to his design" (to H. P. Grierson, 7 June 1922 #4136). The "great elm wood bed" and the "wooden ceiling" did not enter Yeats's poetic stone tower. On the same day Yeats reported to another correspondent how it felt to be upstairs in the tower: "Stone stairs to my surprise are the most silent of all stairs & sitting as [I] am now up stairs in the Tower I have a sense of solitude & silence" (to Olivia Shakespear 7 June [1922] #4135). The poem sets the scene of writing in the tower, as the letters do.

In "Meditations" Yeats is constructing the ancient architecture as "Befitting emblems of adversity," with the austere aesthetic sense which is exemplified by his naming the place "Thoor Ballylee." It is notable that the key adjective "great" Yeats used in his correspondence about the tower (and also the Merrion Square house) as in "the great Tower" (29 March 1922 #4106) never modifies his tower in poetry. It is only in "Ancestral Houses" that the word "great" is used: "our greatness," "Amid great chambers" and "the greatest of mankind." Yeats would also speak of "great rooms" later in "Coole and Ballylee, 1931," but never used the adjective about his tower.

Yeats also keeps the use of the word "tower" itself to a minimum in the sequence as well as in his previous tower-oriented poems. The word appears twice in the original published version of "My House" (419-20) and once in the present version. In the other sections "tower" occurs once in Section IV "My Descendants" (423) and VII "I see Phantoms..." (425). It does not appear in Section VI "The Stare's Nest by My Window," where the crevices in the wall synecdochically represent the architectural condition of the entire building. By

contrast, in the later "Blood and the Moon," the word "tower" would be repeated, as we will see in the final chapter.

"A candle and written page" signal a link with the place as we know it from "Ego Dominus Tuus" ("the lamp / Burning alone beside an open book…") and "The Phases of the Moon" ("the candle-light / From the far tower"; "sleepless candle and laborious pen…"). The "written page" also recalls the "half-written page" and the "laborious life" in the third section of "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," which Lucy McDiarmid calls the "'chamber arched with stone' … in its negative form," composed a year before "Meditations" in the same ten-line stanzas.[318] Compared with the "half-written page," the "written page" in "My House" suggests that the tower has now mostly been written as well as his parallel project of philosophical search through automatic writing. After writing "Meditations," Yeats was "busy writing out the system" (#4184).[319] About a year later on 7 September 1923 Yeats would send the publisher Werner Laurie the first instalment of his draft of *A Vision* (1925)—"Such wisdom of life, result of much toil & concentration as has been granted me, that part of me that is a creative mystic…" (#4364)—which was eventually to be "privately printed" and "issued to subscribers" on 15 January 1926 (Wade 149). Physical architecture ("a chamber arched with stone") and philosophical phantasmagoria ("*Il Penseroso's* Platonist toiled on / In some like chamber, shadowing forth / How the daemonic rage / Imagined everything…") come together to construct Yeats's chamber in the middle stanza of "My House," corresponding to the room's central position in the tower.

The only colour named in "My House" is "grey" ("grey stone fireplace"), while the "rose" may subliminally suggest the colour, even though it is "symbolic," and stand out against the monochrome background. In contrast to his using Pre-Raphaelite brilliant colours in early poetry and prose, concerning Aengus's tower of glass, for instance, Yeats's tower is predominantly composed

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[318] Lucy McDiarmid, "Yeats and the Lettered Page," reprinted in *Yeats's Poetry, Drama, and Prose*, ed. James Pethica 377.

[319] "… getting a 'Book A' written that can be typed & shown to interested persons & talked over" (to Olivia Shakespear, 9 October 1922 #4184).

of "stern colour" (326).[320] The absence of colours other than "grey" in his textual tower stands out when we compare it with the actual tower. The Yeatses used vivid colours for the interior of their stone tower probably taken from the "colour symbolism" of the Golden Dawn and other sources[321]—from "blue & black & gold" in which "George [was] painting the bed-room ceiling" (May 1922 #4118) to the "brilliant red" of the tower's window frames which Lady Gregory recorded in her 9 September 1922 journal entry:

> Yeats asks me if I like the brilliant red of the window frames in the old castle of Ballylee. I say I don't much like them but think they will be better when they fade. He is troubled and gives me all the reasons why they are the only colour that is right with the old stones … [he says] that the bright red was his idea, [George] wanted bright blue.[322]

Though neither red nor blue figures in the poem, it is clear that the real building and its textual mirror are designed with comparable attention to detail.

Although the order of poems, with "My House" immediately following "Ancestral Houses," may suggest at first glance that "My House" is to be introduced as a property directly inherited from "Ancestral Houses," "My House" announces its own lineage.[323] In the second stanza the poet names his intellectual predecessor ("*Il Penseroso*'s Platonist toiled on / In some like chamber… / Benighted travellers… / Have seen his midnight candle glimmering," 419-20), confirming the same philosophical lineage laid out earlier in "The Phases of the Moon"—though the setting in Milton's poem itself is effectively

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[320] See Terence Brown, *Yeats Annual* 18, 66: "his own mature poetic, when form would not be 'half lost in pattern'… in a poetry of markedly limited colouration."

[321] Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* 295, 660n6.

[322] *J1* 392. See Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* 3: "Willy had insisted on bright red for the castle window frames and shutters; though George preferred blue (like the cottage windows), they later compromised on green." Three years before on 16 July 1919, a man was "painting the [cottage] windows a brilliant blue," while George was sewing "an orange curtain," as Yeats wrote to Ezra Pound (#3633). See *Life2* 213, 706n24 for the summary of the tower's interior.

[323] See Daniel Harris, *Yeats: Coole Park and Ballylee* 170-71 for his argument that "in a crucial paradox, [the] autonomous creation [of the tower in "My House"] is derivative. … The images the speaker names [in the first two stanzas of 'My House'] all derive from the landscape of 'Ancestral Houses'…. No manipulation of imagery could better illustrate the speaker's appropriation of the aristocratic tradition."

only in the optative ("Or let my Lamp at midnight hour, / Be seen in som high lonely Towr, / Where I may…"). The intertextual "lonely light" "From the far tower where Milton's Platonist / Sat late…" (373) and "that Samuel Palmer engraved," which foregrounds "a scene of work" and toil, is among the symbolic building blocks of the tower in "My House."[324]

In contrast to the second stanza which introduces us into the tower's internal space—sheltered by the stone chamber, set out for the poet's work of "daemonic rage"—the present third stanza shows the tower exposed to historical changes. "A man-at-arms," a former founder of the tower, is evoked in the first half of it, bringing back memories of the place in time of "long wars and sudden night alarms"—a fitting historical background to the poet's current writing circumstances. The place the two founders share—"here"—is designated as "this tumultuous spot." The deictics "here" and "this" combine the "[t]wo men" who lived in the building while the adjective "tumultuous" combines different historical moments in which the place was a stage of violence:

> Two men have founded here. A man-at-arms
> Gathered a score of horse and spent his days
> In this tumultuous spot,
> Where through long wars and sudden night alarms
> His dwindling score and he seemed castaways
> Forgetting and forgot…. (420)

The poet "founded here," not by inheritance, but by deliberate acquisition. Except for "My" in the title, it is only in the fourth last line that the pronoun "I" appears in this section of the sequence, followed immediately by "me" and "My":

> And I, that after me
> My bodily heirs may find,

[324] See Lucy McDiarmid's comments on "My House" in terms of "the *topos* of poems about the scene and materials of their own composition": "In this version of the *topos* Yeats emphasizes not a finished product, not a specific book or poems, but a scene of work," "Yeats and the Lettered Page," *Yeats's Poetry, Drama, and Prose*, ed. James Pethica 374, 375.

To exalt a lonely mind,
Befitting emblems of adversity. (420)

The poet's association of his house with "Befitting emblems of adversity" "[t]o exalt a lonely mind" may be understood in terms of the "conviction" expressed in *Four Years* (1921) about the force of an "image, or bundle of related images," which is "symbolical or evocative of" "the greatest obstacle" (in this case called "adversity") to "[rouse] the will to full intensity."[325] No direct reference to the contemporary Civil War is made in this section, yet the reference to "this tumultuous spot" and "long wars and sudden night alarms" subliminally captures the speaker's situation, while letting us view the tower in a historical perspective. The vicissitudes of the first founder's life overlap with those of the second in the word "adversity." The predecessor's "dwindling" fortune prefigures that of the second founder's "bodily heirs." The combination of the philosophical quest in the second stanza and the sense of the warrior culture in the third prepares us for "Sato's gift"—a Japanese sword as ancient as the tower—in the next section.

III. "My Table"

Two heavy trestles, and a board
Where Sato's gift, a changeless sword,
By pen and paper lies…

In contrast to "Ancestral Houses" which is written in five *ottava rima* stanzas and dwells on the impermanence of "the inherited glory of the rich," the third section "My Table," written in one long stanza of thirty two lines, as if representing the "board" of the table itself, enquires into the inheritance of "a changeless work of art" that is only conceived by "an aching heart."[326] The

[325] "… nations, races, and individual men are unified by an image, or bundle of related images, symbolical or evocative of the state of mind which is … the most difficult to that man, race, or nation; because only the greatest obstacle that can be contemplated without despair rouses the will to full intensity," *Au (CW3)* 167.

[326] See Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 388n20: "written in the same strange measure as 'Demonn and Beast' (4-4-3-3, *aabb*), breaks the pattern of resemblance to 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen.' The 32 lines of Part III appear as one unbroken block."

relationship between "a changeless work of art" and "an aching heart" resonate with that between a "suffering passion" and "a labouring thought" in the original third stanza of "My House."

"Sato's gift" is based on the Japanese five-hundred-year-old ceremonial sword brought to Yeats by Junzo Sato, a Japanese diplomat working in Oregon, during Yeats's American lecture tour in 1920.[327] The sword seems to have been admitted into Yeats's symbolic tower as yet another "norm" like that invoked in "A Prayer on going into my House" where he says "what the great and passionate have used / Throughout so many varying centuries / We take it for the norm" (371). The sword represents a work of art which "adore[s]" "[s]oul's beauty" and emulates the "soul's unchanging look," having derived from a warrior culture that was also a courtly one of "custom and ceremony."

"Sato's house" contrasts with "Ancestral Houses" and also with "My House," by offering an alternative image of inheritance and continuity: "In Sato's house, / Curved like new moon, moon-luminous, / It lay five hundred years…." The "inherited glory of the rich" in "Ancestral Houses" may "now" only be "[s]hadow[ed]" by "some marvellous empty sea-shell," but "My Table" focuses on the "inheritor":

> …the most rich inheritor,
> Knowing that none could pass Heaven's door
> That loved inferior art,
> Had such an aching heart…. (422)

The sequence moves on in the next section to the poet's meditations upon himself as "the most rich inheritor."

IV. "My Descendants"

These stones remain their monument and mine…

[327] See Oshima, *W. B. Yeats and Japan* 120-23.

The poet in "My Descendants," in contrast to the introductory rhyme to *Responsibilities* ("nothing but a book, / Nothing but that to prove your [old fathers'] blood and mine"), celebrates the establishment of the tower he has restored, prophesying it will "remain their [his friend and wife] monument and mine."[328] The *ottava rima* stanzas used in "Ancestral Houses" return in "My Descendants," where the poet dwells on inheritance in his own house, focusing on the past, the future and the present in each stanza respectively. What he has inherited from his ancestors and has to leave behind to his descendants is, he says, "a vigorous mind," which, however, is not a property that is to be easily passed down from generation to generation.

The first stanza centres around the inherited "vigorous mind" and may have partly been inspired by the recent death of Yeats's father in early February that year 1922. We may hear in "a vigorous mind" echoes of Yeats's comments on his father as being a "mind" to him and on his father's letters as "full of vigorous thought" (#4075) as seen earlier. As if simulating its inheritance, "a vigorous mind" is repeated in "As vigorous of mind": [329]

> Having inherited a vigorous mind
> From my old fathers, I must nourish dreams
> And leave a woman and a man behind
> As vigorous of mind, and yet it seems
> Life scarce can cast a fragrance on the wind,
> Scarce spread a glory to the morning beams,
> But the torn petals strew the garden plot;
> And there's but common greenness after that….
>
> (422)[330]

A passage in John Eglinton's article "Dublin Letter" in the *Dial*, February 1922, a partial obituary for John Butler Yeats, may be recalled implicitly here: "It is

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[328] Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* 295: "… celebrating his good fortune."

[329] Yeats described his daughter and son as "vigorous" in the following year (29 August 1923 # 4362): I have two vigerous & pretty children." See also #4615.

[330] The comma was added in the second line in the quotation when *The Tower* was revised and reprinted in London in 1929.

hard to see how an Ireland in which Sin Fein ideals have triumphed will continue to produce men of the type of Mr Yeats's remarkable father…."[331] Writing to John Quinn on 5 June 1922, around the time when the first proof sheets of his father's memoirs were being prepared at Cuala, Yeats included his father in his list of the people whose lives were to be remembered through their memoirs by posterity: "Hyde, Russell, Lady Gregory, myself, my father, will all be vivid to young Irish students a generation hence because of the memoirs we are writing now."[332] The "vigorous mind," which is compared to "a fragrance," "a glory," "petals" and "the flower" as something hard to be inherited, is set against the tower, which the poet prophesies will endure "whatever flourish and decline" as their "monument."

The rhetorical question "what if …"—corresponding to the repetition in the last two stanzas of "Ancestral Houses" which posed the fundamental question of violence at the root of the history of the Anglo-Irish—is immediately answered here with the prospect of the replacement of "this stark tower" with "a roofless ruin," perhaps slightly anticipating "The broken wall, the burning roof and tower…" (441) to be composed in the following September in 1923.[333] The ensuing curse upon the very tower he has just restored paradoxically shows the builder's pride:

> And what if my descendants lose the flower
> Through natural declension of the soul…
> May this laborious stair and this stark tower
> Become a roofless ruin that the owl
> May build in the cracked masonry…. (423)

As for the actual restoration of the building, the Yeatses were still waiting for the roofing of the tower in the spring of 1922: "The upper floors are concreted so we

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[331] Quoted in *Life2* 212.

[332] #4133. "… my father's memoirs; not quite all that he wrote but all that he finished" (#4133) was published as *Early Memories* in 1923. Gifford Lewis, *The Yeats Sisters and the Cuala* 191.

[333] *T* 328-29, 332-33.

can wait two or three weeks for our roof…" (1 March 1922 #4082).[334] The phrase "roof the tower" began to occur repeatedly in Yeats's correspondence right after he obtained the castle which was "roofless." It would not have been difficult for Yeats, who had initially found the tower roofless, to foresee its "[b]ecom[ing] a roofless ruin" "once again" ("To be Carved").[335]

The final lines celebrate Yeats's tower enterprise as a "monument" itself. Comparable to the six-line inscription poem "To be Carved on a Stone at (Thoor) Ballylee," the closing monument-making six lines of "My Descendants" record the poet's agency: "… I, that count… / Seeing… / …chose… / … decked and altered… / … know…mine." Yeats names "love" and "friendship"—in antithesis to "violence" and "bitterness" in "Ancestral Houses"—as the origins of the "house" which he who is "prosperous"—unlike those that "Prosper but little," being "choked with hate," in "A Prayer for My Daughter"—"chose," "decked" and "altered." Indeed, Yeats architecturally "decked" Ballylee Castle which he had first found roofless and floorless and "altered" it with his poetic agency into the "Thoor Ballylee" of *The Tower*:

> And I, that count myself most prosperous,
> Seeing that love and friendship are enough,
> For an old neighbour's friendship chose the house
> And decked and altered it for a girl's love,
> And know whatever flourish and decline
> These stones remain their monument and mine.
>
> (423)

George's contribution to Yeats's material and symbolic investment in the tower possibly underlies the phrase "a girl's love," which may suggest not only her love for Yeats but for Ballylee. In the domestic sphere of the actual restoration,

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[334] The "timbers of roof" were "to be in place" and in April "a slater" was to come "from England to put on the thick ancient-looking slates…," #4082.

[335] Virginia Moore records George's comment in *Unicorn* 282, first published in 1952 (which was before the tower's later restoration in 1965): "Today the Norman tower at Ballylee is a barn for cattle and a rallying place for cows. ('That's the way we found it,' said Mrs. Yeats when I reported the condition. 'It's come full cycle.')." Quoted in Hanley and Miller, *Thoor Ballylee* 26.

decking and altering the tower owed in no small measure to his wife.[336] Her contribution in the philosophical sphere through automatic writing, which has been well documented, should also be recognised in connection with his tower project.[337] George's symbolic references to the tower, including a few drawings, in her automatic script, some of which we have noted in chapter one, possibly inspired and encouraged Yeats to reinforce the link between his spiritual enquiry and the tower.[338] Her "pin[ing]" for Ballylee probably propelled them to brave the danger of returning to Ireland in the midst of uncertainty finally in the spring of 1922, which was not possible in the previous year. This return indeed allowed Yeats to construct this monumental sequence.[339]

"These stones" in the last line which recapitulates the other deictic references to the tower ("this laborious stair" and "this stark tower") fortifies itself as a "monument" by being capable of denoting self-referentially the poetic text and also to the actual stone tower. As Shakespeare's sonnet 55 claims and also proves with "this pow'rful rhyme," there is no doubt about the "superiority of writing as a monument" over "marble" or any stone.[340] Yeats fortifies the architecture of his poetic monument with "stones" constructed in poetry, which, however, may not only "survive" but also be strengthened by the "material" stones of Ballylee.

The poet prophesies that the symbolic property of his tower will endure "whatever flourish and decline" and "remain[s] their monument and mine." This is the sole instance of Yeats's calling his tower a "monument" in his poetry,

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[336] See for instance Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* 167: "Within weeks of marriage…even before she visited Ireland George had taken possession of arrangements for the restoration of Ballylee (and it appears paid for most of it). Very soon [Ballylee] replaced even Italy as her ideal goal…. By November Georgie was in regular correspondence with the local builder, Michael Rafferty of Glenbrack, Gort…."

[337] See for Yeats's materials for *A Vision*, *YVP1-4*, *MYV1,2*. See also Brenda Maddox, *George's Ghosts*. Yeats would acknowledge George's role in his covert poetic tribute to her, "The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid," to be first published in 1924, and explicitly in *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (Cuala 1929), to be later included in the second edition of *A Vision* in 1937 (Wade 191).

[338] Passages from the automatic script on 28 and 31 October 1918, 3 May and 15 September 1919 (*VYP2* 102, 108, 279, 427) are used as epigraphs in Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* 1.

[339] Back in Ballylee after two and a half year absence Yeats wrote on 23 April 1922 (#4117): "George is very happy to be back here & declares that the children hav[e] at once increased in weight."

[340] *The Sonnets*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans 60. "The superiority of writing as a monument lies in the fact that is materiality is not subject to the ravages of time. Shakespeare writes explicitly: 'No marble, nor the gilded monuments….' …. Stone survives the sculptor, but writing survives the stone," Barbara Johnson, *Persons and Things* 37.

another landmark in his project of the tower, and counterbalances the disillusioned awareness that "no work can stand… / No honour leave its mighty monument…" in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," written one year earlier around April in 1921 (*T* xlii) and placed immediately after "Meditations" in *The Tower*. As we saw in chapter two, Yeats was consciously making Ballylee Castle into "a fitting monument & symbol" (11 July 1919 #3632). The alliteration between "monument" and "mine" and the half internal rhyme in "remain" and "mine" knit the words together as if forming an auditory monument in readers' minds, comparable to the "monuments of its own magnificence" in "Sailing to Byzantium."

V. "The Road at My Door"

An affable Irregular…
Comes cracking jokes of civil war…
A brown Lieutenant and his men…
Stand at my door…

Sections V and VI represent the tower squarely within "this tumultuous spot," more exposed to the immediate reality surrounding it than in Yeats's other tower-oriented poems. Embodying his ambition to create "a long poem … about Ballylee" and "a lyric about the civil war," Section V situates the tower in the midst of the Irish Civil War. The title defines its viewpoint, resonating with Yeats's account of his looking at Ireland "from this house-door, or from Coole door,"[341] "so remote … from all political excitement,"[342] in the spring and summer of 1922. Yeats had begun to use "Thoor Ballylee" as his postal address towards the end of March 1922 as noted earlier (#4110) and described it as "a

[341] Having recently returned from Oxford to Ballylee, now the Irish Free State, Yeats wrote to George Russell on 30 March 1922 (#4109): "I know little of the new Ireland except what I can see from this house-door, or from Coole door & that is fortunately little changed from the old."
[342] To T. Sturge Moore, 15 August 1922 #4159.

bare old Tower by the roadside" (#4108).[343] The familiar tower by the stream is now evoked to show the poet by the roadside during the Civil War.

The "road" had been incorporated in the picture of his tower in "A Prayer on going into my House" ("…an ash / That shades the road…") and in "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" ("…the old storm-broken trees / That cast their shadows upon road and bridge…"). In the lines of Aherne in "The Phases of the Moon" appeared an imagined setting of "ring[ing] at his door…" and "Stand[ing] under the rough roof-timbers of the hall / Beside the castle door…" (377).[344] A relevant passage ("On a walking tour in Connaught we passed Thoor Ballylee…") would be included in the first version of *A Vision* (1925), where at the end of Book I he printed the inscription: "FINISHED AT THOOR, BALLYLEE, 1922, / IN A TIME OF CIVIL WAR."[345] The "house door" (and "the door") served as a crucial symbol of the speaker's "great responsibilities" in "Two Songs of a Fool." "The Road at My Door" features the "road" at his "door" as the interface between the tower and the outside world.

Closing the deal on Ballylee with the Congested Districts Board in March 1917, Yeats had to "agree to a public right of way over the bridge and through Castle yard."[346] Once he decided on the purchase, the image of the "road" was quickly incorporated into and changed Yeats's symbolic picture of the property: "I am now greatly taken with the [?]several stepping stones & Ballylee on the road by a couple thatched cottages…" (4 March [1917] #3176).[347]

On 23 April 1922 he had reported to Olivia Shakespear (#4117): "All we can see from our window is beautiful & quiet & has been so; yet three miles off near Coole, which is close to a main-road the black & tans flogged young men &…. I wonder will literature be much changed by that most momentous of

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[343] Yeats had also used the phrase "by the roadside" before: "This is a mediaeval tower by the roadside which I have made into a pleasant house…" (to J. C. Squire, 9 September [1919] #3650).

[344] Revisions in an early draft document that Yeats tried to include the "road" in the setting as we have seen in Chapter 1: "… knock at his door / ~~That open on the road~~…," "~~It opens upon the common road~~ / This long path leads there / ~~It opens on this long road~~," *WSC* 320-21.

[345] *AVA* (*CW13*) 94. It was probably "between October and December 1922" in his new house at 82 Merrion Square, Dublin that Yeats actually "probably finished a draft of Book I," *AVA* (*CW13*) 266n244.

[346] Yeats to the Congested Districts Board, 27 March [1917] #3202. See Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* 166.

[347] Yeats to Lady Gregory. See *Life2* 85.

events, the return of evil." Four months later on 19 August 1922, their bridge was bombed by the irregular soldiers, as we have seen earlier. Yeats wrote an untitled draft of a poem which directly deals with the incident in three five-line stanzas, each headed by Roman numerals. It features the poet at "the Tower window" above, looking at and wondering about the men below, who are actually preparing to blow up the bridge:

> I stood in the Tower window…
> To find who stand below
> And why they come tower miday
> And why they hammer so...
> From the stream s jagged edge
> Somebody cries 'good night & thanks'
> As though we had given our bridge. (*T* 154-55)

Yeats's report of the incident is recorded by Lady Gregory in her journal entry of 20 August ("He said all were safe, and not a pane of glass broken…") and serves as a vivid commentary on the draft:

> He [Yeats] said "Last night about 12 o'c there was a knock at the door, I went down. There was a man, not in uniform. He said 'What room do you sleep in?' I pointed up to it and he said 'That's all right, you will be safe there. Stay in the house'. I said 'Are you going to blow up the bridge?' 'Yes'. 'I suppose you will give me time to bring the children up into our room?' 'Yes, there will be plenty of time, the explosion won't be for an hour and a half. There will be three explosions, I'll warn you when they are coming'…. (*J1* 387)

Yeats eventually used a different poem as Section V of the sequence, yet he recycled the last two lines of the above draft in his notes to the sequence on its inclusion in *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems* (1924).

George's letter to Ottoline Morrell on 1 September provides a more detailed account of the explosion itself, illuminating what is excluded from Yeats's account to Gregory and his draft poem:

> … two roars came & then a hail of falling masonry & gravel & then the same man shouted up 'All right now' & cleared off. We had gone round opening all windows to save the glass & nothing was damaged. Not a hole in any roof, though some stones went right over the tower (130 feet & more up) or fell on the cottages on the other side.… I think that although the noise did not seem as tremendous as the explosions—when one was close—of the German bombs during the war, the vibration was tremendous. … the bridge is a lamentable sight. One can walk over but one side is completely gone."[348]

About the noise of the explosion, Yeats reported to Gregory his daughter's comment: "'Glynn (the carpenter) is making a great noise up in the workshop' …" (*J1* 387). This comment of Anne's may also testify to the carpenters' working up in the tower during their stay in 1922. This means that Yeats was working on his textual construction of the tower in the sequence while hearing the sounds of the material reconstruction in progress above. Again, destruction and construction are intimately allied.

The bombing of the bridge not only "trouble[d]" ("Easter, 1916" 393) the actual stream, causing flood,[349] but must have influenced the poet's ongoing building of the sequence—just as the moorhen was affected by the movements of the cattle (326, 419). If Yeats had used the draft on the bombing as Section V, the destruction there and the ensuing prayer for rebuilding in Section VI would

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[348] Quoted in *Life2* 215.

[349] "The blowing up of our bridge dammed the river, and the day before we left we had two feet of water on the ground floor for several hours" (to John Quinn 19 October 1922 #4190). The letter sent from 82 Merrion Square also tells the psychological repercussions felt in the family: "We were glad to get away, the last weeks George and the servants were I think anxious at night, even Anne was I think nervous. The blowing up of our bridge had set them listening for distant sounds at nightfall. Anne took it all quite merrily at the moment, and thought the sounds made by the carpenter dropping his hammer, but there was some slight nervous shock and it got into her dreams."

have made a contrastive pair. Yet the physical destruction by the external agency which should cause "passive suffering" was not a subject for his poem.[350] It is the threat of internal degradation and resistance against it that are at stake throughout "Meditations."

A draft of the present version of Section V, titled "The Road," appears in the nearly finished late ink draft of the whole sequence (*T* 176-79). The fact that the draft of this section is the most revised in this virtually fair copy signals that Section V was completed the last. The present version of the poem seems to be set in the period before the bombing, when the road by the tower was temporarily used as a main road: "Owing to the blocking of [other] roads this bye-road has become a main thoroughfare..." (15 August 1922 #4159). The word "thoroughfare" had been used as opposed to the "house" in "A Prayer for My Daughter."[351] With the "rumoured danger to the bridge" (*J1* 383) in mind, however, Yeats had anticipated the incident: "That may be ended by the blowing up of our bridge. The National army is in control here & the people are with them but the irregulars come out at night…" (#4159).[352] The focus is now on the precarious interface between the tower and the world.

An extra first stanza before the present three stanzas is crossed out in ink in this draft (*T* 176-79). (See Figure 10.) The deleted stanza features a "Conemara lad," reminiscent of the shepherd who was "looking for strayed sheep…" (339) in the elegy "Shepherd and Goatherd":

> An anxious Conemara lad
> Comes to my garden gate for news
> A strange dog barked & his flock strayed….[353]

The second and third stanzas in the same draft correspond to the present first two stanzas, where the Civil War is introduced first hand by the presence of soldiers

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[350] *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* xxxiv.

[351] "… may her bridegroom bring her to a house / Where all's accustomed, ceremonious; / For arrogance and hatred are the wares / Peddled in the thoroughfares..." (405-406).

[352] The blowing up of their bridge, as anticipated, made his neighbourhood quieter: "hear all is very peaceful, now that all road bridges have been blown up" (3 September 1922 #4166).

[353] The whole stanza is crossed out, *T* 176-77.

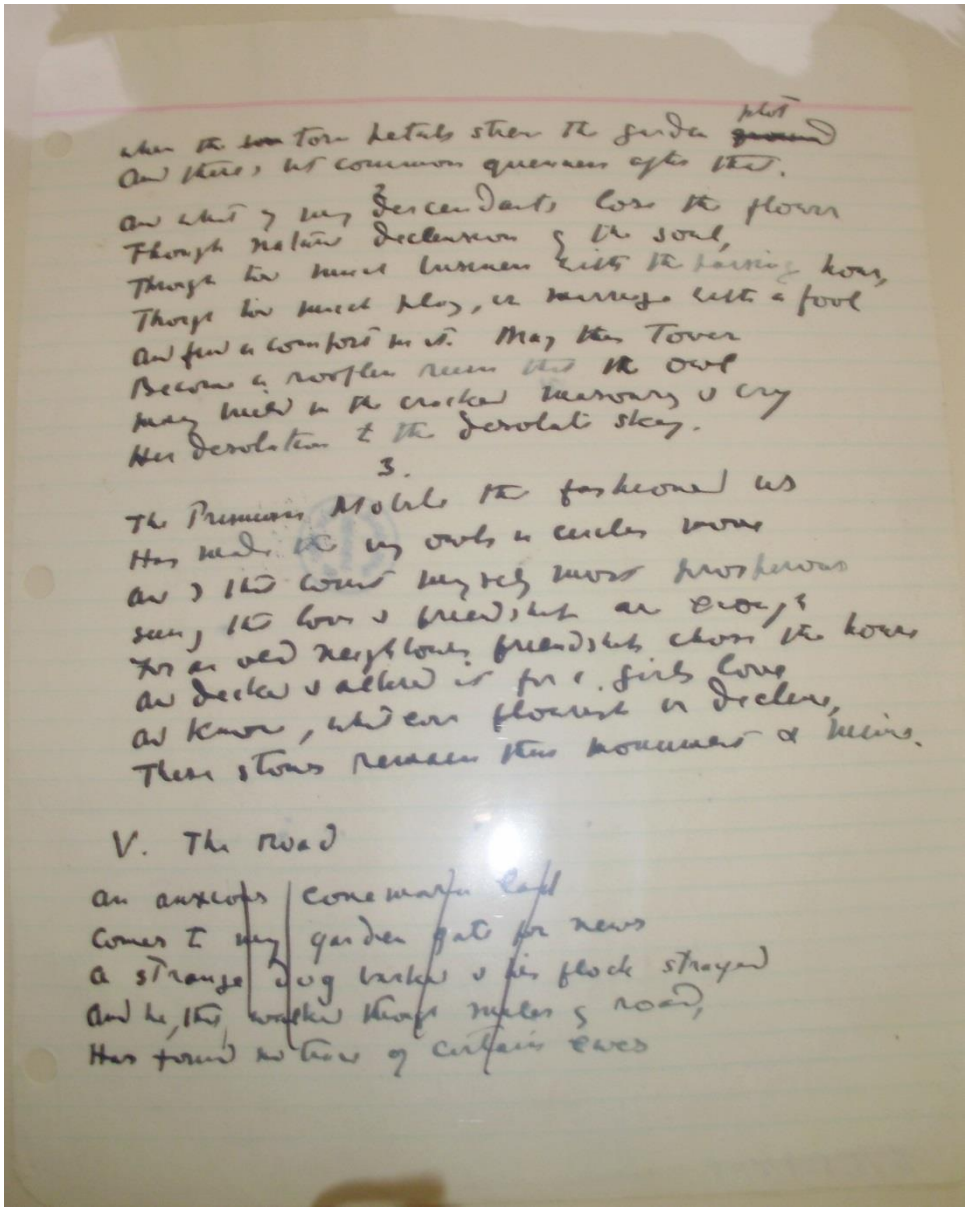

Fig. 10. The ink draft of the first stanza of Section V, "Meditations in Time of Civil War." NLI 13,589 (6). Photograph by author. 24 March 2010. (See *T* 176-77.)

on each side at the tower's door, though "A uniformed irregular" is revised here to "An affable irregular" (*T* 178-79) in the draft. If the phrase had stayed, it would have ironically blurred the difference between irregulars and Free State soldiers, with "A uniformed irregular" and soldiers "Half dressed in national uniform" in the next stanza mirroring each other. "Half dressed" suggests the

incomplete foundations of the new Irish Free State, with irregulars and Free State soldiers representing the violent division of the nation.[354]

The revised "affable Irregular" seems to be more readily combined with the "Falstaffian man" who "Comes cracking jokes of civil war" and leads more easily to the theatrical simile: "As though to die by gunshot were / The finest play under the sun" (424). Though evoking the transformation of wearers of "motley" in the "casual comedy" into "A terrible beauty" in "Easter, 1916," sacrificing one's life in the internecine war that raged in the wake of the Rising is unlikely to have been "the finest play" in reality. The bitterness of the Civil War is paradoxically magnified in the poem by the Irregular's affability and the Free State soldiers' implied politeness. The first two stanzas of "The Road at My Door" encapsulate the ironical state of Ireland in the aftermath of the Easter Rising, which Yeats explains in a letter after moving into Dublin: "Perhaps there is nothing so dangerous to a modern state, where politics take the place of theology, as a bunch of martyrs. A bunch of martyrs (1916) were the bomb & we are living in the explosion" (to Olivia Shakespear, 9 October 1922 #4184). The poem treats that "explosion" at a distance, invoking it here only by way of the anecdotal encounters with fighters on both sides of the conflict. In their new house in Dublin they lived close to actual explosions and gunshots. On the home front at 82 Merrion Square, the Yeatses experienced two bullets' entering their house on Christmas Eve of 1922, with "a fragment [of one of the bullets after breaking up] hitting George on the shoulder without injuring her," as Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory two days later (26 December [1922] #4239). Yeats continued: "it did not break the skin. She had Anne on her knee. … Republicans firing from the roof. … but George & I are quite cheerful & I dont think the children mind."[355]

When we read "Easter, 1916" as an intertext for Section V, the "living stream" that runs through its heart seems to be connected to the stream where the "moor-hen guides" the chicks—as if the scene were the consequences of the

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[354] Helen Vendler visualizes the "even-handed internal political structure" by reproducing the first two stanzas side by side, *Our Secret Discipline* 232.

[355] See *Becoming George* 310, also 314-15 for the dangers George withstood, living at 82 Merrion Square during "the height of the civil war."

calling of "moor-hens" to "moor-cocks" in the earlier poem about the Rising.[356] Yeats's "water-hen" (326, 419), the inhabitant of the stream by the tower, is, indeed, always associated with motion, perhaps subliminally providing Yeats's symbolic property with the element of "minute by minute" movement. The unusually domestic interlude of the chicks the "moor-hen guides" may implicitly allude to the life of the Yeats family, his wife George and their small children—"a girl," "a woman and a man" respectively in Section IV (422)—with the unforgettable metaphor, the "feathered balls of soot," testifying to Yeats's natural observation.[357]

The final title "The Road at My Door," whose image agrees with that of the "bare old Tower by the roadside" (#4108) in his correspondence, suggests the immediacy of the actual violence as well as the castle door's function as a shield against the outside world. The soldiers' action and the poet's "thought" are separated by his "door." Despite the immediacy of the soldiers' presence "at [his] door," their action and perhaps imminent death are also screened by the door, possibly allowing their death "by gunshot" to be transformed into a "play." The poem as a whole, indeed, is constructed as if it were a mini drama, with his "door" functioning, as it were, something like the curtain between the apron stage and the inner stage in the Elizabethan drama. Those four consecutive scenes—of the Irregulars, the Free State soldiers, the moor-hen family (perhaps implicitly the Yeats family) and the poet's "turn[ing] towards my chamber"—epitomize the multi-dimensional reality in which the poet was writing. After the brief interactions with the soldiers on both sides and the interlude of the moor-hen family, the poet goes back to his chamber, back to his dream, at the end of the poem. The "envy in my thought" also in this context may evoke as a subtext Hamlet's reaction when he saw "Fortinbras, who came from fighting battles about 'a little patch of ground'…" and Yeats's commentary on the contrast

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[356] Ornithologically, "moor-cocks" and "moor-hens" are male and female red grouses. The name "moor-hen" can also mean both male and female of a different bird, also called a "water-hen." Yeats's use of the adjective "long-legged" or "stilted" may suggest that he meant moor-hens (also called water-hens) even when he used the word "moor-cocks."

[357] Yeats's letter in 1924 describes his children playing around the river by the tower: "My wife & children are here. The children are both vigorous & handsome & spend their time wading in the river or feeding ducks & geese" ([undated] August 1924 #4615).

between Hamlet and Fortinbras in his 1901 essay "At Stratford-on-Avon."[358] The juxtaposition of the soldiers at the tower's door with the poet's "chamber," set out for "a dream," contrasts action with thought, Yeats's old theme, while the "dream" at the same time subliminally echoing the martyrs': "We know their dream…" ("Easter, 1916").[359] The contiguity of the battlefield with the poet's workplace is encapsulated in the headings of both this section and the sequence as well as in the poem. The contrast between the outside and the inside of "my door" during the Civil War—between the road and his chamber, the "play under the sun" and "the cold snows of a dream"—sets out the space for the poet's imagination inside the door of the tower even more vividly. The outside world is finally driven away from his door, his chamber and thought, when the speaker "turn[s] towards [his] chamber, caught / In the cold snows of a dream."[360]

"A pear tree broken by the storm"—this is the only instance when a "pear tree" enters a tower poem.[361] "My House" had no space for a fruit tree on its "acre of stony ground," unlike William Morris's "walled garden" of "an ancient castle," which "knew" "Little war," where "red apples shone" ("Golden Wings")[362]—while Yeats had been eager to "plant fruit trees as soon as possible — apple trees…" on the actual property even before its acquisition.[363] Yeats explained to T. Sturge Moore on 15 August 1922, four days before the blowing up of Ballylee bridge, his circumstances in "the civil war at which I look (so remote one is here from all political excitement) as if it were some phenomenon of nature…" (#4159). This seems to resonate with the poet's references to "the foul weather, hail and rain, / A pear tree broken by the storm" (424) in his

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[358] *E&I* 107: "I have often had the fancy that there is some one Myth for every man…. Shakespeare's Myth, it may be, describes a wise man who was blind from very wisdom, and an empty man who thrust him from his place, and saw all that could be seen from very emptiness. It is in the story of Hamlet, who saw too great issues everywhere to play the trivial game of life, and of Fortinbras…."

[359] Lady Gregory records Yeats's saying "it is a pity when a country has only courage and self sacrifice and not intellect" (1 September 1922, *J1* 391).

[360] Vendler notes that the "martial four-beat march-rhythm … fades away into trimeter," the dream's "own anomalous rhythm," in the last line of the poem, which "suggests the fundamental defeat of war by the poet's act of solitary imagination," *Our Secret Discipline* 233.

[361] The hyphen in the "pear-tree" was added in *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (Macmillan, 1950 [Wade 211]).

[362] Quoted in Yeats's essay on Morris, "The Happiest of the Poets," written in 1902, *E&I* 60.

[363] "If I get [Ballylee Castle] I shall plant fruit trees as soon as possible — apple trees for the sake of the blossoms & because it will make me popular with the little boys who will eat my apples in the early mornings" (to Olivia Shakespear, 8 November [1916] #3067).

conversation with the National soldiers. Given Yeats's metaphorical use of the "wind" and "storm" in his tower poems to represent the violence of the time, the passage may be read as a covert description in terms of natural phenomena of the Civil War as he experienced it living in the tower. The "rain" and "every wind" in Section II escalate to "foul weather, hail and rain" and "storm" here, where the Civil War comes to his very door. Yeats's stoic ideas about handling wars in poetry may also be reflected in both the attitudes of the "affable Irregular" ("cracking jokes of civil war") and the poet's complaint of "the foul weather, hail and rain." [364] The poet's talk with soldiers on both sides of the conflict juxtaposed with the stream by the tower evokes the "polite meaningless words"[365] and "living stream" of "Easter, 1916," and resonate with Gregory's record on 16 August 1922 that "[Yeats is] still making his poem on Ballylee, he likes connecting it with the Rising" (*J1* 385). In the text, these connections are made by way of almost subliminal echoes of "Easter, 1916."

VI. "The Stare's Nest by My Window"

My wall is loosening…

In the next (but earlier written) section, the unspecified "we," including the speaker, are "closed in" the tower, virtually imprisoned within its wall. Far from being a watchtower, the tower here is, as it were, out of sight. The word "tower" never appears in this section, where the architecture is synecdochically represented by "My wall" and by "My Window." This seems to correspond to the way in which only a few fragmentary details of the war are reported in the second and the third stanzas, while "no clear fact" is "to be discerned." The image of the wall of the tower here is in contrast to the one which represented power in "My House" ("sheltered by its wall").

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[364] "If war is necessary … it is best to forget its suffering as we do the discomfort of fever … Connaught Rangers … who described an incident over and over, and always with loud laughter…," *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* xxxiv-v.

[365] See Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 233.

Section VI was the poem which Yeats started as a separate lyric on the Civil War as noted earlier. Three extant drafts of the poem carry different headings. The earliest is titled "Civil War." The second, the inscription for Lady Gregory, is titled "The Stare's Nest" and dated "July 14 1922"—the only dated draft of the sequence. These two drafts are in three stanzas which correspond to the first three of the published poem.[366] The third draft preserved is a nearly fair copy in four stanzas, headed "VI. The crevice by my window."[367] Yeats probably added the reference to the tower's architecture ("by My Window") to the title after he decided to include the poem into the "long…poem about Ballylee." The last written fourth stanza generalises and comments on the state of the Irish people, using the first person plural pronoun "we" ("We had fed the heart on fantasies," 425), reminiscent of the speaker in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" ("We pierced our thoughts into philosophy," 429).

After the Civil War was directly introduced into the poem via a few patchy details in the second stanza ("somewhere / A man is killed, or a house burned"), the verb "build" in the refrain comes to suggest defending against or amending the half invisible acts of destruction. As it is repeated, the refrain sounds more like a desperate and urgent plea for rebuilding the nation, whose masonry is loosening.[368] After "substance" "in our enmities" contrasted with "empt[iness]" of the "house of the stare" and "our love," the final imperative in the burden sounds to be calling for "spiritual building"[369] that is founded upon "love." This meditation on love in response to feeding "the heart on fantasies" prefigures the "Monstrous familiar images" in Section VII.

The first-person singular pronoun appears in the form of the possessive "My" in "My wall" and in the title "My Window" in Section VI. "My" in this poem may not only mean the possessive of the tower owner but may also suggest that of the personified tower. When their isolation during the war is represented

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[366] *T* 156-59.

[367] *T* 180-81. The heading is found revised in the typescript sent to the *Dial*, with "CREVICE" replaced with "Stare's Nest" "in ink" by Yeats and "then … 'Jay's Nest' in pencil," not in Yeats's hand but by the editor, which was printed by the *Dial* ("The Jay's Nest by my Window"), *T* xxvii, 194n, Wade 145, *VP* 424n.

[368] See Paul de Man 189-94 for "an emblematic reading derived from Porphyry" (190) of this refrain and the sequence.

[369] Lady Gregory's phrase in her letter to Yeats in August 1916, quoted in *Seventy Yeats* 548.

in terms of confinement in the tower, another new, though traditional, function of the building as a place of imprisonment is added to Yeats's tower: "We are closed in, and the key is turned / On our uncertainty…" (425). The metaphor of the "key" which figures collective "uncertainty" and isolation resonates with the one in another contemporary landmark of modern poetry: "I have heard the key / Turn in the door once… / We think of the key, each in his prison…" (T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*).[370] The first-person plural pronouns ("We" and "our") are, as it were, contained within "My wall." This image of confinement expressed with the first-person plural transforms the tower from a private property ("My House") into a collective symbol of Ireland in the wake of the Anglo-Irish War, calling out for its "loosening" wall to be rebuilt in the midst of the "senseless tumult" (in terms of Section VII): "Come build in the empty house of the stare."

It seems likely that Yeats composed this poem perhaps between July 8 and 19 during the postal disruption which continued for more than two weeks from the end of June.[371] The sense of imprisoned isolation and "Some fourteen days" probably reflect exactly that period. Indeed, it may have been the postal disruption "for over a fortnight" itself that prompted Yeats to write a "lyric about the civil war," separately from his ongoing poems on the tower. On 16 July Yeats sent back the proof of part of his autobiography to the editor of the *London Mercury*, saying: "It came yesterday, the first post for 17 days. There is, I hear, a chance of an outgoing post on Tuesday if the government forces can afford a sufficient escort. It took the mail cart twelve hours making the last 16 miles in coming…" (#4150).[372]

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[370] *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* 74. The poem contains a "*tour aboli*" and the image of "shor[ing]" ("These fragments I have shored against my ruins…"). *The Waste Land* was first published later that year on 16 October 1922 in *The Criterion*. Yeats cited the poem ("that strange 'Waste Land' by Mr. T. C[*sic*]. Eliot") as a rare example of "our school" of literature in his preface dated 25 February 1924 to *The Cat and the Moon*, *VP* 854. See Whitaker, *Swan and Shadow* 179.

[371] *J1* 373, 378. *T* 158-59.

[372] "More Memories," *Au* (*CW3*) 22. Yeats at Coole summarised the circumstances to Ezra Pound on 27 July 1922 (#4152): "We have been cut off from the rest of the world by civil war. No newspapers, no trains, no telegrams, no letters, but now after some weeks letters and newspapers begin to come, and there is something like a weekly post. I have been writing poetry in great peace and quietness through all…. The war has come within two or three miles of us but not nearer. We hear rifle fire and an occasional explosion but have suffered no inconvenience apart from lack of letters &c. Roads are blocked with barricades in many places still and were all so blocked a little while ago."

The castle door appears in the same letter, written when he was actually "closed in," as a fortification against the war—Yeats sometimes used the word "castle" in his letters even after renaming the place—in his report of a brief conversation with a passer-by at his door: "I am in a blockaded district. A few days ago a man driving a cart stopped his cart & looked up at the castle & said 'You could put up a good fight'. 'No' I said 'a bad door'. 'What you want' he said, 'are steel shutters' and drove on. No trains, no post, no telegraphs, & roads blocked with stones and trees…" (#4150).[373] A postscript to one of Yeats's letters about a month later could serve as a note to Section VI: "Lady Gregory & Edward Martyn are the only large houses within many miles that have not been raided & one great house has been burned. The casualties are however slight. One hears of some man killed & then nobody for many days. A motor has just passed with a National soldier, & a coffin up on end & what I suppose were the relatives of the dead man…" (to Sturge Moore 15 August 1922 #4159). Such letters remind us that Yeats's "Meditations" are as documentary as they are "symbolic."

His correspondence to Olivia Shakespear in May and June throw up another context for the poem. The letter in May (undated #4118) abounds in references to birds and nests: "four nests" of canaries, "two with eggs," "jack daws in the chimneys," crows' habit of building in a tree and "a nest of stares in a hole over my bed-room window," the last giving the poem the architectural image of the tower and a refrain. Yeats included a reference to the actual nest in the note to the sequence: "In the west of Ireland we call a starling a stare, and during the civil war one built in a hole in the masonry by my bedroom window…" (827).

The refrain about taking over and reconstructing the stare's nest by honeybees, which repeats itself in the same form irrespective of the content of the body of each stanza, sounds increasingly urgent in accordance with the content of the body of each stanza. The body of the poem depicts the acts of destruction—at the outset of the new Free State government's building the new

[373] Roy Foster quotes this conversation, noting "The atmosphere appealed to WBY's sense of the dramatic: it was a good time to be living in a castle," *Life2* 214.

Ireland—against which the refrain is set, urging building. The repeated "empty house of the stare," in conjunction with "a house burned" in the first stanza, suggests the "houses of the gentry" as victims of "the coarse broom of political violence" (#4135), which are "raided" or "burned" (#4159) as well as "a marvellous empty sea-shell" and the refrain ("O what if … take our greatness with our violence?") in "Ancestral Houses."

In "Meditations" the first-person singular possessive "My" is repeated in five of the seen titles of individual sections. Yeats explains the implication of "My" in relation to his idea of "Unity of Being" in Book I, which was probably finished in 1922 as seen earlier, in *A Vision* (1925): "At the approach of Unity of Being the greatest beauty of literary style becomes possible, for thought becomes sensuous and musical. … we lose interest in the abstract and concrete alike, only when we have said, 'My fire', and so distinguished it from 'the fire' and 'a fire', does the fire seem bright."[374]

Yeats's advice to an Irish poet and artist given shortly after writing Section VI casts light on his own use of a refrain in the poem: "I rather wish you had used as a burden those two fine lines … their force would be increased beyond measure if they reoccurred in some series of verses to a ringing measure…" (to Cecil French, 27 July 1922 #4152). Having "left Oxford for Ireland," Yeats also explained in the same letter: "I want to take up my old work in Dublin if I can though in some new way now that Ireland has been worn again." The combination of the comments on the "ringing" refrain and his return to Ireland might encourage us to see the refrain in the poem as directed to the poet himself: "Come build…." We could even read the poem and the sequence as reflexes of this urgent imperative to build.

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[374] *AVA* (*CW13*) 52. See for the association of "my" with "sensuous" or "present sensuous memory" the automatic script on 14 and 16 October 1919, *YVP2* 447, 449, *AVA* (*CW13*) 236n41. In the second edition of *A Vision* (1937) the passage would be revised: "The automatic script defines 'sensuous' in an unexpected way. An object is sensuous if I relate it to myself, 'my fire, my chair, my sensation', whereas 'a fire, a chair, a sensation', are all concrete … while 'the fire, the chair, the sensation', because they are looked upon as representative of their kind, are 'abstract'…," 87.

VII. "I see Phantoms of Hatred and of the Heart's Fullness and of the Coming Emptiness"

I climb to the tower-top and lean upon broken stone…

In the final section of the sequence the poet for the first time climbs to the tower-top. This is a milestone in his tower poems which marks the virtual completion of his textual tower. The leaning upon the "broken stone" on the "tower-top" would eventually make a striking contrast with the poet's halting "Under broken stone" in "a cleft that's christened Alt" (632) in one of Yeats's last written poem "The Man and the Echo." We do not know how complete the top part of the actual stone tower was in 1922, but Yeats may still have been waiting for the slaters to complete the rooftop. Yeats refers to his climbing to the roof in a letter about a year later: "here [in Ballylee] beside a little stream I write poetry & think of nothing else. I suffer nothing worse than occasional horse-flies which on very hot days drive me on to the castle-roof & into the shadow of the big chimney" (1 August 1923 #4353). We might note that the domestic "chimney" never entered his tower poems.

The poet's "climb[ing] to the tower-top," which may mark the completion of the textual building of the tower, is immediately followed by such words as "lean" and "broken": "I climb to the tower-top and lean upon broken stone." The "broken stone" may correspond to the "loosening masonry" in the previous section. Here again, as in "To be Carved" and "My Descendants," we find the images of construction as containing signs of destruction and erosion within itself.

As the chamber in the last stanza of Section V is set out for "a dream," the tower-top space in Section VII is set out for phantasmagoric visions—with the "mist that is like blown snow" signalling a link to the "snows of a dream." The view from the tower-top is covered with a mist, liberating the poem from a natural view, and even that is swiftly taken over by the phantasmagoria. After a swift recapitulation of a few symbols from the preceding sections, a "puff of wind" abruptly shifts the scene to introduce "Monstrous familiar images" by way of "Frenzies" and "reveries."

The "river" and "elms" from Section II and the "moon" and the "sword" from Section III are summoned up again, signalling the winding up of the

sequence. As "A sudden blast of dusty wind" brought about "tumult of images" (433) in the last section of "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," "A puff of wind" immediately sets the scene for "Frenzies," "reveries" and "Monstrous familiar images." Three phantasmagoric visions from the tower roof are presented one after another, with the first two merging to "Give place to" (427) the third. The three visions of "hatred," "fullness" ("love" before revision in the fair copy, *T* 182-83) and "coming emptiness" as indicated in the title seem to correspond to the present, past and the future of Irish history. Each of the first two visions seems to be a more phantasmagoric version of "fantasies" and "enmities" in stanza four in Section VI and "life" which "overflows" in stanza one in Section I. Section VII, which serves as an epilogue to the sequence, seems to have been developed out of the comment on the political development in Ireland expressed in terms of "enmities" and "love" in the later added last stanza of Section VI.

The first of the series of "Monstrous familiar images," "all that senseless tumult," which echoes "In this tumultuous spot" (Section II), grapples with the irrational collective violence as his "mind's eye" saw it:

> The rage-driven, rage-tormented, and rage-hungry troop,
> Trooper belabouring trooper, biting at arm or at face,
> Plunges towards nothing, arms and fingers spreading wide
> For the embrace of nothing…. (426)

The nightmare image anticipate the "blind man battering blind men" (479) in his later tower poem "A Dialogue of Self and Soul." The food metaphor in Section VI ("We had fed the heart on fantasies, / the heart's grown brutal from the fare; / More substance in our enmities…" 425) is continued here for the "[phantom] of hatred" in "rage-hungry" and "biting at…." In the notes on "Vengeance for Jacques Molay"—a strangely historically and spatially displaced image of the Civil War—Yeats links "hatred" with "sterility in various kinds" (827).

Yeats's letter on 9 October, which reports that they "are entering on the final & more dreadful stage" of the Civil War, may serve as a note on the contrast between the first and the third "Phantoms": "I have met some of the ministers, who more & more seem to[o] sober to meet the wildness of their enemies; & every where one notices a drift towards conservatism perhaps

towards Autocracy. I always knew that it would come, but not that it would come in this tragic way…" (to Olivia Shakespear #4184).[375]

Yeats had also used the word "grip" ("I imagine that the Government is greatly tightening its grip on the country…") in another letter (30 September 1922 #4177), which seems to resonate with "Nothing but grip of claw" in the poem. According to Yeats's notes to the poem, the "hawks" in the fourth stanza "symbolize the straight road of logic, and so of mechanism" (827). The image of "mechanism" brings back "never stoop to a mechanical, / Or servile shape…" (417) in Section I.[376] His parallel project of esoteric philosophical search underlies the symbolism of the "hawks," to whose implicit contrast with butterflies the notes refer, quoting from "Tom O'Roughley": "For wisdom is a butterfly and not a gloomy bird of prey."[377]

In the closing stanza, the poet "turn[s] away and shut[s] the door"—this time not from the "road" towards his "chamber" upstairs (Section V), but from the "tower-top" to the "stair," looking downward. No sooner does he turn away from "Monstrous familiar images," or "daemonic images," to something more tangible ("something that all others understand or share") than he admits that the latter would never satisfy him. "O! ambitious heart" and "pine" may be recapitulating "ambitious pains" (Section I), "an aching heart" (Section III) and "the envy in my thought" (Section V), suggesting that the protagonist's "ambitious" and "aching heart" "conceive[d]" the entire sequence of meditations ("a changeless work of art…").

The sequence of a story of founding a house that includes within itself the projections of the coming ruin closes with a declaration of the poet's renewed commitment—in old age as in childhood—to the "half read wisdom of daemonic images," once again evoking the literary ancestor and the tower from *Il Penseroso* ("How the daemonic rage / Imagined everything…," Section II). Despite the apparent "Wordsworthian diminuendo" (*Life2* 223), the "wisdom" is still "half read" and the extent to which the "abstract joy" and the "half-read

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[375] The ongoing violence also made Yeats "[wonder] what prominent men will live through it," #4184.

[376] See Yeats's much later letter to an Indian monk Shri Purohit Swami where the key words "mechanical" and "mechanism" occur (1 November 1936 #6691).

[377] The poem was written on 16 February 1918. See *MYV1* 51-52.

wisdom" "Suffice" him has not increased in old age.[378] The poet's closing statement was, to use Yeats's phrase in a letter of the following summer, a declaration of resistance to "Wordsworthian calm" (1 August 1923 #4353). The claim that "The abstract joy, / The half read wisdom of daemonic images, / Suffice the ageing man as once the growing boy" (427) implicitly defies the loss of "light" the "growing Boy" saw "in his joy," which, in Wordsworth's poem, is compensated for by "soothing thoughts that spring / Out of human suffering," a "philosophic mind."[379] In the fair copy of the sequence the subject in the title of this section is corrected to the present "I" from the rather "ninetyish" pronoun "He," reminding us of the continuity of the visionary aspect of Yeats's poetry.[380] The poet's confidence in his commitment, weighed against the lost opportunities that he "could have proved [his] worth / In something that all others understand or share," seems to have been built up through the very act of writing the sequence about his newly restored castle, a real dwelling-place with a visionary dimension. The actual and symbolic architectures are founded on each other.

Shortly before starting "Meditations," and commenting on the work he had just finished for *Later Poems* and *Plays in Prose and Verse,* Yeats confided to Olivia Shakespear on 7 June 1922 that "These books have meant a great deal of work, & I am tired & in a rage at being old. I am all I ever was & much more but an enemy has bound me & twisted me so I can plan & think as I never could, but no longer achieve all I plan & think…" (#4135). This statement may be associated with "My wall is loosening" of Section VI—previously "My wall is old" in a draft (*T* 156-57)—as well as with "the ageing man" of the final line of the sequence. This would turn out to be his great new subject for poetry, as we shall see in his next tower sequence, which begins with a dramatic monologue of an "ageing man." From December 1922, his work as a Senator, which he

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[378] Ellmann observes that "Yeats claims no progression in philosophical insight from childhood to maturity…. And the word 'suffice' has a peculiar Yeatsian irony about it," *IY* 223.

[379] See Whitaker's comments on the implications of the ironical echo of Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality" in the last lines of Section VII, Whitaker 185-86.

[380] *T* 182-83. "The finale, under the ninetyish title … displayed WBY at his most apocalyptic, obscure, and plangent…" *Life2* 222. It recalls the titling in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), where the names including Michael Robartes were used until revised to the third-person pronoun "He" on the book's inclusion in *The Poetical Works of William B. Yeats,* Vol. I, Lyrical Poems (1906).

enjoyed despite some potentially "deadly" experience, kept Yeats in Dublin.[381] He would have to wait until July 1925 for his next long stay in Ballylee. With the most sustained construction work on the architecture of Thoor Ballylee accomplished through writing "Meditations," Yeats's next poetic building was to culminate in the cenral focus in his tower project—"The Tower."

[381] Yeats's letter on 29 August 1923 (#4362) refers to the "two bullet holes in my windows & at a deadly distance from the floor," but continues: "I enjoy my work as Senator. It is a pleasant occupation for old age which draws near."

CHAPTER 4

Building a "Permanent Symbol": "The Tower," *The Tower* (1928)

The Yeatses returned to Ballylee on a long-term basis from mid-July to mid-October 1925, which was after a three-year interval since "Meditations in Time of Civil War."[382] This long stay in Ballylee led to Yeats's composition of the foremost landmark in his poetry: "The Tower." It is a poetic autobiography and testament, built aurally and graphically into an architecture which stands as a "permanent symbol" of Yeats's life and work "plainly visible to the passer by" (#5030) even "When all is ruin once again" (406).[383] In real life, in marked contrast, Yeats would later make a one-sentence "emergency will" dated "29 December 1929," being critically ill with Malta fever."[384] This second tower sequence features the vantage point of the battlements and opens up a new phase of his tower as a public property.[385] Three years after poetically constructing Thoor Ballylee under the particular circumstances of the Civil War in his first tower sequence, Yeats embarked on building a symbol, which is both public and personal, firmly rooted in history and the local terrain. As opposed to the titles of his previous tower-oriented poems, this time Yeats called the sequence by the generic architectural term, giving his most prominent book of verse the title *The Tower*.

"The Tower" revives and incorporates in its poetic architecture memories of the poet's boyhood fishing on Ben Bulben, the power of the song of a local blind poet, the failure of his love-affair with Maud Gonne, characters and motifs

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[382] See Kelly 234-42.

[383] See Seamus Heaney's phrase an "acoustic architecture": "That sense of … an undeniable acoustic architecture … of the firmness and in-placeness and undislodgeableness of poetic form, that is one of Yeats's great gifts to our century," *Place of Writing* 32.

[384] Kelly 268. "I bequeath whatever I die possessed of to my wife Bertha George Yeats to be employed by her, according to my known wishes, for the benefit of my children," #5331.

[385] Yeats had referred to the battlements when he first wrote to his father about the property: "There is a winding stone stair, and a fine outlook from the battlements, and an old tumbledown cottage…," 13 February 1917 #3157.

from his own work (Hanrahan, "The Fisherman," a dying swan in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen"), one of his Senate speeches, and so forth—mixing "images and memories" or "the moon and sunlight" (Part II) itself. At the same time, "The Tower" establishes the restored tower of Thoor Ballylee at the heart of Yeats's oeuvre and life as well as in the legendary soil of Ballylee, giving it a pivotal role in symbolically unifying his life and work.

In this most central poem in Yeats's tower project, the references to the actual building are unexpectedly minimal. Only a few powerfully evocative synecdoches—"the battlements," "the narrow stairs," "this door" (Part II) and "the loophole there" (Part III)—and a few other references to the tower or its resident—"this house," "that ruin" and "a sleeper's rest" (Part II)—anchor the poem to the stone architecture. The poem is instead solidly structured with a number of echoes and correspondences as well as architecturally complex stanzaic forms, just as the tower building is fortified with the "battlements" and the "men at arms" are "cross-gartered to the knees / Or shod in iron." The paradox of the virtual absence of the building in the poem indicates that the tower which had been gradually built up in his poetry over the last decade had finally become ready for full-scale symbolic use, even almost independently of the actual building.

"The Tower" first appeared in the *Monthly Criterion*, June 1927 and the *New Republic*, 29 June 1927. In *October Blast* (Cuala Press), published in August 1927, the date "1925" and notes accompanied the poem.[386] When the poem was published in *The Tower* (Macmillan) in February 1928, the date of the poem was changed to "1926" and the same notes were used with minor corrections. Yeats roots Part II in the tower's neighbourhood by referring to "that ridge" and "that rocky place." With the notes Yeats underscores the links between the personae and the places and between the poem and the place of composition: "The persons mentioned are associated by legend, story and tradition with the neighbourhood of Thoor Ballylee or Ballylee Castle, where the poem was written. Mrs. French lived at Peterswell …" (825). Yeats represents "the neighbourhood of Thoor Ballylee" as a place with "great emotional intensity"

[386] The page proofs had been completed by 14 April 1927, *T* xliv, 144-51.

that offers people "a symbolical, a mythological coherence," as it were, recalling his claim in "Four Years: 1887-1891," written in 1920-21, that "all races [have] had their first unity from a mythology that marries them to rock and hill."[387] At the time Yeats's mythological topography was complemented by his practical concern with the actual "threat of drainage of a bog, which he is afraid will convert Ballylee into an an [*sic*] island," as reported in Lady Gregory's letter.[388]

The title "The Tower" represents both the stone building Yeats has restored at Ballylee and this sequence itself, the poet's medium which aspires to the form of the tower. The tower at Ballylee anchors this poetic sequence "in the earth" of a particular place. The symbolic image of the "ancient" square tower fortified with the "strict formality of stanza-construction"[389] functions in the poem as what Yeats would later call the "ice or salt" in which "all that is personal" "must be packed."[390] Paraphrasing the word "ice," Yeats would quote from "The Fisherman," the very poem on which Part III of "The Tower" is in part based: "Is ice the correct word? I once boasted, copying the phrase from a letter of my father's, that I would write a poem 'cold and passionate as the dawn.'"[391]

During the three-year interval between "Meditations" and "The Tower," Yeats had become a Senator (December 1922) and a Nobel laureate (November 1923). In 1923, except for brief stays in Ballylee in August, when he found "various traces of occupation by irregulars," Yeats was mostly based in Dublin, attending the meetings in the Seanad.[392] In mid-November 1923 Yeats was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature and gave a lecture in the following month in Stockholm. In his Nobel lecture, "The Irish Dramatic Movement," Yeats described the tower at Ballylee, rooted in the soil which he had represented in the 1899 essay on "the Gaelic poet Raftery" and his muse ("Dust hath Closed Helen's Eye"). He introduced the tower immediately after referring to the violence of the Anglo-Irish War, illustrating the cohabitation of beauty and

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[387] *Au* (*CW 3*) 7, 166-67.
[388] Lady Gregory to Oliver St. John Gogarty, 23 May 1926. Quoted in *Life2* 314.
[389] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 294.
[390] "A General Introduction for my Work," *E&I* 522.
[391] *E&I* 523.
[392] To T. Sturge Moore, 18 August 1923 #4359.

violence in the minds of the Irish people and associating people in the neighbourhood of the "little old tower" in Galway with the people "upon the wall of Troy":

> I have in Galway a little old tower, and when I climb to the top of it I can see at no great distance a green field where stood once the thatched cottage of a famous country beauty, the mistress of a small local landed proprietor. I have spoken to old men and women who remembered her, though all are dead now, and they spoke of her as the old men upon the wall of Troy spoke of Helen…. It was a song written by the Gaelic poet Raftery that brought her such great fame….[393]

Part II of "The Tower" is in part a versification of this long-held theme of his—the Irish blind poet and his muse in Ballylee—as we shall see. Unlike in 1899, however, the building standing there was now Yeats's own Thoor Ballylee, the tower the poet had obtained and transformed into his own architectural and textual property during the intervening years.

Yeats's letter on 29 January 1924, not long after he came back from Stockholm, tells us about his need to stay in Dublin for "Cuala and the Senate" and also the condition of the tower at that stage:

> the proceeds of my last 'lecturing tour' … I have still a substantial sum left, which is intended in part for the concrete roof, for we still live, when there, protected not very perfectly by stone floors alone. … with Cuala and the Senate, neither of us can be long away from Dublin. Its chief use for some time to come will be to house the children, my Wife and I going down for but a few days at a time. (to John Quinn #4464)

The "chief use" of the tower for the time being while Yeats and George are away is strikingly practical: "to house the children." As he anticipated, they had to

[393] *Au* [*CW 3*] 411-2.

wait for some time—until July 1925—to go back to Ballylee for their next long stay.

In the meantime, Yeats sometimes went to Coole in 1924, working on what would become *A Vision* (1925) and correcting his early work for *Early Poems and Stories*, the fifth volume of Macmillan's collected edition.[394] While staying at Coole, Yeats visited Ballylee to find out about its condition. On 8 April 1924 he reported to George who was in Dublin: "you will have the whole castle ready to inhabit very soon…" (#4517). The second-floor room ("The room Raftery has plastered"), which would become their bedroom, was "practically ready."[395] The new feature of the tower which fascinated Yeats was the half-ready top-room above, which he described as "the great room, where all the legends come alive."[396] The atmosphere in which "all the legends come alive" would indeed be created in Part II of "The Tower," while the top-room would make its way into a later tower poem "Blood and the Moon." In the following month Yeats went to Ballylee with Raftery to check the damage from a burglary. Finding "[n]othing [stolen] but door upstairs," Yeats wrote to his wife: "There was a wonderful view from the roof & it looked a pleasant place" (11 May 1924 #4539).

Yeats's revival of the old theme of Ballylee and Raftery in the Nobel lecture in December 1923, his fascination with the tower's top room and the view from the roof in spring 1924 and his correcting of his early work for *Early Poems and Stories* must all have contributed to his writing of "The Tower." It was on the republication of "Dust hath Closed Helen's Eye" in *Early Poems and Stories* that Yeats appended a footnote to "the old square castle, Ballylee," repeating "I" and "my": "Ballylee Castle, or Thoor Ballylee, as I have named it to escape from the too magnificent word 'castle,' is now my property, and I spend my summers

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[394] *A Vision* (1925) was "privately printed for subscribers only by T. Werner Laurie, Ltd." and "issued to subscribers on January 15, 1926," Wade 149. *Early Poems and Stories* was published on 22 September 1925, Wade 147. See *J1* 598, *J2* 45.

[395] #4517. Yeats had now come to constantly spell the name of the builder "Raftery," as Lady Gregory did.

[396] Yeats to George, 10 April 1924 #4519. See also "the great surprise" (#4517) and "I cannot get that fine top room at Ballylee out of my head—fire-place & all magnificent" (9 April 1924 #4518).

or some part of them there. (1924.)"[397] By adding this note a quarter of a century later, Yeats, as it were, anchored the tower in the essay "to some personal thing" (*J1* 385), transforming it into "my" tower. The footnote also changed the "I" in the essay from a visitor and onlooker to a resident and participant in the world he had depicted in the essay. This appropriation of the textual tower in the essay contributes to relating the essay to Yeats's other tower-oriented works. In his notes to "The Tower" Yeats also refers to this essay as an extra-textual source—using "my" again: "The peasant beauty and the blind poet are Mary Hynes and Raftery, and the incident of the man drowned in Cloone Bog is recorded in my *Celtic Twilight*." [398] This cross-reference indicates Yeats's conscious organization of his work, with the tower as a central landmark.

The opportunity of revising his early essays, stories and poems probably indirectly prepared Yeats to call back some "images and memories" from them in Part II, including Raftery, Hanrahan and the figure based on Maud Gonne. Sending Gonne *Early Poems and Stories* soon after its publication, Yeats commented on the curious continuity between his early and later work: "[the stories] sometimes startle me so much do they seem to prepare for my present thought. Strange to write enigmas & understand them twenty five years later."[399] "The Tower" is in part an attempt to understand and reconfigure these "enigmas."

When in July 1924 he sent Olivia Shakespear his recently published *The Cat and the Moon* which "contains some of my best work but … is very slim," Yeats expressed his intention of doing "deeper & more passionate work than ever before" when his work on *A Vision* is finished: "My head is full of things I want to write" (#4599). One of the first works Yeats would begin after *A Vision* was *The Resurrection*, "a sort of overflow from the book,"[400] but Yeats's prediction of his future work ("deeper & more passionate") resonates with the speaker's comment in Part I of "The Tower": "Never had I more / … passionate … / Imagination…" (409). The adjective "passionate" also recalls the pledge the speaker in "The Fisherman" had made a decade earlier ("'I shall have written

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[397] *Early Poems and Stories* 159. *Myth* 22.

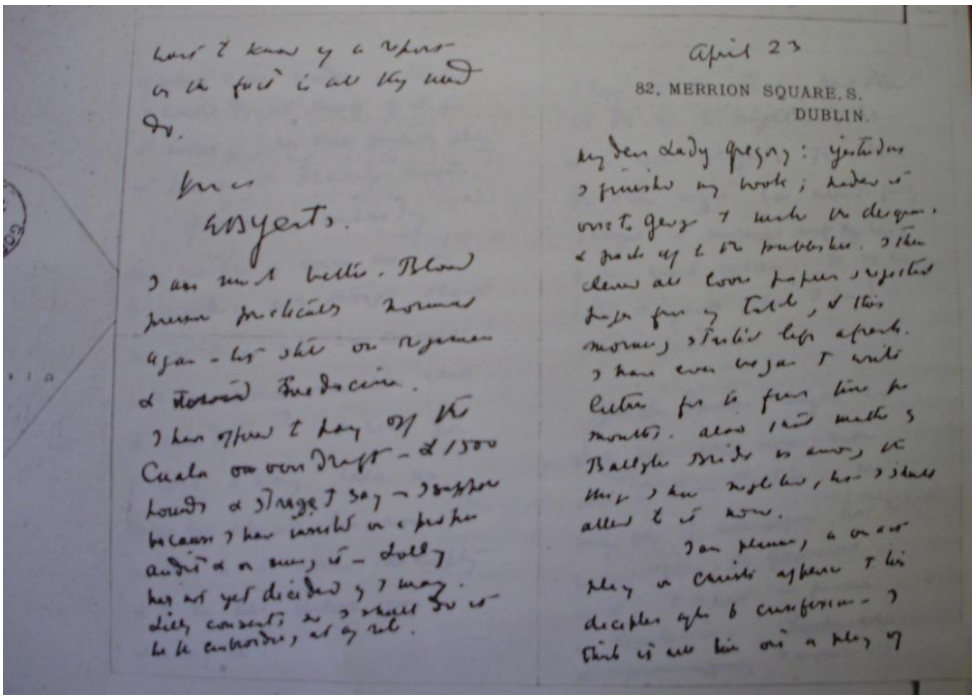
[398] *The Tower (1928) A Facsimile Edition* 105. *VP* 825. Yeats included the title of the essay in a draft of the note, which he struck it through, NLI 13,589 (1).

[399] 27 September 1925 #4779.

[400] [11 May 1925] #4725

him one / Poem maybe as cold / And passionate as the dawn.'") and in Part III of "The Tower" the poet would indeed leave his will to his imaginary heirs, who are, poetically, descendants of the "freckled man" Yeats had invented in 1914. [401]

On 22 April 1925 Yeats finally finished writing what would become *A Vision*, though he would painstakingly continue proofreading it until publication in January 1926. On 23 April he reported to Lady Gregory from 82 Merrion Square that he "handed it over to George to make the diagrams & pack off to the publisher" and "this morning started life afresh" (#4714). (See Figure 11.)



April 23

82, MERRION SQUARE, S.
DUBLIN.

Fig. 11. A photocopy of Yeats's letter to Lady Gregory, 23 April 1925 (#4714). NLI 18,743. Photograph by author. August 2012.

Yeats then mentioned Ballylee ("Also that matter of Ballylee Brid[g]e is among the things I have neglected, but I shall attend to it now…") as well as *The Resurrection*. Yeats's reference to "Ballylee Bridge," one of whose parapets had been blown up during the Civil War, testifies to his continued concern with the material tower, despite his long absence. Yeats, meanwhile, had to deal with Cuala's financial problems around the same time. He had just written his wife: "We may have to sell this house [at 82 Merrion Square] & give up

[401] A preserved draft of "The Fisherman" (347-8) is dated "June 4" [1914], *WSC* xvii, 140-41. First published in *Poetry*, February 1916.

Ballylee…."[402] The tower withstood this financial difficulties, but other concerns including the possibility of Lady Gregory's leaving Coole would also begin to cast a shadow on their possession of Ballylee.[403]

Yeats's long-term stay in Ballylee from 14 July until 12 October 1925 corresponds to the compositional period of "The Tower," which almost suggests that his return was to write the second tower sequence.[404] Yeats was now to demonstrate that his tower was ready to accommodate various dimensions of life and work, both personal and public, as we shall see in tracing its compositional history.

1

Lady Gregory records Yeats's being "rather afraid he may have lost his poetic gift through that long immersion in Philosophy" around the time Yeats arrived in Galway for the summer of 1925.[405] She continues: "But those verses in the Resurrection play were so fine I'm sure it will be all right."[406] About two weeks later we find Yeats composing "The Tower." According to the first of Gregory's two journal entries which refer to his work on the poem, Yeats was writing the Raftery passage (Part II) around 30 July 1925: "Yeats is still composing his Ballylee poem, a verse about Raftery celebrating Mary Hynes' beauty though he was blind…" (*J2* 30). The word "still," though not chronologically specific, suggests he had already been at work on the poem for some time. Her record of their conversation shows the way Yeats was talking to her about the poem while composing it: "And when I said Blind Homer had done the same for Helen he was pleased and put that in his verse…"—though Yeats had already compared Raftery with Homer in his 1899 essay. Her second record concerns Yeats's writing the opening and the Plato and Plotinus passages (Part

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[402] [April 1925] #4711. In the postscript to the 23 April letter Yeats told Lady Gregory "I have offered to pay off the Cuala overdraft…," #4714.
[403] See *J2* 164: 30 January 1927.
[404] See Kelly 242-43, *T* 110-11.
[405] *J2* 29: 14 [*sic*] July 1925.
[406] See also *J2* 12: 23 and 24 May 1925.

III) at Ballylee and Coole around 4 October 1925.[407] The preserved manuscript in Lady Gregory' hand in which she conflated two of Yeats's drafts corresponding to the first 24 lines of Part III suggests that Yeats did not just read, but "ma[de] available to her" some of his drafts.[408]

Only a few of the extant drafts of the poem are dated. There are preserved a heavily revised ink draft of Parts I and II and a nearly fair copy of Part III, dated "~~Sept~~ Oct 1925" first, then "~~Sept~~ Oct 7 / 1925" at the end of the revised ending on the next leaf, with the passage of the daws' nest added (and still without the soul-making final lines).[409] (See Figure 12.) This is the only extant draft of "The Tower" dated by Yeats himself. The first five sheets of the ink drafts for Parts I and II are numbered on the upper right in Yeats's hand. The drafts are written on every line of the ruled paper and are heavily corrected, with the versos of the sheets also used for revisions. The leaves for Part III, on the other hand, are unnumbered; the drafts are written more spaciously and are little corrected. This suggests the drafts of Parts I and II (*T* 86-105) and that of Part III (*T* 106-111) were written separately on different sittings. Regarding the two versions of the ending of Part III, it seems likely that Yeats wrote the draft, dating it "~~Sept~~ Oct 1925" (*T* 108-109), then wrote on a different leaf the lines about the daws' nest—the passage which had already appeared in an early draft (*T* 72-73)—before what was at that stage the last stanza ("I leave …") and dated "~~Sept~~ Oct 7 / 1925" at the end (*T* 110-11). The process of adding the bird's nest passage itself seems to exemplify the layer-upon-layer construction of the poem.

There are two undated typescripts preserved, which the Cornell edition of *The Tower* dates "probably spring 1927" (*T* xliv). The first typescript is generally based on the October 1925 ink draft which carries heavy revisions in Parts I and II; it incorporates "John Synge," the revision dating from November

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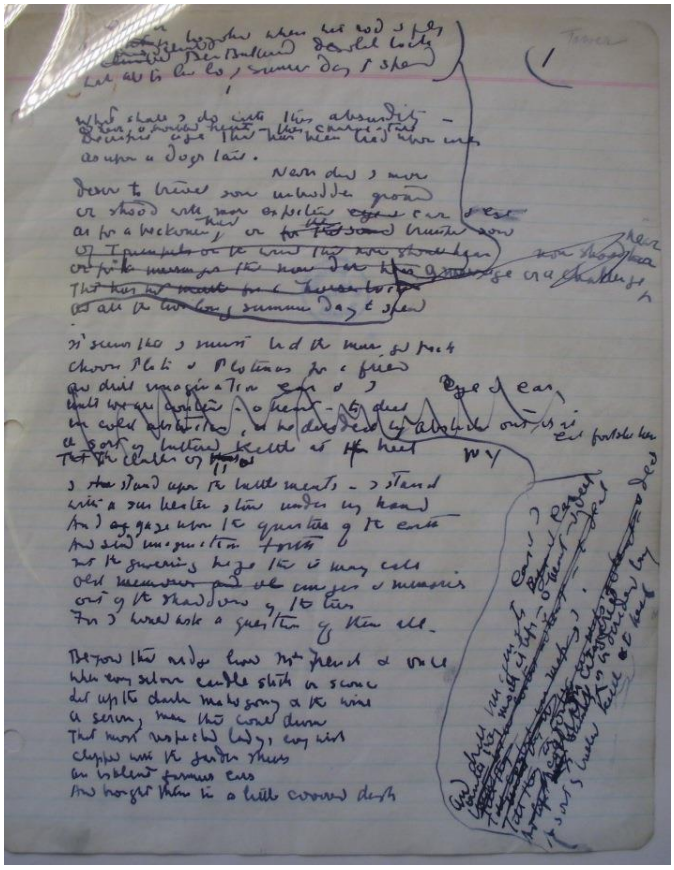
[407] *J2* 47: "Yeats came over bringing his new poem, or part of the Ballylee poem—he has just written—'It is time to make my will'. And he has begun the third in which he 'mocks at Plato and Plotinus.'"

[408] *T* 58-61. *T* 61n:"It seems very unlikely that Yeats took any role in the production of this draft, beyond making available to her the original leaves of his own drafts, and he certainly did not see hers to correct it."

[409] *T* 86-111, 111n.



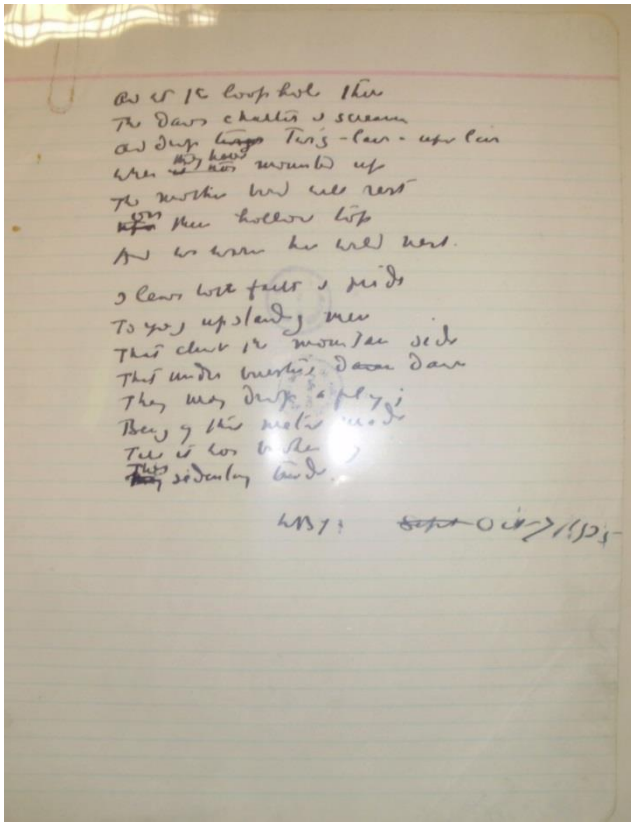


Fig. 12. *Above*: The first leaf of a numbered ink draft of "The Tower." NLI 13,589 (4). Photograph by author. August 2012. (See *T* 86-89.) *Below*: The last leaf of a nearly fair copy of Part III, "The Tower," dated "Sept Oct 7 / 1925." NLI 13,589 (4). Photograph by author. August 2012. (See *T* 110-11.)

1926, though changes it to "Burke" in hand ("people of Burke and of Grattan…"); its last eight lines ("I leave …") are struck out in ink (*T* 114-33). It is in the first typescript that we first find the poem titled: "THE TOWER." We have no other clue to when Yeats titled the poem. The second typescript is basically founded upon the revised first typescript. It seems possible that some corrections which are not found in the revisions to the first typescript but are incorporated in the second typescript, especially those substantial ones in Part I, are first made on the missing copies of the first typescript.[410] With no drafts preserved, those revisions of Part I after the first typescript are not traceable. The second typescript ends with new stanza of fifteen lines ("Now I shall …"), which replaces those eight lines struck out in (the first carbon copy of) the first typescript (*T* 134-41). This most radical change from the first typescript is also untraceable, with no earlier drafts available.[411] Given the revisions made between these two typescripts, there seems to have been some interval between them. There is a break, as in the ink draft, before the line "It seems that I must bid …" in Part I in the typescripts, which is to be kept until in the published text in periodicals.[412]

There is an extant holograph draft, written later than the second typescript, of the last passage of Part II where "turn aside / From great labyrinth out of pride" first appears (*T* xxvi, 142-43). The page proofs for *October Blast*, completed by 14 April 1927, are based on this version but incorporates further revisions of the passage (*T* xliv, 144-51). This indicates Yeats kept working, even after the second typescript, on the particular passage which examines the reasons of his failed relationship with the "woman lost." In the page proofs of *October Blast* the stanza of "sedentary trade" has been reinstalled as the penultimate stanza before the closing fifteen lines ("Now shall I …"), along with several corrections

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[410] "The first typescript … exists in three copies, an original… and two carbons…." The original copy of the first page is "missing," *T* 115n.

[411] The original copy of the final page of the first typescript of the poem is "unrevised"; the second carbon copy of the page is "missing," *T* 132-33.

[412] *T* 134-35. *VP* 409n. In *October Blast* and *The Tower*, the line "It seems…" is printed at the beginning of a new page and whether Yeats intended a break before the line "It seems…" has become unclear. In the *Collected Poems* the line in question immediately follows the previous one on the same page without a break.

(*T* 144-51); we first find the final published version of the closure, at the end of which the poem is dated "1925."

It is difficult for us to know beyond this about the dates of composition of "The Tower." The compositional history, which was relatively long—from July 1925 at the latest to its first publication in June 1927—of this most visible landmark of Yeats's oeuvre is in part mysteriously invisible. This is mainly due to his unusual silence about the poem in his correspondence and the virtual lack of extant early drafts of the first two parts, in contrast to the abundance of those for Part III (*T* 86-105). Little evidence is available either, concerning the dates of those two typescripts—a crucial late stage of the composition of the poem where Yeats heavily revised it.

Understandably, perhaps as a result, few critics have looked into the compositional history of "The Tower." An early biographer Joseph Hone provides little information about the poem's composition, though using some lines from the poem as an epigraph of one of his chapters.[413] It seems it was solely on the grounds of the date appended to the poem in *The Tower* volume ("1926") that Curtis Bradford, a pioneer of the study of Yeats's manuscript materials, assumed that Yeats had added the last fifteen "new lines" to the end of Part III in 1926: "No manuscript versions of these new lines have been found, so I cannot trace the history of their composition. Apparently Yeats completed them in 1926, the date he gave the finished poem...."[414] Yeats's dating, however, does not necessarily testify to the date of composition, as we may see from the fact that Yeats dated virtually the same text of "The Tower" (excepting minor corrections) "1925" in *October Blast* and "1926" in *The Tower* respectively. Roy Foster pays little attention to the compositional history of the poem, focusing instead on the finished poem in the context of the years 1926 and 1927.[415]

We will explore the compositional history of "The Tower" in two phases: first from the poem's conception to its virtual completion on 7 October 1925, and then the period of final revisions up to its first publication in June 1927. In my

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[413] Hone, *W. B. Yeats* 366.
[414] Bradford, *Yeats at Work* 101.
[415] See *Life2* 314-17.

research, I have not come across any detailed discussion of when Yeats began to plan "The Tower." There is an extant early fragmentary draft of Part I which Yeats had written at least by 23 April 1925. This undated fragment appears right after an entry dated 1922 in the white vellum notebook Yeats used from 7 April 1921 to at least 21 July 1927. On the verso of the next leaf is found an entry dated "April 23, 1925" about his finishing *A Vision*.[416] Curtis Bradford quotes this draft in his introduction in *Yeats at Work* as continuous prose—rather than in the shorter lines, the way they are actually written in the notebook—along with the "Topic for poem" for "Among School Children" written in the same notebook.[417] Bradford, however, does not explore what this early fragment of "The Tower" might suggest about the inception of the poem, while he devotes a chapter of his book to the drafts of Part III. This fragment for "The Tower" has been left out from the Cornell edition of *The Tower*, unlike the "Topic" for "Among School Children."

Yeats's use of the notebook in question was not very constant, as some dated entries show, and it is difficult to date more precisely this hitherto almost neglected draft for Part I of "The Tower." Preceding the entry about *A Vision* on 23 April 1925, however, the draft at least testifies to the fact that the opening passage of "The Tower" had already germinated when Yeats finished writing *A Vision* that spring (See Figure 13):

> What shall I do with this absurd toy
> which they have given me, their
> grotesque rattle. O heart O nerves,
> you are as vigorous as ever, you still
> hunger for the whole world, & they
> have given you this toy— (NLI 13,576)

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[416] NLI 13,576. The same date as his letter to Lady Gregory #4714.

[417] Bradford, *Yeats at Work* 4. Daniel Albright quotes the draft from Bradford, *Poems* 633. Richard Ellmann quotes from the notebook in the notes and writes "MS. Book, 1921," *IY* 327. See *T* xix, 360-61 for "Topic for poem" for "Among School Children."

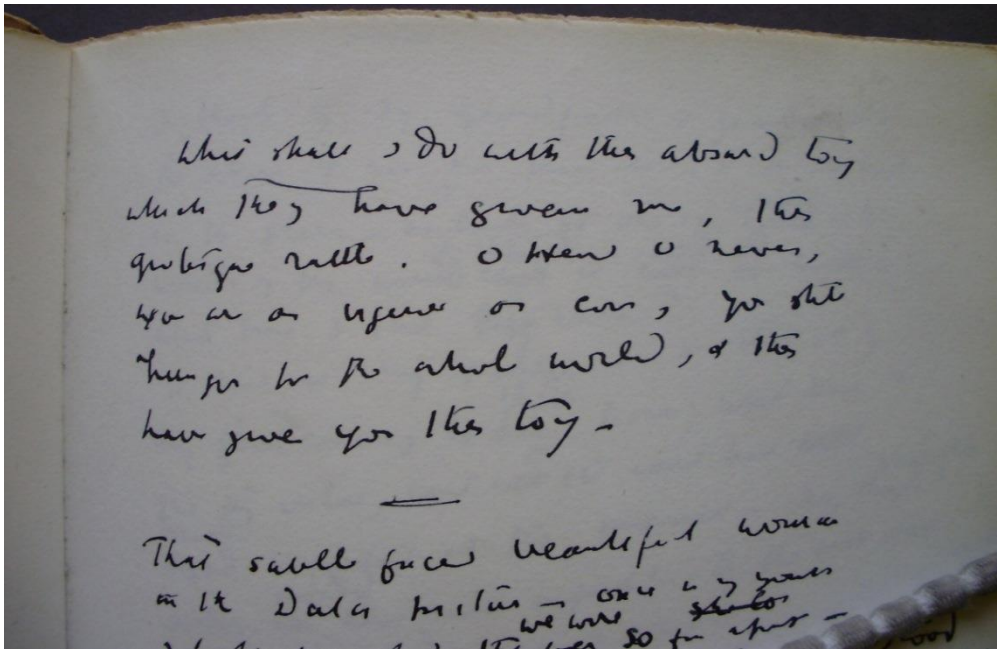

Fig. 13. An early draft for Part I of "The Tower" in the white vellum notebook. NLI 13,576. Photograph by author. March 2010.

As seen in the previous chapter, Yeats had already expressed his rage against old age in his letters before 1925. In June 1922 he had written in a letter how he was "in a rage at being old," feeling that "an enemy has bound me & twisted me so I can plan & think as I never could, but no longer achieve all I plan & think…."[418] In August 1923 Yeats had remarked during his brief stay at Thoor Ballylee that he was "writing nothing but curses upon old age" and "resisting Wordsworthian calm."[419] These provide a context for the poet's "rag[ing] / … against old age" (413), like Hanrahan in "Red Hanrahan's Curse," in Parts I and II of "The Tower," set in vivid contrast to Wordsworthian "grief."[420] Though nobody to date has apparently considered this possibility, the poem, judging from these pieces of evidence, may have been begun some time earlier than normally assumed—possibly even as early as in the summer of 1923. His experience of driven "on to the castle-roof" by "occasional horse-flies" (1

[418] To Olivia Shakespear, 7 June 1922 #4135.
[419] To Professor Grierson, 1 August 1923 #4353.
[420] The "power of the curse-making bards was upon him" and Hanrahan "made a curse upon old age and upon the old men," *Myth* 242-43. "Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song, / And while the young lambs bound… / To me alone there came a thought of grief…," Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works* (1849-1850).

August 1923 #4353) could have also prepared the use of the vantage point in Part II of "The Tower" as well as in his Nobel lecture.

After the virtual completion of the draft in October 1925, there seems to have been little communication between Yeats and Lady Gregory about "The Tower." In a letter on 1 November 1925 Yeats answers her enquiry about a poem, which may have been "The Tower": "I did not send that poem because I have altered the poem so much that I don't remember what I put in that first version…" (#4793). He says "This [the work for *A Vision* and *Autobiographies* (1926)] over I shall probably dictate the poem," then adds "but I may not for I have some strange little poetry in my head which needs writing." Yeats was perhaps referring to the group of poems which would eventually become "A Man Young and Old," some of which would be written in January and February 1926 and the rest in November and December in 1926 (*T* xlix). If we may assume "the poem" in the letter was "The Tower," it is possible that Yeats had made the heavy corrections we now find in the preserved drafts of Parts I and II on the numbered leaves during the one month period after his virtual completion of the poem's draft in October 1925. It seems likely that Yeats moved on to a group of love poems before immediately making a typescript and finalizing "The Tower" at this stage.

The next piece of evidence of Yeats's working on the poem dates from a year later, 1 November 1926, according to George's dating. Yeats sent her some lines from the opening passage of Part III, slightly revised to include the name "John Synge" along with "Grattan" ("John Synge & those people of Grattan"), saying "this is what you want."[421] This indicates that Yeats was revising the poem in late 1926 and talking to George about it. Unlike "Meditations," Yeats rarely wrote to others about his writing "The Tower." It was, for instance, shortly before the poem's first publication in 1927 that Yeats first asked Sturge Moore for the cover design of the book *The Tower*, without directly referring to the poem "The Tower" itself: "The book is to be called 'The Tower' as a number of the poems were written at & about Ballylee Castle."[422] As it happens, Yeats

[421] #4940, *T* 112-13, 113n.
[422] 23 May 1927 #5000.

wrote no letters to Olivia Shakespear in 1925; when their correspondence resumed in 1926, Yeats wrote about his poetry as before, but only a word about "The Tower" after publication: "Yes the 'Tower' seems a success, people have written."[423] Yeats had, on the other hand, already told her about his next tower-oriented poem "Blood and the Moon."[424] Yeats's silence about "The Tower" in his correspondence, paradoxically, seems to indicate the poem's special status as his testament.

Based on the evidence of these limited materials available today, we may hypothetically summarize the compositional history of "The Tower" as follows: Yeats conceived of Part I of "The Tower" at least before 23 April 1925—possibly as early as 1923—and finished the draft of the whole poem on 7 October 1925. Thereafter he heavily revised Parts I and II of the October draft possibly by 1 November 1925 but was still revising the poem about a year later around 1 November 1926. He made at least two typescripts probably early 1927, composing the last stanza after the first typescript, and completed the page proofs for *October Blast* by 14 April 1927. This means "The Tower" was substantially finished by 7 October 1925 and the rest of the period was for the revision of the poem. The drafts underwent heavy revisions at least twice, first on the leaves of the October 1925 draft and then on the first typescript. The revisions, however, were not those to transform the overall architecture of the poem but to shape the building materials. The revision which influences the structure of the poem most was the addition of the last fifteen lines.

One of the hypotheses to be derived from the consideration of compositional history of "The Tower," I would suggest, is the interrelated genesis and mutual influence of the passages on the soul in the first two poems in *The Tower*—"the soul clap its hands" and "Now shall I make my soul." These passages appeared at a very late stage of composition of "Sailing to Byzantium" and "The Tower" respectively.[425] "Sailing to Byzantium" was first published in *October Blast* and both poems may have been finalized around the same time shortly before the book's page proofs.

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[423] 7 September 1927 #5023.
[424] After 10 July 1927 #5013.
[425] See *T* 38-41 for the late ink drafts of "Sailing to Byzantium."

During the relatively long interval between the draft in October 1925 and the second typescript in spring 1927, Yeats had composed and revised "Sailing to Byzantium" and "Among School Children." These poems as well as "The Tower" grapple with the relationship between old age, philosophy and song. Yeats began to write "Among School Children" and "Sailing to Byzantium" in 1926, had them typed and revised the typescripts in the same year—which was perhaps before his working on the typescripts of "The Tower." The school inspection which Yeats made as a Senator in late March 1926 is known to have inspired "Among School Children."[426] After writing "Among School Children" in May and June 1926,[427] Yeats worked on "Sailing to Byzantium" in August at Muckross House in Co. Kerry where he stayed for that purpose.[428] In September Yeats told Olivia Shakespear that he had written "Sailing to Byzantium" to "recover [his] spirits."[429]

There is preserved a heavily corrected typescript of "Sailing to Byzantium" dated "Sept 26 1926" in his hand, which suggests the date of his correction (*T* 32-3). Both the typescript and the revisions at this stage were, however, far from the final version of the poem. The text was still without the passage of the "soul clap its hands" among others, and there was to be a long way for the typescript to reach the final form of the poem. On 24 September 1926, just two days before the date on the typescript of "Sailing to Byzantium," Yeats had sent from Ballylee to Olivia Shakespear the sixth philosophers' stanza ("Plato…") of "Among School Children."[430] His calling it "a fragment of my last curse upon old age" (#4927) may indicate a shift in his focus from curse-making to soul-making. According to the letter, Yeats was writing verses, while on the other

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[426] Kelly 246. Yeats had given a lecture on "education in the Primary Schools," "The Child and the State," to the Irish Literary Society on 30 November 1925, published in the *Irish Statesman* on 5 and 12 December 1925, *UP2* 454-61. He made speeches on the subject in the Senate on 24, 30 March and 28 April 1926, *Senate Speeches* 96-105. "I hope to prove that education is being starved..." (to Lady Gregory, 26 March 1926 #4854).

[427] According to Lady Gregory's record Yeats was "pleased at having suddenly begun a poem suggested by the school he had visited" on 26 May 1926 (*J2* 101). If "his poem" in her journal entry on 13 June also refers to "Among School Children," he had "nearly finished" it and "repeated one verse that sounds fine" on 12 June 1926 (*J2* 107). There are preserved a draft of the poem dated 14 June 1926 and a corrected typescript with the typed date of "14 June 1926."

[428] See, for instance, Yeats's letter to the Marchioness of Londonderry on 21 August 1926 #4914.

[429] 5 September 1926 #4920.

[430] #4927, *T* 388-89.

hand reading "Croce & his like" to "make the conception of the Daimon…clear" and "find a positive ageless energy or perception." The "ageless energy or perception" anticipates "unageing intellect" in "Sailing to Byzantium," which would appear at a later stage of drastic revisions of the poem's drafts.[431] The contrast between the "ageing body" and the "unageing intellect" and also the motif of soul and school are shared by "Sailing to Byzantium," "Among School Children" and "The Tower."

Yeats had also written to the same correspondent a few months before on 2 July 1926 (#4891): "I am in better health than I was & I do really believe that I owe it to Plotinus as much as to the tower." This may illuminate Yeats's palinode about Plotinus in his notes to "The Tower" which he would append to the poem on its inclusion in *October Blast*—"When I wrote the lines about Plato and Plotinus I forgot that it is something in our own eyes that makes us see them as all transcendence. Has not Plotinus written: 'Let every soul recall … at the outset the truth that soul is the author of all living things….'"[432] My suggestion is that Yeats's composing of "Among School Children" and "Sailing to Byzantium" and his related reading in 1926 may well have inspired not only the palinode in the notes but the final crucial fifteen lines on soul-making in "The Tower."

2

In "The Tower," the poet's residential fort and war-time study in the first tower sequence has been transformed into a stage for soliloquy, storytelling and public declaration. In its final form, it moves progressively from the protagonist's rant in the prologue (Part I), his review of the (legendary) past that nourishes and unifies the soil where the tower is rooted (Part II), the public delivery of his testament to his chosen heirs and an epilogue where he declares his resolution to make his soul (Part III). Taken together, the poem offers vistas

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[431] *T* 34-35. The spelling "unaging" in *The Tower* (1928) was revised to "unageing" in the revised and reprinted *The Tower* (1929) as in *October Blast*, *VP* 407.

[432] *The Tower (1928) A Facsimile Edition* 107, *VP* 826-27.

of the present (Part I), the past (Part II) and the future (Part III), all unified around the central stage of the tower itself.

I

What shall I do with this absurdity…

In Part I, the overture, the poetic persona speaks a dramatic soliloquy, an old man's rant against old age, alone on an invisible stage as it were. The speaker's inner dialogue with his heart at the opening is, in a way, an antithetical sequel to that of the Platonist poet at the end of "Meditations": "But O! ambitious heart … abstract joy … / Suffice the ageing man as once the growing boy." In Part I of "The Tower" the poet claims that his friend is "the Muse," rather than "Plato and Plotinus," and his current "imagination, ear and eye" cannot "be content with argument and deal / In abstract things," even though he must "be derided" for it by his old age. This theme of a passionate old man would be developed in later poems such as "A Prayer for Old Age" and "An Acre of Grass."[433]

Containing no images of stone structure, Part I is fortified by its tight chiastic structure, including its correspondences to Part III, and braced stanzaic form. Part I strikes the keynote of dissonance—between imagination and the ageing body—and rages against it by opening with a question, addressed to the poet's "heart":

> What shall I do with this absurdity—
> O heart, O troubled heart—this caricature,
> Decrepit age that has been tied to me
> As to a dog's tail? (409)

This opening question is, symmetrically, answered by the last written closing stanza in Part III, the coda which is focused on "soul":

[433] "A Prayer for Old Age" would be first published in November 1934 and "An Acre of Grass" in April 1938.

Now shall I make my soul
Compelling it to study
In a learned school
Till the wreck of body…
Or dull decrepitude…
Seem but the clouds of the sky…
Or a bird's sleepy cry…. (416)

The word "decrepitude" in the last stanza of Part III derives from the keyword "Decrepit" in Part I and recapitulates the theme of old age. The onomatopoeic word "rattle" in the early fragmentary draft for Part I seems to have been transformed into a Latinate "Decrepit," which derives from Latin *dēcrepitus*, made up of *dē-* (down) and *crepit-* (to crack, creak, rattle) (*OED*). "Decrepit" is the sole instance of the word in Yeats's poetry and "decrepitude" would occur only once again in his poetry in "After Long Silence," where "Bodily decrepitude" would be called "wisdom" (523). [434]

Part I itself comprises two corresponding passages. The conceit—"Decrepit age that has been tied to me / As to a dog's tail…"—in the first quatrain is echoed in last quatrain: "be derided by / A sort of battered kettle at the heel." "Never had I more / Excited, passionate, fantastical / Imagination, nor an ear and eye / That more expected the impossible" is mirrored in the last quatrain by "Until imagination, ear and eye, / Can be content with argument and deal / In abstract things…"(409). The chiastic arrangement provides, as Helen Vendler observes elsewhere, "solidity of structure," suggesting "considered forethought behind" the sixteen-line outburst against old age.[435] Part I virtually reached its final form in the second typescript. Until in the first typescript, which is based on the ink draft, "imagination…" is found only in the fourth last line, where the poet talks about "drill imagination, ear and eye, / Until they mock at life, Oh heart…" (*T* 114-5), which, indeed, anticipates "Compelling" "my soul" "to study / In a learned school / Till…" in the final soul-making. In the passage where we

[434] "After Long Silence" would be composed in November 1929 and first published in 1932.
[435] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 185. She comments on the "chiasmic arc" in Yeats's first *abab* trimeter-quatrain poem "To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing."

first find "imagination…" in the present poem the first typescript had "Never did I more / Desire to travel some untrodden ground, / Or stood with more expectant ear and eye, / As for a beckoning hand or trumpet sound."

The relationship between old age and the poet's bafflement is captured by the conceit of old age as a thing tied to one "[a]s to a dog's tail." The simile "As to a dog's tail" caricatures the poet by associating him with a powerless, victimized dog. The mocking simile conveys the speaker's sense that the "[d]ecrepit age" is extraneous to him. The early fragment in the notebook shows that Part I developed out of the sense of having something irrational forced on him: "What shall I do with this absurd toy / which they have given me, their / grotesque rattle…."[436] What is called "they" in the fragment may correspond to "the power" in Part II in the October 1925 draft ("rage / Against the power that made old age"), which is deleted in ink in the first typescript.[437] Having something alien forced on oneself was also expressed by such verbs as "graft" and "plant" in Part II in the October 1925 draft before revision: "~~Whether that cold had grafted upon the bone~~ / ~~Whether … age were planted~~ in the bone…" (*T* 102-103). The image of tying would occur again, compressed and inverted, in "Sailing to Byzantium," where "my heart" is "fastened to a dying animal" (408).

The key phrase "absurd toy" in the early fragment is transformed into an abstract word "absurdity," the first quadrisyllabic Latinate word in the present poem. This is strikingly one of only two instances of the word being used in Yeats's poetry.[438] In the colloquial question the word "absurdity" stands out, demonstrating its etymological meaning "dissonance," the keynote of Part I.[439] The "assymetrical" rhyme—"absurdity" and "me"—exemplifies the incongruity between "Decrepit age" and the poet.[440] The unsettling discrepancy between the poet's imagination and his age is conveyed with the jarring juxtapositions of abstract and concrete words, including another asymmetrical (slant) rhyme in the

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[436] NLI 13,576.

[437] *T* 100-103, 122-23.

[438] The other is "An abstract Greek absurdity…" in "Ribh denounces Patrick," "Supernatural Songs" (556).

[439] The word "absurdity" originates from "post-classical Latin *absurditat-* , *absurditas* dissonance (4th cent.)," *OED*.

[440] Vendler remarks on Yeats's "risk[ing] using asymmetrical slant rhymes such as *school* / *beautiful* or *enough* / *love*" as well as on his "unprecedented serious quadrisyllabic rhymes such as *fantastical* and *impossible* in 'The Tower,'" *Our Secret Discipline* 92.

first quatrain "caricature" / "more" and the contrasting pairs in the second quatrain "fantastical" / "impossible" and "eye" / "fly."

The poet's claim "Never had I more / Excited, passionate, fantastical / Imagination, nor an ear and eye…," as has been pointed out, echoes a letter of William Blake's.[441] The letter was written when Blake had just recovered from illness, which, however, would turn out to be only four months before his death. In an early article Yeats had quoted from this "most beautiful of all the letters, his own and other people's," which had been "written in shaking strokes by [Blake's] dying hand": "I have been very near the Gates of Death & have returned very weak & an Old Man feeble & tottering, but not in Spirit & Life, not in The Real Man The Imagination which Liveth for Ever. In that I am stronger & stronger as this Foolish Body decays."[442]

The speaker's claim "Never had I more … / It seems that I must bid the Muse go pack…" also recalls the contrast between Landor and Wordsworth in Yeats's meditation on a poet in old age in the last section in "Anima Hominis," dated "February 25, 1917" and written shortly before his agreeing on the purchase of Ballylee Castle: "Could he [a poet growing old] if he would, knowing how frail his vigour from youth up, copy Landor who lived loving and hating, ridiculous and unconquered, into extreme old age, all lost but the favour of his Muses?" His quotation from Landor's "Memory" there ("The Mother of the Muses, we are taught, / Is Memory; she has left me; they remain, / And shake my shoulder, urging me to sing…") provides a literary context to the poet's reference to the Muse in Part I of "The Tower." In "Anima Hominis" Yeats continued: "He will buy perhaps some small old house.… Then he will remember Wordsworth withering into eighty years, honoured and empty-witted, and climb to some waste room and find, forgotten there by youth, some bitter crust" (*Myth* 342). With "Never had I more…" in Part I of "The Tower" Yeats "resist[s] Wordsworthian calm," again reversing, as at the closure of "Meditations," the tenor of Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode" ("The things which I have seen I now can see no more…") while alluding to his sonnet on Izaak

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[441] Jeffares, *A New Commentary* 216. Albright, *Poems* 633.

[442] "Chevalier Burke and Shule Aroon," *The Boston Pilot*, 28 December 1889, *Letters to the New Island* 94. See *The Letter of William Blake* 168.

Walton's *The Complete Angler* through the motif of fishing: "No, not in boyhood when with rod and fly … had the livelong summer day…."[443]

The motif of the poet's boyhood climbing on "Ben Bulben's back" to fish corresponds to that of his spiritual heirs in Part III ("young upstanding men, / That climb the mountain side…") and underlines the speaker's claim to have been "of that metal made…" (416). Those lines about fishing in Part I first appeared in the revisions to the ink draft.[444] The way the motif of a boy's climbing and fishing in Part I is continued by that of young men at the beginning and towards the end of Part III may be associated with the currents of "the streams" they follow to the source. In "The Stirring of the Bones" Yeats had referred to the woods "above the waterfall at Ben Bulben" as "so deep in my affections that I dream about them at night."[445] Embedding those three lines about his fishing on Ben Bulben into "The Tower" means incorporating the Sligo dimensions of Yeats's life and imagination into his tower as part of its "foundations."

II

I pace upon the battlements and stare
On the foundations of a house…

In striking contrast to being "derided by / A sort of battered kettle at the heel," Part II begins with the poet's "pac[ing] upon" the vantage of "the battlements," signaling the start of his public performance on that stage. It sets the "sweeping" pace of his thoughts in Part II as they ramble from one image to another, from stanza to stanza, emphasizing horizontal mobility.[446] This is where the architecture of the tower first appears in the poem and where the poet first "pace[s] upon the battlements" in any of his tower-oriented poems.

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[443] "Whose pen, the mysteries of the rod and line… / Meek, nobly versed in simple discipline--- / He found the longest summer day too short…." "Written upon a Blank Leaf in 'The complete Angler'" *The Poetical Works* (1849-1850).

[444] *T* 86-87. See Figure 2.

[445] First published in 1922. *Au* 283.

[446] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 295: "… it is in the Gregory elegy that Yeats first successfully undertakes the sort of sweeping and (putatively) random reminiscence that will pervade 'The Tower (II), 'All Soul's Night,' and 'The Municipal Gallery Revisited.'"

The contrast between "lean[ing] upon broken stone" (425) in the closing section of "Meditations" and "pac[ing] upon the battlements" in "The Tower" epitomizes the different natures of the two tower sequences. The verb Yeats originally used was "stand," however, until it was revised in ink to the present "pace" in the first typescript: "I stand upon the battlements, I stand / With a sun-beaten stone under my hand, / And gaze upon the quarters of the earth…."[447] Before the revision, the verb "stand" here harked back to "stood" used at that stage in Part I ("Never did I more / Desire to travel some untrodden ground, / Or stood with more expectant ear and eye, / As for a beckoning hand or trumpet sound," *T* 114-15). The shared verb suggests that, in the compositional process at the stage of the October 1925 drafts and the first typescript, Parts I and II had a closer relationship than they do in the present poem.[448] The vivid texture of "a sun-beaten stone" felt under the protagonist's hand was deleted when the verb "pace" replaced "stand."[449] In place of the "sun-beaten stone," which synecdochically represented the restored tower, appeared "the foundations of a house." The juxtaposition of the "battlements" and "foundations of a house" highlights the completion of the tower.

Some of the shorter lines in Part II were indented in the first typescript and corrected in ink on the same sheet. This may indicate that Yeats temporarily considered following the indentation used in Abraham Cowley's elegy ("On the Death of Mr. William Hervey"). Part II of "The Tower" adopts, as Helen Vendler points out, Cowley's "non-*ottava rima* octave sanzas" as in two of Yeats's previous tower-oriented poems ("In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" and "A Prayer for My Daughter") and the indentation would have made the poem look more archaic and also graphically suggest the battlements.[450]

The ink revision in the same typescript from "Into the quivering haze" to "Under that ~~setting suns~~ days declining beam" in the first stanza clarified the

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[447] *T* 116-17.

[448] In the ink draft on the leaf numbered "1," the Roman numeral "II" which shows the beginning of Part II appears to have been added later than the following lines, which are written below Part I with only one line space in-between, *T* 86. See Figure 2 above.

[449] Cornell *T* 116.

[450] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 292-93: "Yeats 'concealed,' by suppressing indentation, the irregularity of line-length…. If Yeats had followed Cowley's mode of indentation … his elegy ['In Memory of Major Robert Gregory'] would appear 'old-fashioned,' 'metaphysical,' and 'formal' rather than 'modern,' 'literal,' and 'casual'…."

movement towards sunset in the poem and also the correspondence to the passage of "One inextricable beam" in the fifth stanza.[451] The "day's declining beam" contrasts with "the livelong summer day" in Part I as well as with the motifs of the "dawn" and "morn" in Part III and will be continued in the images of sunset at the end. "The Tower" indeed represents the sunset "as cold / And passionate as the dawn."

The "foundations of a house" the poet "stare[s] / On" from the battlements alludes to "'the little old foundation of the house'" where Mary Hynes lived, to which the speaker had been brought in the essay "Dust hath Closed Helen's Eye."[452] The word "foundations," which is really suggestive at this time and place, also evokes the foundations of his own "house," the tower. In the course of Part II various components of the foundations of the tower are called up and "come alive" one after another.[453] In Part III the poet will also enumerate the "foundations" of his poetry. It was nearly a decade since Yeats had begun his poetical construction of the tower with "Ego Dominus Tuus" in late 1915 and described his whole work in terms of architecture in January 1916 as seen earlier: "… my house being still unfinished, there are so many rooms and corridors that I am still building upon foundations laid long ago…" (#2842). The speaker "upon the battlements" may have been looking back on all these foundations, including the remains of Mary Hynes's house, as the "foundations" of this tower sequence "laid long ago."

It was also "at the foundation of a nation" (#4900)—through the Easter Rising, the Anglo-Irish War, the establishment of the Irish Free State and the Civil War—that Yeats was constructing his tower. Yeats plainly wrote about his symbolic use of the tower and "liv[ing] at the foundation of a nation" to the Marchioness of Londonderry in July 1926, implicitly suggesting the national significance of the symbol of the tower:

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[451] Daniel Albright calls "The Tower" "a poem of sunset," *Poems* 635.

[452] *Myth* 22. Yeats also describes the place where Mary Hynes lived in the 1900 and 1902 versions of his unfinished novel *The Speckled Bird*, *SB* 44, 156.

[453] Yeats's expression about the top room: "… where all the legends come alive…," #4519.

> I am making this gaunt tower the centre of many poems. It is a deliberately chosen symbol of some difficult truths. I feel that those who are fortunate enough to live at the foundation of a nation (& this nation is in the main knew [new] despite its gaelic dreams) can affect the future as men of greater genius elsewhere cannot.[454]

To make the tower "the centre of many poems" might mean making the tower the central focus in each of "many poems," but also configuring "many poems" in relation to the tower as their shared centre, or making the tower a symbolic repository of "many poems." In expectation of her visit to Ballylee, the previous month Yeats had sent the Marchioness of Londonderry "a photograph of the house" and written "We shall be very proud to show you our tower." The first person plural possessive pronoun may sound to imply more than Yeats and George as if "our tower" was a symbol of Ireland that survived the Civil War, with a visible scar left on the bridge ("You will notice in the photograph that one side of the bridge is gone…").[455] Yeats had recently begun another symbol-making work, a typically foundational work of a nation, as the chair of the committee on the designs of the new Irish coinage, "the silent ambassadors of national taste."[456] In mid-July 1926, he had delivered a speech in the Senate on the "motion, requesting the Government to pass a resolution designed to bring the Lane pictures back to Ireland"—another work related to nation-building.[457]

In Yeats's tower-related poems we have been introduced to the views "of" the tower from various aspects both in close-up and in perspective. We now have a view "from" the tower in Part II of this sequence. The poet on his commanding stage "send[s] imagination forth," "call[s] / Images and memories / From ruin or from ancient trees" to the tower and dismisses them at will, as if he were indeed the "ancient ruffian," the "juggler." Yeats manipulates readers'

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[454] 23 July 1926 #4900.

[455] 19 June 1926 #4882.

[456] Yeats spoke in the Senate on March 3, 1926: "The official designs of the Government, especially its designs in connection with postage stamps and coinage, may be described, I think, as the silent ambassadors of national taste…," *Senate Speeches* 95. "The Committee [on coinage] set to work in June, 1926, and seventeen meetings later, in April, 1928, had completed its task…," *Senate Speeches* 95n. "If we succeed I shall try to get something done about the stamps…," 19 June 1926 #4882. See also #4972.

[457] See *Senate Speeches* 108-14 for Yeats's speech on 14 July 1926.

view—spatially and temporally—juggling with various demonstratives throughout Part II: "that ridge," "That most respected lady's every wish," "that rocky place," "those rhymes," "that ancient ruffian's turn," "this house," "that ruin," "these rocks," "this door," "those eyes," "that deep considering mind" and so on. It is like being in a documentary film, shot from the battlements.

The motifs of rise and fall are repeated in Part II. Because of the song commending a "peasant girl," we are told that "certain men" "Rose from the table" under the moonlight and "one was drowned in the great bog of Cloone." "Caught by an old man's juggleries," "Hanrahan rose in frenzy" and was driven from "an old bawn" "through the dawn" and "stumbled, tumbled, fumbled to and fro." The "half-mounted" "master of this house" became "bankrupt" and then came "that ruin," though "Before that ruin came, for centuries" "Rough men at arms" "climbed the narrow stairs." The passage on the power of songs—"certain men, being maddened by those rhymes…"—may also, covertly, commemorate nationalist uprisings, the Easter Rising in particular, whose elegy "Easter, 1916" is evoked later in Part III by its form. The relationship between a song and rising would again be asked much later in one of the last questions that haunted the poet: "Did that play of mine send out / Certain men the English shot?" (632).

The speaker draws rein, as it were, with the dashes in the midst of the account of "Hanrahan's pursuit" and with the interjection "enough!" forces readers to break off following Hanrahan in their mind's eye, while making himself seem to be casually improvising. The dash after "towards" half demonstrates Hanrahan's "unforeknown, unseeing / Plunge," while also drawing attention to the unnamed destination. Yeats cited his own work in the notes to the sequence: "Hanrahan's pursuit … is from my *Stories of Red Hanrahan.*"[458] In Yeats's story "Red Hanrahan" the hero Hanrahan, following the phantoms, "passed by the place where the river goes underground at Ballylee, and he could hear the hounds going before him up towards the head of the river," finally finding himself "in the heart of Slieve Echtge."[459] The "place where the river

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[458] *The Tower (1928) A Facsimile Edition* 105-106. *VP* 825.

[459] *Myth* 219-20. "Red Hanrahan" was first published in 1903 and was "closely revised" (*Myth* 2005 342) for inclusion in *Stories of Red Hanrahan* (Dundrum) (dated 1904 and published in 1905) (Wade 59), where it replaced "The Book of the Great Dhoul and Hasnrahan the Red"

goes underground at Ballylee" was also the spot Yeats in the 1899 essay featured in relation to "a strong cellar in Ballylee" in Raftery's poem: "the strong cellar was the great hole where the river sank underground, and he brought me to a deep pool…."[460] "Slieve Echtge" appears in the story as the site of "a fairy mound" where Hanrahan was "unable to free a captive Queen of Erinn," "Echtge, daughter of the Silver Hand"—indeed it is the original site of Hanrahan's failure, related to the final passage of Part II of the present poem.[461] Sllieve Echtge, though unnamed in the final poem, like Ben Bulben, underlies the setting of "The Tower." Ben Bulben is named as the site of the poet's boyhood fishing in Part I, but the place name "Echtge" (spelt "Ochte") appeared along with "Bulben" in early drafts of the "upstanding men" passage in Part III, as we will see. In naming Hanrahan, Yeats makes him a unifying symbol of many different strands in the sequence.

These partly underground allusions concerning the unnamed destination of Hanrahan's wandering ("towards—") in "The Tower" also touch on the issue of Yeats's collaboration with Lady Gregory and his acknowledgement of her role in the revision of the Hanrahan stories. It was on the republication of the stories in *Early Poems and Stories* (1925) that Yeats named her in his acknowledgement: "REWRITTEN IN 1907 WITH LADY GREGORY'S HELP."[462] In 1905 she had inscribed on the verso of the title page of John Quinn's copy of the 1904[5] edition of *Stories of Red Hanrahan*: "I was very glad and proud to help in the re-writing of these stories … bringing Hanrahan back to Galway from Sligo where W. Yeats had first set him wandering… to Ballylee, which belongs to my present

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(1897) in *The Secret Rose* (Bullen 1897) (Wade 21), whose very different earlier version was "The Devil's Book" published in *The National Observer*, November 26, 1892. See *VSR* 83-95, 183-97, 267-71. *Myth* 2005 342.

[460] *Myth* 23. It was when this essay, first published in *The Dome*, October 1899, was collected in *The Celtic Twilight* (1902) that Yeats used the present spelling "Ballylee," replacing the former "Baile-laoi." *Myth* 2005 224n.

[461] *Myth* 2005 347n28. *Myth* 221.

[462] See *Myth* 2005 xlvii-l. Yeats's "prefatory note in rubric" to "The Book of the Great Dhoul and Hanrahan the Red" (1897) read: "A friend has helped me to remake these stories nearer to the mind of the country places where Hanrahan and his like wandered and are remembered," *Myth* 2005 xlviii.

home, Coole. Augusta Gregory. July 17, 1905..."[463]—though Yeats himself "had brought Hanrahan to 'the Town of the Grey Lough' [Loughrea, County Galway] in the 1897 text."[464] Given this aspect of complication over collaboration, the claim "And I myself created Hanrahan / And drove him … / I thought it all out… / towards— / O towards I have forgotten what—enough!" may begin to bear a different connotation, with "I myself" in contrast to Lady Gregory rather than Raftery or Homer.[465]

With the interjection "enough!"—a return of the dramatic soliloquy mode—the focus changes back to the tower, now called "this house," and its former owner. In the next haunted stanza the "narrow stairs" bustling with hearty soldiers come into our view—close enough for us to hear and see the "loud cry and panting breast" of some of them. This is where the interior of the tower first appears in this sequence:

> Before that ruin came, for centuries,
> Rough men-at-arms, cross-gartered to the knees
> Or shod in iron, climbed the narrow stairs,
> And certain men-at-arms there were
> Whose images in the Great Memory stored,
> Come with loud cry and panting breast
> To break upon a sleeper's rest
> While their great wooden dice beat on the board.
> (412)

The succession of active verbs and plosives in the last three lines of the stanza ("Come…cry," "panting breast," "break upon," "great wooden dice" and "beat … board") makes those images of soldiers "come alive." "An ancient bankrupt master of this house" and "Rough men-at-arms" bring back the historical

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[463] *Myth* 2005 xlviii. See also the editors' note (xlviiin75): "Lady Gregory wished to capture Hanrahan for Kiltartan, but his 'vision' remained firmly grounded on the Steep Place of the Strangers, Co. Sligo…."

[464] "The Book of the Great Dhoul and Hanrahan the Red," *Myth* 2005 344n9. *VSR* 184ff. O'Suillivan the Red in "The Devil's Book" was located in Cork. *VSR* 185ff.

[465] See *Myth* 2005 l: "No wonder WBY was to insist, with some emphasis of manner in 'The Tower'…."

dimension of the tower as a place of military defence evoked in "My House" ("A man-at-arms / Gathered a score of horse…" (420). The "narrow stairs" which "men-at-arms" climbed "for centuries" can be read as a powerful synecdoche of both the architecture and history—a particularly troubling, colonial history to evoke in 1925, post the creation of the Irish Free State. It feels as if hundreds of years of violent history were compressed in the winding stair, which combines the past and the present—and even perhaps the future. The image of the soldiers "climb[ing] the narrow stairs" also forms a striking parallel to the leitmotif of the "upstanding men" who "climb the streams" in Part III.

The ghosts of "certain men at arms" link the past with "a sleeper," the current master of the house. With the last two lines of the stanza ("To break upon a sleeper's rest …") the bedroom of the "sleeper" seems to "break upon" our view, almost making the stanza itself look like his bedroom. The reference to the "sleeper" puts a spotlight on Yeats as a tower dweller and this scene is also highlighted in the notes to the poem: "The ghosts have been seen at their game of dice in what is now my bedroom…."[466] His referring to "what is now my bedroom" emphasizes his present ownership and its temporary nature. Yeats's being preoccupied by Cuala's financial problems around April 1925 may have possibly resonated with the "bankrupt master" and the anecdote adds a worldly, pecuniary character to the military past of the building.

Starting with "the day's declining beam" and aspiring to make "the moon and sunlight seem / One inextricable beam," Part II ends with "the day blotted out" by the power of "memory." The poet re-examines his past crucial experience of love's "failure"—the word used in the second typescript—invoking Hanrahan's "[r]eckon[ing] up" of his every "Plunge," which prefigures the poet's own "dreaming back" after death, and suggesting the prime importance of that love.[467] The "[r]eckon[ing] up" of possible causes prefigures the rhetoric of enumeration in Part III:

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[466] *The Tower (1928) A Facsimile Edition* 106. *VP* 825.

[467] *T* 139. See *T* 126-27 for the second version of the ink revision to the first typescript, where "failure," "admitted" and "Admit" first appear in the passage: "And ~~when~~ if, when you

> Does the imagination dwell the most
> Upon a woman won or woman lost?
> If on the lost, admit you turned aside
> From a great labyrinth out of pride,
> Cowardice, some silly over-subtle thought
> Or anything called conscience once;
> And that if memory recur, the sun's
> Under eclipse and the day blotted out. (413-14)

Preserved manuscript materials show that the last passage of Part II was the most revised of the sequence and virtually finalized as late as after the second typescript.[468] (See Figure 14.) This autobiographical passage where the speaker self-tormentingly searches for the expression of the cause of the love's failure recalls Yeats's "persistent" exploration of his relationship with Maud Gonne during the automatic-writing sessions with George.[469] The transformation of the listed causes, the process out of which the phrase "turn aside / From great labyrinth out of pride" finally emerges between the second typescript and the page proofs of *October Blast*, itself exhibits Yeats's "persistent" "[r]eckon[ing] up" of the traumatic experience.[470] The key term "eclipse" in the celestial metaphor is the only instance of the word in Yeats's published poetry. It appeared in the first revisions in the first typescript, replacing "Suddenly made bankrupt" (*T* 124-25). The image of eclipse is easily associated with the theme of blindness in the poem: the blind poets (Raftery and Homer) and Hanrahan's

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apportioned out the blame, / You have admitted ~~parting~~ failure came … / Admit this further …." The word "failure" replaced the phrase "brought all to nought" used until the first typescript. (See Figure 4.)

[468] *T* 139, 142-443, 148. See also *T* 104-105, 124-27.

[469] *MYV1* 30. The passage may refer to Yeats's crucial failure in his relationship with Maud Gonne during "the psychological collapse" of the winter of 1898 which Deirdre Toomey unravels in "Labyrinth: Yeats and Maud Gonne," *Yeats and Women* 1-40. She points out that the failure had already been "proleptically dramatized" in Hanrahan's rejection of a woman of the Shee (Cleena of the Wave) in the original versions of "Red Hanrahan" as early as 1892 (and 1897), *Yeats and Women* 8. *VSR* 193, 194.

[470] See *T* 142-43 for the crucial revisions in the late ink draft. Between this draft and the page proofs of *October Blast* further revisions are made, though no draft is extant.

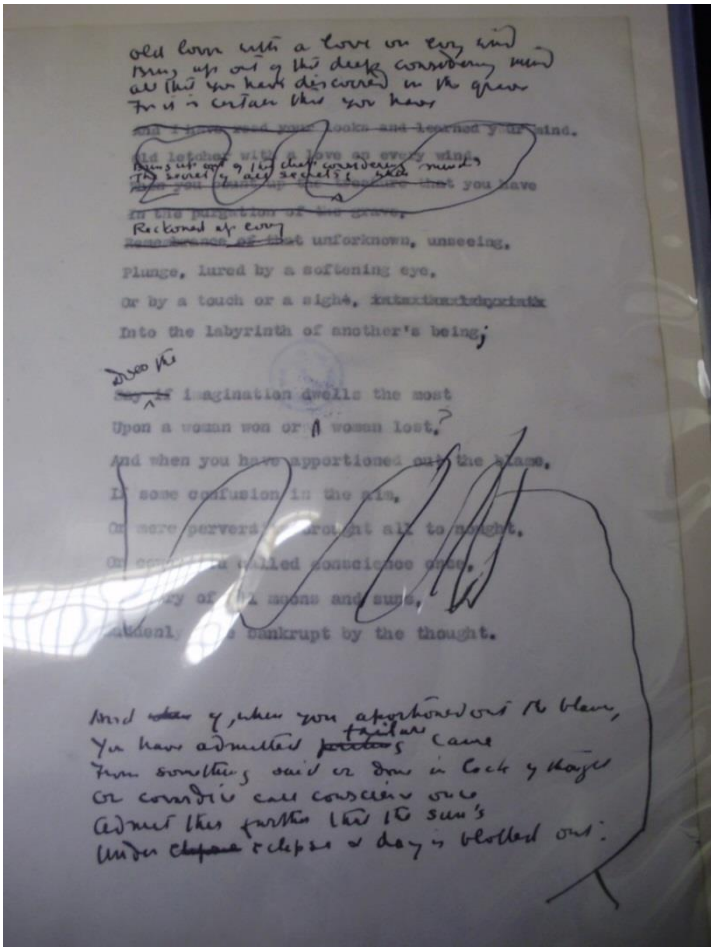

Fig. 14. The last leaf of Part II in the first typescript with the second version of Yeats's ink revisions. NLI 13,589 (4). Photograph by author. August 2012. (See *T* 126-27.)

"unseeing plunge."[471] Part II, which opens with the poet's "pac[ing] upon" the stage of "the battlements," as it were, closes with the sun's "eclipse," which may, theatrically, function as a blackout on the stage.

III

It is time that I wrote my will…

Part III is the most metapoetic part of this metapoetic tower. The accumulation of the trimeter lines into this towering part itself represents the aspiration of the poem towards the form of the tower. The stone architecture itself is only glimpsed at in the passage of the "loophole" ("As at the loop hole

[471] In the first typescript before the ink revisions is found "Blind Homer sang of Helen and all sing / Out of a blind imagining…," *T* 118-19.

there / The daws …"), yet "the lean, clean-chiselled obelisk of the verse-form" as Heaney called it suggests the tower.[472] The accumulated narrow lines with different lengths look not unlike the design of the tower and winding stair by Sturge Moore for the cover of the successor volume to *The Tower*,.

This part of the sequence looks forward to the future, for which the poet constructs his tower as an embodiment of his "will" in both senses of the word—"testament" and "willpower"—made up of his "pride," "faith" and "peace," as the daws "drop twigs layer upon layer," so that it will serve as a nest for his chosen posterity. The stack of noun phrases particularly occurs in the passages of pride, peace-making and soul-making respectively. Yeats's testamentary tower built in "trimeter *abab* quatrain[s]" comprises what Vendler calls "modern Irish forms of nobility"[473] and his "table of values."[474] In this declamatory poetic testament, we hear the voice of Senator Yeats and that of the disgruntled speaker in Part I as well as some echoes from Yeats's earlier poems. In early drafts Yeats consistently used the word "testament," where we now find "will" (*T* 52-5). Yeats never used the word in his published poetry, but he called his memoirs a "testament" in his correspondence during the Anglo-Irish War, shortly after learning that Thoor Ballylee had been damaged by the Black and Tans:

> My 'Memoirs' … are my political & literary testament …. Every analysis of character … builds up my philosophic nationalism — it is nationalism against internationalism, the rooted against the rootless people. Ballylee wrecked adds point… (to Lady Gregory, 30 December 1920 #3837).[475]

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[472] "In the third section of this poem ["The Tower"], the tower's stoniness is repeated in the lean, clean-chiselled obelisk of the verse-form," *Place of Writing* 30.

[473] Vendler notes that Yeats's poems in trimeter quatrains "need to be recognized as a group defining, for Yeats, modern Irish forms of nobility," *Our Secret Discipline* 202.

[474] See Yeats's remark in April 1936 on his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*: "I am a despotic man, trying to impose my will upon the times (an anthology one instrument) … I must be able to say this is my table of values." Quoted in *Life2* 556, 753n.

[475] See also Yeats to Lennox Robinson, 31 [December 1920] (#3839): "I think the situation in Ireland when this war is over will be the greatest opportunity … to stir the popular imagination. I am preparing for it a kind of 'Testament' in the form of a description of the starting of the intellectual movement in '92/3/4…. I think that you should prepare too, for you are young and

The "quick trimeter march-rhythm,"[476] as Vendler observes, sets the brisk pace and the "upstanding men / That climb the streams" (414), the motif derived from "The Fisherman" ("Climbing up to a place…," 348), emphasizes the vertical dimension. The image of ascent of the speaker's chosen heirs contrasts with that of "declension of the soul" and corresponding "ruin" in "My Descendants" (423). Before Yeats added the soul-making stanza to the end of the poem, the lines on the imaginary heirs opened and, chiastically recapitulated ("I leave both faith and pride / To young upstanding men…"), closed Part III, as musicians' songs ritualistically open and close Yeats's plays for dancers—with the repetition also suggesting their climbing repeatedly dawn after dawn.[477]

Yeats must have been consciously fulfilling the poetic vow he had made in "The Fisherman" ("I shall have written him one / Poem…") when he designated the "upstanding men" who derive from the "freckled man" in "The Fisherman" as his heirs, using the same "trimeter *abab* quatrain" which Helen Vendler identifies as "Yeats's nationalist vehicle *par excellence.*"[478] John Synge, who was probably closely associated with the poem "The Fisherman" and who had been commemorated in the elegy set in the tower ("Passionate and simple like his heart," 325), may also be implicitly evoked in the process. [479]

Yeats's later explanation of the genesis of the "wise and simple man" (347) in "The Fisherman" in a BBC broadcast on 17 March 1934, might serve as a note to the "upstanding men" in "The Tower" here:

> I built up in my mind the picture of a man who lived in the country where I had lived, who fished in mountain streams where

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can do more than I who become more and more absorbed in abstract thought and suggestion. I can help to make the keys but I will never turn them in the locks…."

[476] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 17.

[477] A phrase "Many dawns" is found deleted in an early draft, *T* 52-53.

[478] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 202.

[479] Norman Jeffares identifies "the dead man" in "The Fisherman" as "probably J. M. Synge," *A New Commentary* 152. Foster notes "Synge is present, not only as 'the dead man that I loved' but as the Fisherman himself…" and summarizes the poem as "an evocation of the ideal reader who is also an ideal Irishman: a solitary, proud 'country person' whose image is at once a reflection and an inspiration," *Life2* 11-12.

> I had fished; I said to myself, 'I do not know whether he is born yet, but born or unborn it is for him I write…'[480]

What is striking in this commentary is the emphasis on the places Yeats and the "man" share. The correspondence between the fishing places in Parts I and III, though implicit, is comparably significant in "The Tower."

More than half of the preserved leaves of early drafts for Part III are devoted to the lines about the "upstanding men." We find Yeats drafting the passage again and again, including three trials to incorporate the two key place names ("Ochte" and "Bulben") in the passage, as in: "And choose a sun flecked man for an heir / That clambers up a cold / Mountain stream on Ochte bare / Or Bulben s woody side, and at dawn…."[481] In the end neither name figured in the final part of the poem and "Ben Bulben" only in Part I, yet the two names in these early drafts suggest the underlying relationship between the fishing spots in Parts I and III as well as the passage in Part II about Hanrahan, whose experiences and visions were located in Yeats's stories in both "Echtge" and "Bulben."[482]

The poet in boyhood in Part I, Hanrahan in Part II and "upstanding men" in Part III are linked together as if by some subterranean water running through the sequence, indicating their sharing a common source of inspiration. Hanrahan in Yeats's story was also going upstream, following the phantoms. The "fountain" in the description of the poet's spiritual heirs ("climb the streams until / The fountain leap, and at dawn / Drop their cast at the side / Of dripping stone…") recalls the lost "fountain" image of "the inherited glory of the rich" ("mounts more dizzy high the more it rains," "out of life's own self-delight had sprung / The abounding glittering jet…") in "Ancestral Houses" (417), suggesting they will climb to regain the shared fountain. The summative nature of the symbol is crucial to this poem.

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[480] "The Growth of a Poet," published in *The Listener*, 4 April 1934, *UP2* 498.
[481] The lines are regulated, *T* 50-51. See also *T* 54-55.
[482] Yeats spells the name "Ochte" in these drafts.

The passage about Anglo-Irish pride is partly based on Yeats's Seanad speech in defence of the minority Anglo-Irish Protestants' right to divorce on 11 June 1925:

> I think it is tragic that within three years of this country gaining its independence we should be discussing a measure which a minority of this nation considers to be grossly oppressive. I am proud to consider myself a typical man of that minority. We against whom you have done this thing are no petty people. 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.[483]

The voice from the podium of the Seanad echoes in the soliloquy the poet delivers from the tower and the summative rhetoric of this Seanad speech of Yeats's is transparently transplanted into Part III. The creation of "the best of [Ireland's] political intelligence" by the Anglo-Irish is perpetuated as a building block of his tower, giving it a new historical resonance.[484]

The speech provides two of the poem's keywords, "pride" and "people," with an immediate context. Lady Gregory's comments in her conversation with Yeats later that month (22 [23] June, 1925), when he was writing "the notes and articles … on Ireland, and of Burke and Berkeley influences," serve as a backdrop for the poet's declaration of Anglo-Irish "pride": "We Protestants did not like to boast, while we were 'the oppressors' of our intellectual superiority and moral courage, but now we are under a Catholic majority we can do so…" (*J2* 17). On 20 [30] July 1925 she likewise records their talk about "the possibility of getting something of the spirit of Grattan's Parliament into Dail and Senate…" (*J2* 30).

Among the early drafts there is a leaf which carries versions of the passage about the poet's peace-making and that of the daws' nest-making, which suggests

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[483] *SS* 88.

[484] "We have created the most of the modern literature of this country. We have created the best of its political intelligence…," *SS* 88.

their close connection, in the red-leather binder notebook.[485] It appears that Yeats first wrote those two passages on the left-hand side and revised them on the right-hand side of the same page. His way of enumerating the materials of his "peace" is reminiscent of the rhetoric of actual descriptions of nests in reference books such as *A Field Guide to Irish Birds* which records that jackdaws' nests have a "foundation of sticks and all kinds of rubbish, with lining mainly of wool, but including hair, fur, paper, grass and other oddments."[486] Yeats's correspondence shows he was concerned with actual birds' nests and may have been familiar with such descriptions: "Will you help my canaries who are nest making but with sheeps wool & green moss which they dislike. Can you get me at the bird-shop a bundle of nesting material?"[487] Daws were, like the stares, in Yeats's life in Ballylee: "no end of jack daws in the chimneys…."[488]

The verb "build" used in the drafts of the peace-making passage on the leaf ("I build my eternal peace…"), though replaced with "prepared" on the same page, signals the parallelism between his peace-making and birds' nest-making. Yeats would later use the verb "prepare" once more in his other poetic testament: "Gardens where a soul's at ease… / Calvert and Wilson, Blake and Claude / Prepared a rest for the people of God, / Palmer's phrase… ("Under Ben Bulben," 639).

I have prepared my peace
With learned Italian things
And the proud stones of Greece,
Poet's imaginings
And memories of love,
Memories of the words of women,
All those things whereof
Man makes a superhuman

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[485] *T* 72-3. See *T* xxiv for the description of the notebook (NLI 30,373).

[486] *A Field Guide to Birds' Nests* 352. Yeats later made a list closer to this in content in the final stanza of "Circus Animals' Desertion" (630).

[487] To Olivia Shakespear, 23 April 1922 #4117.

[488] May [1922] #4118. Jackdaws "nested in the chimney when not smoked out by the turf fire." *Becoming George* 295.

Mirror-resembling dream. (415)

Behind the word "peace" may lie the axiom "Art whose end is peace," which Yeats used in "To a Wealthy Man who promised a Second Subscription to the Dublin Municipal Gallery if it were proved the People wanted Pictures": "turbulent Italy … draw / Delight in Art whose end is peace…" (288).[489] "To a Wealthy Man…," with its motifs of "grammar school of courtesies," "peace" and "twigs for an eagle's nest," seems actually to be evoked in Part III. Yeats had composed the poem, first published in *The Irish Times*, 11 January 1913, in the political context concerning the issue of building a municipal gallery over the River Liffey to accommodate Hugh Lane's collection of pictures.[490] At the time of his composition of "The Tower," Yeats had been working with Lady Gregory for about a decade, since Hugh Lane's tragic death on the torpedoed liner on 7 May 1915, over the "unwitnessed codicil" to Lane's testament which "leav[es] back" his modern French paintings "to the Dublin Municipal Gallery on certain conditions."[491] This is in line with the wider geographical and cultural reach here in "The Tower," where we move beyond the local and Irish theatre—while continuing to be anchored by the domestic model of the daws' nest "at the loophole there." "Italian things" and "stones of Greece" (Part III) as well as Plato and Plotinus (Parts I and III) and Homer and Helen (Part II) establish a broader European theatre of cultural reference, which is in parallel with his perspective in representing "we" in the Senate speech on divorce as "one of the great stocks of Europe," and implicitly evoke the issue of the Lane pictures at the same time.

The summative dimension of "The Tower"'s poetic form is especially explored in Part III, which is written in "[i]ambic trimeter … *abab* quatrains" which according to Vendler "have no distinguished history in English verse before Yeats."[492] The "lingering overtones of the persons earlier commemorated within" the same poetic form include those of Lady Gregory in "To a Friend

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[489] "[Coventry] Patmore was credited by WBY with the aphorism 'The end of art is peace'…," *CL2* 27n5.

[490] See Yeats to Hugh Lane, 1 January 1913 #2049.

[491] Yeats to John Quinn, 24 June 1915 #2687. *Life2* 17-21.

[492] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 182.

Whose Work Has Come to Nothing" (a companion to "To a Wealthy Man…"), Maud Gonne in "On Woman," the "freckled man" and perhaps John Synge in "The Fisherman" and the nationalist martyrs and Constance Markievicz in "Easter 1916" among others in order of composition.[493] None of them are explicitly identified in Part III, though Yeats once tried naming "Synge" in the drafts, as seen earlier. The "Subject for Poem" for "The Fisherman," which is notably related to the lines of the "upstanding men" in Part III, immediately follows that for "On Woman" in the manuscript notebook.[494] Cast in the same measure, these two poems may be regarded as a closely related pair. The images which had been given form to in his former trimeter quatrains—former residents of the measure, as it were—may implicitly "come alive" in Part III, in contrast to the way "Images and memories," including those of the building's former residents, are explicitly summoned to the tower in Part II. Even the echo of the "anomalous" trimeter final line "In the cold snows of a dream" in the fifth section of "Meditations" seems to be woven into the implicit leitmotif of Part III—"cold / And passionate."[495] As the ghosts of the soldiers still haunt the winding stair, a poetic form—trimeter quatrains in this case—functions as a mnemonic focus of its former residents.

"Memories of the words of women" are listed among the materials out of which the poet has constructed his "peace." They commemorate a crucial feminine dimension of Yeats's testamentary poem, remembering the contributions of the women around him, Lady Gregory, George Yeats, Maud Gonne and others, and acting as a complement to the "upstanding men." Lady Gregory's journal records indicate her roles as a listener and sometimes collaborator in Yeats's writing. George's automatic script and talk in sleep over

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[493] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 182, 197, 203-204. A draft of "To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing" is dated "Sept 16 [1913]." A draft of "On Woman" is found in "The Maud Gonne Notebook" (NLI 30,358), which she gave Yeats for Christmas 1912 and he used "up to the end of 1915," is dated "May 25. 1914," *WSC* xvii, 134-35. The poem "was addressed to Maud Gonne," Albright, *Poems* 571. A draft of "The Fisherman" is dated "June 4 [1914]," *WSC* 140-41. "Easter, 1916" is dated "September 25, 1916."

[494] NLI 30,358. On the latter half of the second leaf of the "Subject for Poem" for "On Woman" is written the "Subject for poem" for "The Fisherman," *WSC* 430-31.

[495] "As he retreats to his chamber, "caught" in the "cold snows" of his dream, that dream creates its own anomalous rhythm, the trimeter…," Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 233.

the years had led to Yeats's writing of *A Vision* and also some other works.[496] Lady Gregory's journal entry on 24 September 1925 records their conversation when Yeats read to her from *A Vision*, giving an example of the way George's "words" were incorporated into his work: "I [Lady Gregory] exclaimed at one sentence—one should do things "not because we ought but because we can", and said how fine that is, and he said "That is one of the dictated sentences written by G.'s [George's] hand…" (*J2* 45). Similar phrasing is not only used in connection with Synge in "The Tragic Generation"[497] but is implicit in the present poem, where Yeats employs the verb "give" instead of "do" to express the pride of the "people of Burke and of Grattan"— "That gave, though free to refuse…" (414).

It may have been Maud Gonne, who had been praised in "On Woman" in the same measure, that was most on Yeats's mind in this mnemonic passage—as suggested by the question in Part II: "Does the imagination dwell the most / Upon a woman won or woman lost?" The word "memory" was used instead of "imagination" in a draft of the line: "~~Does memory dwell longest & dwell~~ most" (*T* 104-105). The word "memories" repeated here ("memories of love, / Memories of the words of women…") resonates with Hanrahan's "mighty memories" and the "memory" which eclipses the sun. The word also calls up Yeats's earlier poems inspired by his unfulfilled love for Maud Gonne, many of which are also shadowed by the words "memory" and "memories."[498] His work of art, his "peace," is represented here, in part, as a product of the experience of failure probed at the end of Part II. The peace-making passage incorporates that part of his life and work in this testamentary tower, serving in a way as an answer to the question "Does the imagination dwell…?" as well as inviting us to think of dwelling of many different kinds.

Part III had ended in the first typescript with the ritualistic second appearance of the "upstanding" heirs, followed by the shift in focus from them

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[496] Yeats had acknowledged George's "voice" ("The voice has drawn / A quality of wisdom from her love's / Particular quality…," 469) in "The Gift of Harun Al- Rashid," composed probably in the summer of 1923 and first published in January 1924, *T* xliii..

[497] Written in 1920-22. *Au* (*CW3*) 263: "not because one would or should, but merely because one can do…."

[498] See "Old Memory" (*In the Seven Woods*), "Reconciliation" (*The Green Helmet and Other Poems*), "The Cold Heaven," "A Memory of Youth" (*Responsibilities*), "Memory," "Broken Dreams" (*The Wild Swans at Coole*). Yeats still worked on "memory" with "His Memories" ("A Man Young and Old," *The Tower*) from January to February 1926, *T* xlix.

back to the poet (*T* 132-33). This last stanza ("I leave…") is stricken through in ink in the same typescript and is replaced in the second typescript with a new stanza ("Now I shall make…"), as seen earlier. In the page proofs of *October Blast* the once removed stanza ("I leave…") is reinstalled before the new last stanza ("Now shall I make…"), with the definite article before "sedentary toil" changed to "This."[499] The brisk movement between the pair of demonstratives, from "that" ("of that metal made") to "This" ("This sedentary trade"), more forcefully controls readers' view, bringing their focus not only on the poet's work in general but on the present poem and the tower as what Seamus Heaney calls its "place of writing." The penultimate stanza concluding with the speaker's occupation condensed in three words ("This sedentary trade") forms a fit parallel of the "mother bird," "rest[ing]" to "warm her … nest" as well as a dramatic contrast to the "pac[in] on the battlements." The word "trade" recalls the transition from "trade" to the final flight of the swan / soul in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen,": "…in that station / Where we should cast off body and trade… / … triumph can but mar our solitude. / The swan has leaped into the desolate heaven…" (431). In "The Tower," as it were, the poet bequeaths his triumph to his imaginary heirs in the penultimate stanza, before announcing his venturing on making his soul, which may lead to his swan-emulating last flight.

After an interval of more than a year since the poem's October 1925 draft, Yeats wrote the coda of fifteen lines, expressing his resolution to embark on making his soul "Among the deepening shades" of old age, in parallel to "Sailing to Byzantium." "Compelling it [my soul] to study / In a learned school" seems to be demonstrated in the poet's "Compelling"—which indicates deliberate effort and willpower—himself to list the last stages of life in a passage which contains "asymmetrical" rhymes as Part I does ("blood / decrepitude" and "delirium / come").[500] In that process Yeats may have been consciously counterpointing his Romantic predecessor John Keats's landmark letter on "The Vale of Soul-making":

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[499] *T* 150. "This" and "~~My~~ This" are already found in the October 1925 drafts, *T* 108-11. "The" is still used in the text published in the *New Republic*, 29 June 1927, 416n.

[500] See Vendler's comments on "Yeats's relentless ascending list of losses," including "visibly discordant" rhymes, *Our Secret Discipline* 200-201.

> … how then are Souls to be made? How then are these sparks which are God to have identity given them—so as ever to possess a bliss peculiar to each ones individual existence? How, but by the medium of a world like this? This point I sincerely wish to consider because I think it a grander system of salvation than the chrystiain religion—or rather it is a system of Spirit-creation…. [501]

Trying to "put it in the most homely form possible," Keats introduces a metaphor of school: "I will call the *world* a School…. Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a Soul?" Keats concludes that man's "nature" "altered" or "fortifie[d]" by "circumstances" is his soul.[502]

Building upon Keats's "Vale," where "the *world*" is a "School," Yeats has made his school "learned." The "learned" school is associated with "learned Italian things" and "the proud stones of Greece," drawing a parallel between the poet's peace-making and soul-making. It also recalls the "grammar school of courtesies… / Upon Urbino's windy hill," which was compared to "an eagle's nest" (288) in "To a Wealthy Man…" as well as the "singing school" and "sages in the holy fire" in "Sailing to Byzantium." Yeats's last stanza may be explained, employing Keats's rhetoric, as the poet's resolution to "fortif[y]" and "alte[r]" his "troubled heart," facing the circumstances of old age, and set about making his own soul.

Counterpointing another Romantic predecessor Wordsworth's imagining his "be[ing]" away, leaving someone behind, at the closure of "Tintern Abbey" ("Nor, perchance—If I should be where I no more can hear / Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams / Of past existence—wilt thou then forget…"), [503] Yeats imagines his surviving the "death of friends, or death / Of every brilliant eye / That made a catch in the breath…." In the passage on the "death of friends" Yeats may also have been inspired by that letter of Blake's

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[501] *The Letters of John Keats*, 4th ed., ed. Maurice Buxton Forman (*OUP* 1960) 334-35.
[502] *The Letters of John Keats* 336.
[503] "Lines, Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour. July 13, 1798."

quoted earlier: "Flaxman is gone, and we must all soon follow, everyone to his own eternal house."[504] Blake's letter continued: "Leaving the Delusive Goddess Nature & her Laws to get into Freedom from all Law of the Members into The Mind, in which every one is King & Priest in his own House. God send it so on Earth as it is in Heaven." Blake's metaphorical equation of entering "The Mind" with being in one's "own House" must have especially been inspirational to Yeats, who was constructing the tower, his "own House," through writing this testament:

> Now shall I make my soul,
> Compelling it to study
> In a learned school
> Till the wreck of body,
> Slow decay of blood,
> Testy delirium
> Or dull decrepitude,
> Or what worse evil come—
> The death of friends, or death
> Of every brilliant eye
> That made a catch in the breath—
> Seem but the clouds of the sky
> When the horizon fades,
> Or a bird's sleepy cry
> Among the deepening shades. (416)

After the list reaches a climax in the fifth last line, we enter the space where borders are blurred between the "death / Of every brilliant eye" and the day's fading away, between the visual ("clouds," "horizon" and "shades") and the aural ("cry") and also between the second last quatrain and the last one—with inter-sensory verbs "Seem" and "fades" striking the keynote. The last three lines simulate the nineteenth "quatrain," whose fourth line is, as Vendler points out,

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[504] *Letters to the New Island* 94.

"unobtrusively 'missing'"—with "the 'b' rhyme of the last, defective 'quatrain'" ("cry") rhyming with "the 'b' rhymes of the preceding quatrain" ("eye," "sky")—which subliminally suggests the poet's voice itself fading away, as if emulating "a bird's sleepy cry."[505] The last two "quatrains" in effect share and hinge upon the fourth last line ("Seem but the clouds of the sky"), which functions as the last line of the second last "quatrain" and also as the first line of the last "quatrain." The poet's desire expressed in Part II ("O may the moon and sunlight seem / One inextricable beam…") is echoed in the crucial verb "Seem," which marks a turning point from things distinct to those indistinct, when he finally handles the end of a day and life. In parallel with "certain men" "mist[aking] the brightness of the moon / For the prosaic light of day" because of "rhymes" (410, 411), the poet's soul-making in response to destruction and loss after all work of building aspires to emulate the sunset—in contrast to his testament's evoking the "dawn."

Phonetically, long vowels and diphthongs are accumulated, especially beginning with the word "Seem": "clouds," "sky," "horizon," "fades," "bird's," "sleepy," "cry," "deepening" and "shades." In the long vowel [i:], hypnotically thrice repeated in "Seem," "sleepy" and "deepening," one may almost hear Yeats's chanting. After all those "evil[s]" mounting one after another, the verb "Seem" brings about a modulation, a crucial turning point of the tune, introducing the final scene—image and music—which is strangely soothing and peaceful, while being quietly bracing at the same time. There is no hint of storminess anymore, as there was in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen." Set against Eliot's celebrated simile for modern inertia in 1917 ("When the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherised upon a table…), the "cold" "passionate" of the Yeatsian nightfall which pivots on "Seem but" stands out, as the poem ends among "deepening shades."[506]

The accumulation of the last fifteen lines on the final stages of life in one unwinding sentence may again be associated with "layer upon layer" of the daws'

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[505] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 201.

[506] T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber, 1969) 13. Samuel Beckett pays homage to Yeats's lines in his television play *... but the clouds ...* (1976). In the second typescript where we first find the present last stanza Yeats wrote "Seem near," instead of the final "Seem but," *T* 141.

nest-making—as if making a final nest for his soul. The piling up of the last layers of lines also seems as if representing the poet's climbing the narrow "laborious stair" of old age step by step, braving physical and cognitive decay—with each of the two dashes perhaps indicating a short rest to take a breath.[507] The ascent culminates with the "death of friends," where, as if one reached the tower's top and had an open-air view from there, we are presented with the images of nightfall, which demonstrate the final aesthetic / anaesthetic "deliverance."[508] This last written stanza, designed to inspire both the poet and his posterity, was added to the ending of the poem as if it were a codicil to his will—in answer to the question he had asked himself at the outset of Part I: "What shall I do with this absurdity…." With the completion of "The Tower," with its deliberately summative and testamentary force, the volume named after it was given its focal point, as Sturge Moore's cover design paratextually corroborates it, and Yeats's tower-poetry was almost complete as *The Tower*. (See Figure 15.)

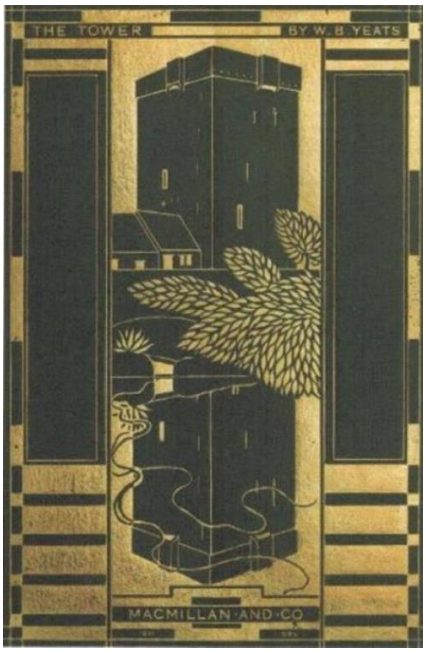

Fig. 15. The olive-green cloth cover of *The Tower* (Macmillan, 1928) with the design by T. Sturge Moore in gold. A digital scan of the reproduction (as a postcard) by the National Library of Ireland.

[507] See Vendler's remarks on Part II of "Blood and the Moon": "he will laboriously climb its stair, stopping from time to time," *Our Secret Discipline* 81.

[508] Albright, *Poems* 642: "just as dead souls compose their memories into formal pattern … so the aged poet can attain deliverance, anaesthesia, by a process of detachment and artful arrangement."

CHAPTER 5

The Winding Stair and Other Poems (1933) and After

Yeats published *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (Macmillan) on 19 September 1933, combining *The Winding Stair* (Fountain Press, 1929) and *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems* (Cuala, 1932) and keeping the title with its reference to the tower's internal architecture (Wade 169). This 1933 volume contained four tower-oriented poems: Yeats's last two tower-oriented sequences ("Blood and the Moon" and "A Dialogue of Self and Soul") from the 1929 book and an *ottava rima* proleptic elegy for the place where his tower project originated ("Coole and Ballylee, 1931) and a three-couplet poem which encapsulates a pair of his tower-related emblematic representations ("Symbols") from the 1932 book.

The Winding Stair and Other Poems, unlike *The Tower*, has no "plainly visible" focal point of a title poem. The tower sequences, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" and "Blood and the Moon," stand next to each other, complemented and fortified by their antithesis, and form central images of the winding stair. "Blood and the Moon" was the earlier written of the two, written in Ballylee. The poem represents history of power, violence and thought in terms of the construction of the tower. "A Dialogue" was written shortly after the Yeatses left Ballylee, eventually for good, as their summer residence. One of the dialogists, the Self, sets up "against the tower / Emblematical of the night" counter-emblems of "the day," displacing the tower in the course of the poem and becoming a soloist—probably reflecting Yeats's departure from Thoor Ballylee in real life. The placement of these two poems in the book, as in *The Winding Stair* (1929), reverses their order of composition. Unlike those in *The Tower* volume, however, this pair of tower sequences in *The Winding Stair and Other Poem* is undated and offered to readers, removed from the compositional contexts. "A Dialogue" and "The Blood and the Moon," placed in this order, form a sort of a dialogue themselves. Although the tower is displaced by "emblems of the day" in the middle of "A Dialogue," the order of the poems also

makes the Self's claim give place to the immediately following representation of the tower, which in a way combines the antithesis in the preceding piece, caught in the crossfire between bloodshed and the moonlight.

The Winding Stair and Other Poems added to *The Winding Stair* two more tower-related poems ("Symbols" and "Coole and Ballylee, 1931") as well as expanding the image of the winding stair in "Byzantium" ("unwind the winding path…," 497). The reference in his dedication in the volume to the return of energy in the spring and the alternation of health and illness in the condensed overview of the course of his poetry after *The Tower* also suggests a spirally cyclical movement as on a winding stair: "Then in the spring of 1929 life returned to me as an impression of the uncontrollable energy and daring of the great creators…. Then ill again…" (831). In "Symbols," which follows "Blood and the Moon" after two intervening poems, emblems of the tower and the sword are, as it were, "together laid" (484).[509] "The Seven Sages" is a sort of a companion to the "ancestral stair" passage in "Blood and the Moon," to which it introduces an element of "A Dialogue" with the emphasis on "the roads" and "beggary" ("They walked the roads… / They understood that wisdom comes of beggary," 487). It is placed towards the end of a group of shorter poems (from "Oil and Blood" to "The Crazed Moon") which is between the tower poems and the paired Coole elegies, in the latter of which we for the last time catch a glimpse of a "window-ledge" of the tower in Ballylee.

Yeats had decided on the title of his 1933 volume, the same one as he had used for the 1929 book, at least by 26 September 1930, when he first wrote to T. Sturge Moore on the subject of the book's cover design. The letter suggests

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[509] The poem is generally considered to have been composed in October 1927 (*IY* 291, Kelly 256), but a preserved draft shows that Yeats was at least still revising the poem at a much later date. An ink draft of "Symbols" with revisions is found on the verso of the 49th leaf in NLI 13,580 "Rapallo Notebook 'C' with entries from September 1928 to June or July 1929" (*WMP* xvi, 236-37). On the recto of the tenth leaf of the same notebook is a draft of a poem, titled "Meditations upon Death" (later "At Algeciras—A Meditation Upon Death") and dated "Feb 4. 1929" (*WMP* 210-11), which suggests that Yeats entered the above draft of "Symbols" on the verso of the 49th leaf later than that date. The poem's drafts are not found in the manuscript notebook Yeats used for *The Winding Stair* from September 1927 to March 1928 (*WS* xviii) and it was in *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems* (Cuala, 1932) that the poem was first published. Albright calls "Symbols" "'A Dialogue of Self and Soul' stripped to its irreducible minimum," *Poems* 706. One of the early titles in a draft for "Blood and the Moon" was "The Symbol," as noted earlier, *WS* 82-83.

there was virtually no room for other choices in Yeats's mind: "I am bring[ing] out a book of verse which I propose to call 'The Winding Stair', & I want you to make the cover design. … If you cannot get a good design on 'The Winding Stair' idea I might change the name of the book, but prefer not..." (#5387). Learning from Lady Gregory that someone else had used the title before him, though, Yeats on the next day wrote to his wife about his idea of changing his title to "Byzntium."[510] The revised title "BYZANTIUM AND OTHER POEMS / (1929)" is printed in the first galley proofs of *Poems* "stamped 12 September 1931" for the never-published Edition de Luxe. The printed title, however, was eventually "crossed out" and the final title "The Winding Stair,: / 1929, / And Other Poems" was written in Yeats's hand, keeping the implicit internal allusion to the tower and *The Tower* (*WMP* xxiii).

Yeats had made some suggestions about the design to Sturge Moore in the 26 September 1930 letter, as he had done so for *The Tower*. He identified the title as "the winding stone stair of Ballylee enlarged in a symbol," immediately adding "but you may not think this stair, even when a mere symbol pictorial…" (#5387). This is in sharp contrast to Yeats's request for "the real object" (#5030) about the design for *The Tower*. It testifies to his conscious making of the previous volume's antithetical companion, which "will be the same thickness as 'The Tower' in hight and bredth" (#5387). At the stage of his letter on 26 September 1930, Yeats had probably just finished "Byzantium" and already written many of the poems which would be called "Words for Music Perhaps." In the letter Yeats had included, not a photograph as he had done for *The Tower*, but his own drawings of a gyre and Ballylee stairs. His first suggestion about the design in the letter was "a mere gyre - Blake's design of Jacobs ladder - [drawing of gyre] - with figures, little figures" (#5387). But Yeats added a second option at the end of the letter: "Of course a suggestion of a stone stair might be possible a hooded figure coming or going — perhaps just entering. A mere suggestions of stairs. [drawing of Ballylee stairs]." The design for *The Winding Stair and*

[510] Yeats to George, 27 September 1930 #5389: "Lady Gregory tells me that somebody else has used the name 'The Winding Stair'. Shall I change it & call my book of poems 'Byzantium'. In that case I can send Sturge Moore the new Byzantium poem (I have it here) which will give him a mass of symbols."

Other Poems was eventually stamped "blind," also in contrast to its counterpart, on the front cover of "olive green cloth," and stamped "in gold" only on the spine.[511] Yeats's appreciation of the finished work expressed to Sturge Moore shortly before the publication of the book suggests that he had preferred it in gold: "It is one of the best you have done. Were it in gold it would, I think, equal that for 'The Tower'…" (7 September 1933 #5935). (See Figure 16.)

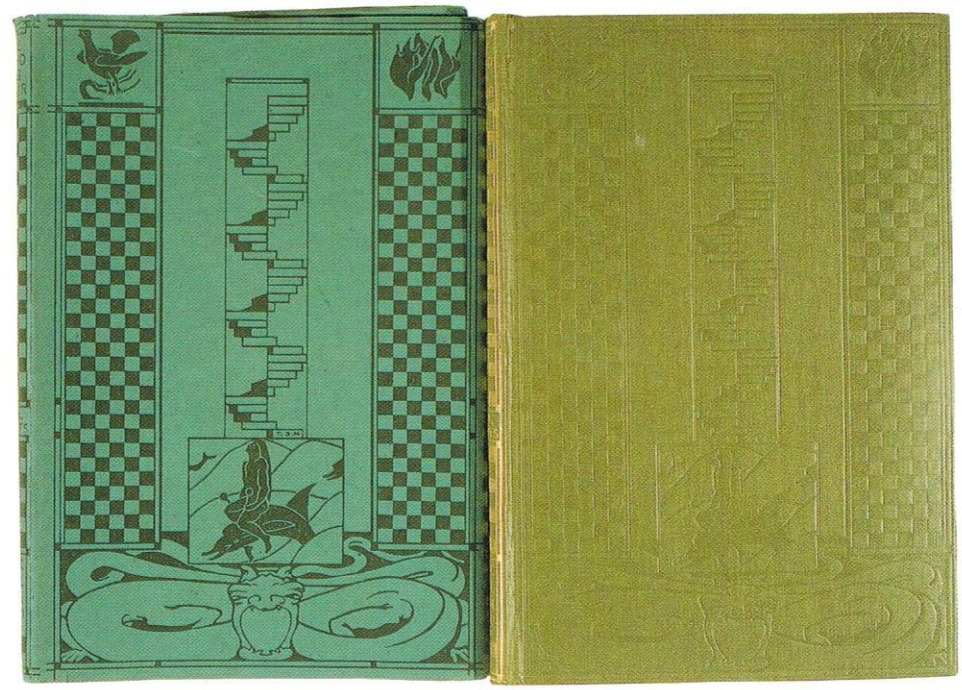

Fig. 16. *Left*: The paper jacket of *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (Macmillan, 1933) with the design by T. Sturge Moore. *Right*: The olive-green cloth cover of the book stamped blind on the front cover and in gold on the spine. A digital scan of the reproduction in David Pierce, *Yeats's Worlds: Ireland, England and the Poetic Imagination*, with contemporary photographs by Dan Harper (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995) 258.

Sturge Moore's cover design for *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* situates the winding stair motif as a presiding image in the very centre like a spine.[512] It may be partly a geometrical version of "Jacob's ladder" by William Blake. The stair is seen through the transparent vertical walls of the tower, set up between one of the "blood-begotten spirits" "Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood" in "That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea" (498) below and the

[511] Wade 169. The book's cloth cover and paper jacket are reproduced with an explanatory caption in David Pierce, *Yeats's Worlds* 258.

[512] See *LTSM* 179 for the reproduction of the design. The word "winding" divided into "WIND / ING" on the spine, perhaps primarily because of the narrow width, may add other implications to the title.

blank space above the tower-top which may correspond to the space evoked in the opening of "A Dialogue." The composition, partly echoing earlier-mentioned Moore's cover design for Yeats's *Selected Poems* (1921), which had been originally designed for the American Edition of *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (1916), underscores the difference between them. It may be probably due to the temporary change of the title to "Byzantium" that the design contains some motifs from the poem "Byzantium," such as a bird on a bough and flames as well as a spirit on a dolphin, which add density and complexity to the central image. In this final chapter on his final tower poems we will witness Yeats completing and winding up / down his epoch-making tower project and period.

1

"Blood and the Moon": emblematizing the tower

> Blessed be this place,
> More blessed still this tower…
>
> I declare this tower is my symbol; I declare
> This winding, gyring, spiring treadmill of a stair is
> my ancestral stair…

i

"Blood and the Moon" was first published in *The Exile*, Spring 1928. The poem is generally understood to have been inspired by the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins, Vice-President and Minister of Justice of the Irish Free State, on 10 July 1927. Yeats refers to this point in his notes to *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*: "I think that I was roused to write *Death* and *Blood and the Moon* by the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins, the finest intellect in Irish public life, and, I think I may add, to some extent, my friend…" (831). This agrees with his remark in his letter shortly after the event: "I … am now at a new Tower series

partly driven to it by this murder…."[513] Another piece of evidence is the date on a nearly fair copy of the poem: "August 1927" (*WS* 94-95). Presumably because of Yeats's testimony about the connection between the poem and the murder, coupled with the date "August 1927" on the draft, it has been taken for granted that the poem was written after the event.[514] There are, however, some pieces of evidence which suggest that Yeats had an inception of the poem much earlier. The possibility that Yeats began to write "The Blood and the Moon" earlier than it has generally been understood would allow us a fresh viewpoint to explore this first tower poem he wrote after "The Tower."

There is an extant leaf which carries an early draft of the first stanza of "Blood and the Moon" on the recto and a draft of the second stanza of "Among School Children" on the verso.[515] The latter includes several differences in words from the final text of "Among School Children," carries no punctuations except a dash and is diagonally written, with the whole stanza crossed out with three bold lines in ink. The content of this draft of "Among School Children" indicates that it almost immediately precedes the ink draft of the poem dated "June 14 / 1926" (*T* 364-65). This draft, then, roughly belongs to the stage of the poem's composition when Yeats had "nearly finished his poem, repeated one verse that sounds fine" to Lady Gregory (13 June 1926 *J2* 107).

The sharing of a leaf by an early draft of "Blood and the Moon" and a late one of "Among School Children" could suggest, if not necessarily prove, that the periods of composition of those two poems may have overlapped or at least have been close to each other. Given Yeats's habit of writing on the rectos of leaves first and using the versos for revisions,[516] we may assume that Yeats began to write the opening stanza of his new tower poem (eventually "Blood and the Moon") on the recto of the sheet first, then used the verso to work on the second stanza of "Among School Children," a poem he had "nearly finished." This

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[513] To Olivia Shakespear, undated and placed between the letters on 12 July and 19 August 1927 in *CL InteLex* as #5013.

[514] See, for instance, *Life2* 342: "The event reverberated all around him…. The poem which subsequently formed in WBY's mind, 'Blood and the Moon', confronted the idea of inherited hate, and the closed circles of Irish history…." Kelly cites Yeats's writing of the poem on 6 August 1927 (255). Ellmann dates the poem "August 1927," *IY* 291.

[515] NLI 13,590 (4), 1. *WS* xv, 64-65. This draft of "Among School Children" seems to have been overlooked and is not listed in the Cornell edition of *The Tower* 361n.

[516] See Bradford, *Yeats at Work* 53.

preserved piece of paper, therefore, may allow us to hypothesize that Yeats had begun "Blood and the Moon" by 14 June 1926. (See Figure 17.)

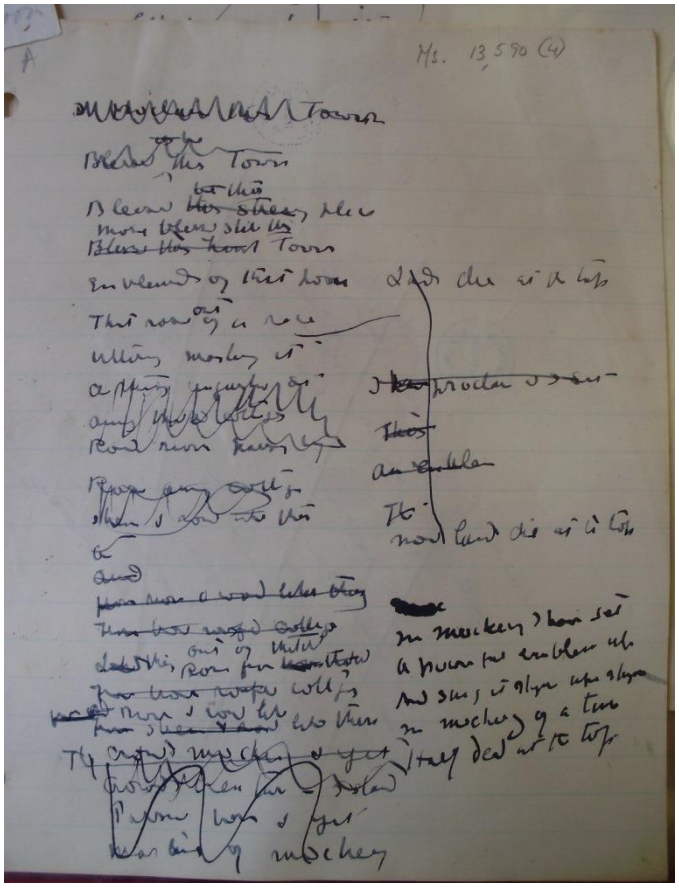
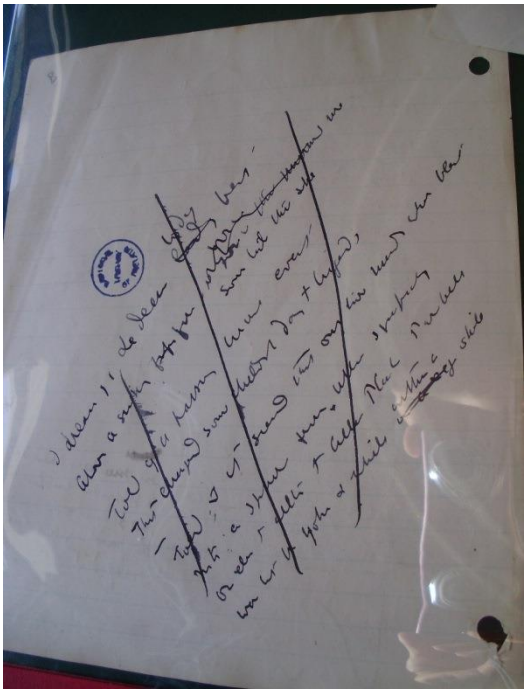


Fig. 17. *Above*: An early ink draft of the opening stanza of "Blood and the Moon." NLI 13,590 (4). Photograph by author. 30 July 2012. (See *WS* 64-65.) *Below*: A late ink draft of the second stanza of "Among School Children" on the verso of the same leaf. NLI 13,590 (4). Photograph by author. 30 July 2012.



An earlier entry in Gregory's *Journals*, in fact, may indicate that "Blood and the Moon" had been conceived as early as by 26 May 1926. Her journal entry on 28 May 1926 records Yeats's coming two days before, "pleased at having suddenly begun a poem suggested by the school he had visited," and continues:

> … that ["Among School Children"] no sooner begun than another had started in his head, into which he thinks he will get all his ideas about Burke and Berkeley and Swift, and now Goldsmith, that he had meant to write as an essay....[517]

I suggest "another" in the quotation probably refers to what would become "Blood and the Moon," the earlier of the two of Yeats's poems where his four Anglo-Irish forebears are featured.[518]

Yeats's "ideas about Burke and Berkeley" had already been in part expressed in a lecture late in the previous year. Visiting primary schools from late 1925 as a Senator, Yeats had given a lecture on the theme of education in Ireland, "The Child and the State," to the Irish Literary Society on 30 November 1925, which was published in two parts in the *Irish Statesman* on 5 and 12 December 1925 (*UP2* 454-55). It was even before his well-known visit to St. Otteran's in Waterford on 22 March 1926 which is understood to have inspired "Among School Children."[519] In that lecture Yeats cited Berkeley and Burke as "great Irish classics" "which have deeply influenced modern thought…" (*UP2* 458). After referring to "a great folk literature" in Gaelic literature, Yeats remarked: "We have in Berkeley and in Burke a philosophy on which it is possible to base the whole life of a nation." (*UP2* 458). What will be put into verse in Part II of "Blood and the Moon" occurs right after Yeats suggesting how they should "[f]eed the immature imagination upon old folk life, and the mature

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[517] *J2* 101. The editor's explanatory note to this passage mistakenly identifies the poem as "The Tower," *J2* 671n13.

[518] The other is "The Seven Sages" (486-87), written probably around January 1932. An ink draft is dated "Jan 30" and David Clark notes the "year is 1932" (*WMP* xliii, 260-61, 261n, 611) instead of "Jan. 30, 1931," Ellmann, *IY* 291.

[519] Kelly 246.

intellect upon Berkeley" and "Burke who restored to political thought its sense of history": "Berkeley proved that the world was a vision, and Burke that the State was a tree, no mechanism to be pulled in pieces and put up again, but an oak tree that had grown through centuries," (*UP2* 459).[520] "Among School Children" and "Blood and the Moon" are companion poems in that they are both partly based on his thoughts upon education in Ireland, and it is not surprising if they "had started in his head" one after another (*J2* 101).

According to these evidences, we may assume that Yeats began to compose "Blood and the Moon" while he was still working on "Among School Children." Yeats wrote to Olivia Shakespear around the same time: "We are at our Tower & I am writing poetry as I always do here, & as always happens, no matter how I begin, it becomes love poetry before I am finished it. … lots of subjects in my head…" (25 May 1926 #4871). Among the "lots of subjects in [his] head" was probably that of "Blood and the Moon." The way Yeats closed the letter ("no news for nothing happens in this blessed place") certainly suggests the opening of the poem: "Blessed be this place…" (480).

The development of the preserved drafts as well as these dates suggest a possible two-stage compositional history of "Blood and the Moon": before and after the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins on 10 July 1927. The poem had begun in Yeats's head by 26 May 1926 and had started to be written by 14 June 1926. Yeats had probably written Parts I and II, at least one early draft of Part III (*WS* 80-81) and possibly up to Part IV in 1926 or 1927 before the event. In what I see as the second stage of composition of the poem, which is after the event, it appears Yeats almost rewrote Part III as well as making some corrections in the first two parts. He wrote a nearly fair copy which ends with Part IV and dated it "August / 1927" (*WS* 94-95). Yeats's own comments such as "I think that I was roused to write…" (831) and "partly driven to it by this murder…" (#5013) also fit this hypothesis. The lack of preserved early drafts for Part IV or at least the fact that they have not been found together with those for the preceding parts

[520] Lady Gregory's journal record on 16 June 1927 of what Yeats told her he said at a Trinity College dinner shows that the same idea was in Yeats's head around that time: "Berkeley was the first to say the world is a vision; Burke was the first to say a nation is a tree. And those two sayings are a foundation of modern thought," *J2* 194.

itself suggests a gap of some sort between the first three parts and the fourth part in terms of their composition. On the other hand, it seems possible that Yeats already had the idea of using the top room of the tower in Part IV when he wrote the phrase "Half-dead at the top" in Part I. Yeats may have combined the top-room motif with the state of mind the assassination has left him with after the event, as a kind of a coda.

If it is correct to assume that "another" poem (*J2* 101) was "Blood and the Moon," it would mean that "Blood and the Moon" had been begun even before "The Tower" was finished and that the two tower sequences were in progress in some form in Yeats's head at the same time—between May 1926 and early 1927 (when "The Tower" was finished). If so, the hitherto overlooked possibility of the partial contemporaneity of them may shed new light on the continuity and complementariness between these two tower poems. Till now they have generally been read as distant and separate, as suggested by the five-year interval between the publication dates of each Macmillan volume which contains "The Tower" (1928) and "Blood and the Moon" (1933). Read together, "The Tower"—which looks outward from the battlements—and "Blood and the Moon"—which looks inward inside the tower on the winding stair or in the top-room—would prove to be more complementary than they have so far been understood to be. The contrast recalls Yeats's explication of Shelley's towers and caves in his 1900 essay once again ("the mind looking outward upon men and things and the mind looking inward upon itself," *E&I* 87). It suggests that the winding stair and the "waste room at the top" (831) served for Yeats as, in a sense, what the cave was for Shelley.[521]

In the ninth stanza in Part II of "The Tower," historical soldiers climbed "the narrow stairs," "for centuries" (412). In "Blood and the Moon" "the winding stone stair of Ballylee" is "enlarged in a symbol"—in the architectural and metaphorical senses—of the history of modern thought founded by his spiritual ancestors.[522] The distinctive shapes of the "six irregularly long-lined

[521] Ziolkowsky (62) explains the internalized image of the tower in *The Winding Stair*, comparing it to *The Tower*.

[522] Yeats to Sturge Moore, 26 September 1930 #5387: "The Winding Stair, as you will see by one of the poems, is the winding stone stair of Ballylee enlarged in a symbol."

aaa tercet[s]" which "climb through history"[523] in Part II of the poem suggest, because of the line lengths and the break between tercets, Blake's winding stair, which is spacious and "widening" (401), in his watercolour "Jacob's Ladder" which Yeats would refer to in his 1930 letter to Sturge Moore (#5387), more than the actual narrow "spiring" stone stair in Thoor Ballylee. A draft of the notes to the poems for *The Winding Stair* (1929) had actually cited, though deleted, Blake's representation: "~~the gyre or whorl as in Blakes~~ … picture ~~of~~ … ~~Jacobs ladder~~."[524] Yeats had previously invoked the water-colour by Blake in his footnote dated "1924" to his 1897 essay "The Friends of the People of Faery," an outcome of his folklore collection with Lady Gregory[525] It was for its reprinting in *Early Poems and Stories* (1925), the book for which he also added a few other notes to other essays including the one on "the old square castle" as we have seen. Yeats described Blake's image as "an ascending gyre" in the note to an ascent of a faery figure compared to a winding stair in the essay: "A countryman near Coole told me of a spirit so ascending. Swedenborg, in his Spiritual Diary, speaks of gyres of spirits, and Blake painted Jacob's Ladder as an ascending gyre."[526]

The top room is a new dimension added to Yeats's textual tower in "Blood and the Moon." It was the room in Ballylee about which Yeats had been enthusiastic a few years earlier ("the top room — is the great surprise," 8 April 1924 #4517) and which had been architecturally left unfinished and unused in real life.[527] At this final stage of his tower project Yeats was now to emblematize his accomplished tower, featuring the winding stair and the top room.

ii

The early drafts of the poem seem to demonstrate that Yeats had the keyword "emblem" from a very early stage, but that he did not know yet how he

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[523] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 80. See also Albright, *Poems* 700: "the metre of this section, imitating an involved spiral motion, recurs in *Supernatural Songs* II and VII."

[524] NLI 30,359, 18[r], *WS* xxiv.

[525] The essay was originally published in 1897 as Part IV ("The Friends of the Tribes of Danu") of "The Tribes of Danu." Its excerpts were collected in *The Celtic Twilight* as "The Friends of the People of Faery" in 1902. See *Myth2005* 296n, *UP2* 54-70, 67n18.

[526] *Myth* 123, 123n.

[527] See T. R. Henn, *The Lonely Tower* 13-14.

would exactly construct the tower as an emblem. By closely looking into the preserved drafts, we witness Yeats finding a kind of poem different from his preceding tower poems in the process of composition and how he "ha[s] set … up" the poem "Blood and the Moon."

The probably earliest extant draft for Part I shows Yeats beginning the poem by dwelling on the power relationships which the tower and the adjacent cottages emblematize: "Thatched roofs under a / ~~Cottage clustering round~~ a towr…."[528] Yeats then explains their significance by paraphrasing them as "Emblems from an age / When the great mans powr / ~~Rose up out of the coman life common men~~…."[529] The juxtaposition "A Road river foliage / And Emblems…" in this earliest draft repeats his sense of the shock of the tower's emergence in the place and accentuates the singularity of the building's presence in the setting. This juxtaposition of nouns with different levels of meaning recalls "the symbolic rose" superimposed on the ground outside the tower in "My House." While "the symbolic rose" was set among other components of the tower which convey the texture of real objects, here the tower with the attached cottages themselves are presented as "Emblems from another age" (*WS* 66-67).

This is the third time that Yeats incorporates cottages into his representations of the tower. The first was in the ceremonious prayer on the threshold of his residence in Ballylee: "God grant a blessing on this tower and cottage" (371). During the Irish Civil War Yeats had dwelt upon the original function of the tower as a fortress and summarized its relation to the cottages as "A farmhouse that is sheltered by its wall" (419). In "Blood and the Moon" the focus is on the genesis of the tower out of the cottages as a manifestation of power. Except for the "cottages," none of the items in the tower's surroundings in early drafts such as the "road," "river" and "foliage" survived in the final emblematic picture of the tower in Part I (*WS* 60-69). The tower is made into an emblem of a "bloody, arrogant power" which "Rose out of the race," with the block of the stanza graphically suggesting the outer form of the architecture and blocking out those other details.

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[528] NLI 13,590 (4), 3[r], *WS* 60-61.
[529] See also NLI 13,590 (4), 1[r], MS 13,589 (25), 5[r], *WS* 64-67.

The probable earliest draft for Part I shows how Yeats tried representing the river in the setting of the tower: "~~A river~~, / ~~A river full of [?windy/?winding] eddes~~" / ~~Like a [?]~~ / ~~A whirl~~" (*WS* 60-61). Words such as "eddies," "~~[?windy/?winding]~~" and "whirl" suggest that Yeats at first entertained an idea of associating the river full of eddies outside with the winding stair inside the tower. He even tried featuring the river with the adjective "streamy" in the epitomized picture of the place at the beginning: "Blessed ~~be~~ this ~~this streamy~~ place" (*WS* 64-65).

If my hypothesis that Yeats had started writing "Blood and the Moon" by 14 June 1926 is correct, his representation of the river in the draft may have reflected the flood in Ballylee recorded in Gregory's 13 June 1926 journal entry ("two feet of water in the ground floor rooms…"), even though it was not unusual for their river to flood.[530] If the river had stayed in the poem, it might have been connected not only with the winding stair but with the blood and contrasted with the moon. Yeats had connected flood and blood and set them against the purity of Cathleen ni Houlihan in 1894 ("Like heavy flooded waters our bodies and our blood…," 208). The "flooded stream" by the tower had featured in "A Prayer for my Daughter" (403), which Yeats in the end kept exclusive to that 1919 tower poem, choosing not to incorporate the river in "Blood and the Moon."

Yeats had also tried to set the aspect of "foliage" ("a blown leafy place," "the blown foliage," or even "wood," *WS* 62-63) against the starkness of the tower in early drafts. It matches the description of the tower in his letter written several days after Gregory's record on the flood: "The place is not as desolate as it looks for I am surrounded by trees…" (19 June 1926 #4882). This was indeed the letter where Yeats spoke about his work on the Irish new coinage as seen in chapter four. The drive to emblematize the tower in this new tower-oriented poem may have been, if in part, inspired by his new work on the coinage. That symbolic work for the young nation may have almost coincided with his composition of "Blood and the Moon."

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[530] *J2* 107. *Life2* 213.

As if it were itself demonstrating how the power rose out of its surroundings, the subject "I" emerges among Yeats's trials of representing the setting of the tower—an example opposite to the pattern Curtis Bradford pointed out to be common in Yeats where the subject "I" is deleted in later stages of composition.[531] It appears on the recto of the leaf which carries a draft of "Among School children" on the verso as discussed earlier along with some other new developments such as the opening and immediately repeated word "blessed," the notion of "mockery" and the active form of "set" (*WS* 64-65). "~~I proclaim this Tower~~" and "~~I proclaim & I set~~…" in this draft echo the "I declare" in Part III of "The Tower" and also anticipate "I declare this tower is …" in the second part of the present poem. It is also in this crucial draft that the word "Uttering" first appears (*WS* 64-65), having replaced "express" which had been used until then (*WS* 60-63). This is the second and the last time that the verb "utter" occurs in Yeats's poetry after forty-odd years' interval since *The Island of Statues* (1885). Instead of the rhyming pair "muttering / uttering" (657) in the early work, the verb now makes an oxymoronic pair: "Uttering, mastering it" (480).

The final text of Part I represents the historical emergence of the "bloody, arrogant power" with an architectural simile: "Rose like these walls from these / Storm-beaten cottages" (480). It is only in the corrected near fair copy in ink that we first see "like these walls" along with "Storm beaten cottages" (*WS* 82-83), transformed from the earlier "thatched cottages" (*WS* 68-69). This introduction of the architectural simile containing a deictic in the sixth line led the poem to rise away from the more densely located environment imagined in the initial drafts. Despite the semicolon that divides the blessings in the opening two lines and the power's genesis that follows, the second line and the third line, clinched by the key rhyme in the poem, "tower / power," may seem to be in apposition.[532] It is as if the third line were a paraphrase of the second, with the alliterative "blessed" and "bloody" oxymoronically combining the two lines:

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[531] See Bradford 51.

[532] The punctuation at the end of the second line was repeatedly revised, even after publication. It was a period in the first publication in the *Exile*, Spring 1928, *WS* 97n.

Blessed be this place,
More blessed still this tower;
A bloody, arrogant power
Rose out of the race… (480)

The deleted numerals in the near fair copy (*WS* 82-83) may indicate that Yeats temporarily considered beginning a second part from "In mockery" in the eighth line, dividing the first seven lines on the history of the rise of power and the following five lines on the poet's "set[ting] … up" of a "powerful emblem." The idea of division seems to have been replaced with a dash at the end of the seventh line. The rise of "A bloody arrogant power," which recalls "our greatness," "our violence" and "our bitterness" in "Ancestral Houses" (418), is represented as the construction of the tower, in parallel with which the poet says he has constructed "A powerful emblem," "sing[ing] it rhyme upon rhyme"—a reference to the entire series of his tower poems. Yeats sums up his own construction and its bearing on the age:

In mockery I have set
A powerful emblem up,
And sing it rhyme upon rhyme
In mockery of a time
Half dead at the top. (480)

The epithet "powerful emblem," with the word "rhyme" immediately following it in the next line, inevitably evokes "this pow'rful rhyme" of Shakespeare's sonnet 55 ("Not marble nor the gilded monuments / Of princes shall outlive this pow'rful rhyme…").[533] By setting it against Shakespeare's "powerful rhyme," which boasts that it exceeds "unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time" and provides "you" with "room" to "live in," Yeats makes his own architectural creation of a "powerful emblem" stand out, which is rooted not only in his text but "in the earth."

[533] *The Sonnets* 60.

While Yeats is focused on emblematizing the tower in "Blood and the Moon"—and foregrounding his doing so—he at the same time emphasizes immediacy with repeated demonstratives "this," "these" and "there," as he did in "The Tower": "Blessed be this place, / More blessed still this tower… / Rose like these walls from these / Storm-beaten cottages… / I declare this tower is my symbol; I declare / This winding, gyring, spiring treadmill of a stair… / That Goldsmith and the Dean, Berkeley and Burke have travelled there… / … we that have shed none must gather there" (480-81). When Yeats uses these demonstratives about his tower, each has at least a double referent—the tower in stone and the tower in words. Yeats made the tower into a living emblem, by living and writing there. He lived and wrote in his self-constructed emblem, which is rooted in Ballylee, the place he both wrote in and inscribed in his work.

The word "mockery" brings back the fifth section of "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen": "Mock mockers after that / … for we / Traffic in mockery…" (432). Read in this context, the project of setting up the tower begins to seem as if it were an answer to the poet's self-mockery in that earlier tower-less sequence which grapples with the violent contemporary history of Ireland. The "storm" which has haunted the tower and its surroundings in his tower-oriented poems also connects "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" and the ensuing tower poems: "seeing how bitter is that wind / That shakes the shutter…" ("In Memory of Major Robert Gregory," 327), "heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower…" ("A Prayer for My Daughter," 403) and "Storm-beaten cottages—" in the present poem (480).

The top part of Thoor Ballylee—the topmost unfinished waste room, together with the "flat cement roof"[534] and the "broken stone" (425) on the battlements—represents a physical state of being "Half dead at the top." Yeats probably included this uncompleted restoration work of his as a source of self-mockery in his multiple targets of "mockery."[535] Nevertheless, Yeats took

[534] Hone 331.

[535] See Henn 13-14: "The rebuilding of the Tower, Thoor Ballylee, near Lady Gregory's place at Coole, was a gesture, too; half-believed in, half-mocked at, but serving as a symbol, by turns cosmic and absurd; viewed with that peculiar irony that was necessary to preserve a sense of mystery, an incantation of power and benediction…. But, in mockery or not, it could foreshorten history for him…."

advantage of this unfinishedness as his emblematic property, transforming the architectural defect into a metaphorical asset. (Self-)mockery, which had been introduced in his tower poems through that of the poet's project by Robartes and Aherne and the speaker's mockery of Plato and Plotinus, fortifies his tower in "Blood and the Moon."

At the beginning of Part II, references to historical towers of the world both real and imaginative provide "this tower" with a context. Finally placing it side by side with Shelley's as well as with other historical towers Yeats declares his permanent poetic ownership of his laboriously-created tower symbol. The list progresses from the external tower to the internal, ranging from the sea to the skies: the "beacon tower," the astronomical tower symbolizing "the moving heavens" and Shelley's "thought's crowned powers," taken from his *Prometheus Unbound* (480). Among "Alexandria's," "Babylon's" and Shelley's towers Yeats enumerates his own, which he has "set" "up" in "a time / Half dead at the top." It is not here the tower "set on the stream's edge" in the elegy (326). What was prepared as "Befitting emblems of adversity" (420) for the poet's "bodily heirs" in "Meditations" has now come to be "declare[d]" "my symbol" (480). In "The Phases of the Moon" Yeats had made Michael Robartes invoke earlier prototypes of the building: "the far tower where Milton's Platonist / Sat late, or Shelley's visionary prince: / The lonely light that Samuel Palmer engraved" (373). Yeats now systematically builds up the general symbolism of the tower and the winding stair as he explains in his note in *The Winding Stair* (1929): "My poems attribute to it [Thoor Ballylee] most of the meanings attributed in the past to the Tower—whether watch tower or pharos, and to its winding stair those attributed to gyre or whorl" (830).

When the poet declares the winding stair as my "ancestral" stair, he foregrounds the "sense of history" (*UP2* 459) charged with his eighteenth century Anglo-Irish precursors' intellectual toil and achievements, from "*Saeva Indignatio*" to "intellectual fire."[536] The winding stair, which had been momentarily imagined as the space where the poet's dead friends might have

[536] See Albright, *Poems* 702: "'haughtier' suggests the upward movement on the stair, as we ascend from blood to moon—from Swift to Berkeley.".

"climb[ed] up" "to bed" after talking "to some late hour" in the Gregory elegy (324), is now the space-time where his four spiritual ancestors are invoked not only as travellers there ("have travelled there") but as if they were *genii loci* of the winding historical stair of human consciousness leading up to Ireland as a modern nation.[537] The poet had declared he would bequeath his "pride" and "faith" in Part III of "The Tower," and here he inscribes the footsteps of the "heart," "mind" and "head" of Swift, Goldsmith, Burke and Berkeley as "a foundation of modern thought" (*J2* 194). Each of the long-lined tercets, with the middle line much longer than the others, seems as if it represented a turn of a winding stair.[538] In addition, Yeats may have combined Swift's comparison of his madness to a tree withering at the top[539] and Burke's metaphor of a state as a tree into an image of a nation whose governing structure is not in order. The repetitive toilsome tread of the historical travellers on the "ancestral stair" is encapsulated in the oxymoronic joining of a "treadmill" with a "stair."

There are two extant sets of drafts for Part II. In one draft we see the overall structure of the section established and Yeats making and improving building blocks for each stair-like stanza, searching for the right diction (*WS* 70-75). The other is a near fair copy with corrections (*WS* 86-89), which is very close to the final text, apart from minor differences and the use of the verb "perish" instead of the final "vanish" in the stanza about Berkeley. In the earlier draft for the first stanza is found the Babylonian astronomical tower as "An almanac of [?~~winding~~] ~~stairs~~ the ~~universe~~ winding stairs" (*WS* 70-71). This indicates that the stair's winding, associated with the movements of heavenly bodies, is woven into larger cosmic symbolic systems. In the second stanza in the earlier draft we see Yeats accumulating adjectives to charge the winding stair with multiple meanings: "This [?sunward] turning ~~difficult~~ toilsome," "This [?sunward] turning, tone built, difficult ~~this~~ ghost haunted stair is an ancestral stair," "This broken medieval ~~alian~~ luckless alean stair is my ancestral stair" (*WS* 70-71). None of these, including the oxymoronic combination of "alien" and

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[537] Roy Foster comments on "The Tower" that "Personal icons are positioned throughout the poem like household deities," *Life2* 316.

[538] See M. L. Rosenthal, *Running to Paradise: Yeats's Poetic Art* 306: "jagged rhyming tercets each made up of a six-stress, an eight-stress, and a seven-stress line…."

[539] See Michael Steinman, *Yeats's Heroic Figures: Wilde, Parnell, Swift, Casement* 115.

"ancestral" which suggests the grafted history of the Anglo-Irish, stayed among the final modifiers for the stair Yeats settled on in the revisions in the near fair copy (*WS* 86-87).

For Part III there are three surviving heavily revised drafts and two fragments (*WS* 74-81) as well as a heavily corrected near fair copy and a fair copy very close to the final text (*WS* 90-93). One of the three drafts is in ink and very different in nature from the other two in pencil, the latter of which is closer to the final version. The ink draft is in a file different from the one which contains 18 holographs of "Blood and the Moon" to which the other two drafts in pencil belong, though all the other leaves in the same file are written in ink (*WS* xiv-v).[540] This text in ink has no reference to "blood" and seems to have been focused on the antithesis between the moonlight and the poet's candle flame. I suggest these pencilled drafts, where the word "blood" appears as a key note, post-dated the O'Higgins's assassination and were written later than the ink draft, which is blood-free. [541] It is in these drafts in pencil that we encounter "blood of murdered men" ("~~There is nothing~~ / ~~& nothing but the moon~~ in all ~~this land is pure~~… / No blood of murdered men was ever cast thereon… / Although the roads & fields are soaked ~~with~~ in innocent blood," *WS* 76-77), "blood saturated ground," "Soldier, assassin, rebel, executioner"[542] (*WS* 78-79) and so on.

The ink draft, on the other hand, contains no reference to blood, probably written before the assassination of O'Higgins. The central image is the contrast between the candle the speaker holds and "protects" "from a sudden wind" and "A narrow beam of light," "Intricacy of moonlight on the winding stair" which comes through a loophole: "The candle flame flickers behind a sheltering hand / A narrow slip in the wall displays the cloudles moon" (*WS* 80-81). The "candle" had frequently figured in Yeats's tower as an icon of the "sedentary toil" (370): "the candle-light / From the far tower," "*His sleepless candle*" ("The Phases of the Moon"), "A candle and written page" and "his midnight candle glimmering"

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[540] The ink draft is NLI 13,583, 13^{r}, *WS* 80-81. The two drafts in pencil are NLI 13,590(4), 10^{r}, 11^{r}, *WS* 76-79.

[541] The Cornell edition places the pencilled drafts (*WS* 76-79) before the blood-free draft in ink (*WS* 80-81).

[542] Among this list of the agents of bloodshed, "rebel" was deleted from the fair copy, *WS* 92-93.

("My House"). The combination of a candle with the wind may also evoke "The Candle Among Waves" design by Sturge Moore, used for some title pages of Yeats's books published by the Cuala Press, including *October Blast*.[543] Yeats may have originally meant to set fragile human intellect, the "flicker[ing]" "candle flame" "behind a sheltering hand," against boundless moonlight, the "cloudles moon," in Part III.

In the next stage of composition, the candle will totally disappear from the poem and the central contrast becomes that of blood and the moon, instead of the candle and the moon. The impact of the assassination of O'Higgins seems to have remade the whole third part into the space where the human history of repeated bloodshed below is set against the intact moon above. It turns the tower in the poem into an emblem of bloody human history. The contrast is now between the purity of the moon and bloodiness of the tower, as eventually will be reflected in the very title of the poem. Before the event, the tower may have represented "power," but now it has come to represent "blood." If this reading is right, the event has drastically changed Yeats's poem in progress and made it "blood-saturated," even though the particulars of the murder, including its victim, are effaced from the poem, "[leaving] no stain."

It is in the second pencilled draft that the noun "treadmill" first occurs at the end of Part III: "Stagger upon the treadmill of the ancestral stair / Drunken with the odour of the blood…" (*WS* 78-79). The noun, which is the sole instance of the word in Yeats's poetry, is used as a metaphor for the historical winding stair to convey the sense of helplessly being trapped in repeated patterns of bloodshed. In the near fair copy the word would be transposed to the stair in Part II as a key metaphor: "treadmill of a stair" (*WS* 86-87).

The near fair copy of Part III contains more concrete or particular descriptive words than the fair copy, which is more schematized and virtually the final version.[544] The near fair copy registers more of the texture of the stone tower, with not only the "floor" but the "passage" and the "wall" mentioned: "~~A~~

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[543] The emblem is included in Sturge Moore's bookplate design for Yeats, reproduced in *LTSM* 39.

[544] The near fair copy is NLI 13,590 (4), 16^{r}, *WS* 90-91. The fair copy is NLI 13,590 (4), 15^{r}, *WS* 92-93.

~~stone roofed passage~~ … / A ~~narrow~~ stream of light, ~~upon the wall~~ a pool of light upon the & floor…." At that stage the "blood-saturated ground" was modified by "Irish" ("on the blood saturated Irish ground") and the list of those who have "shed blood" included "rebel." In the still unfinished last quatrain in this near fair copy the imperatives convey their desperate need for the moon: "Come therefore cry like children for the moon / … but cry aloud…." The fair copy with corrections of Part IV inscribed "August 1927," the only draft material available for the final part of the poem, also still contains several differences from the final text.[545] The use of "glory" for the "night" in "wisdom is the property of the dead / A glory of the darkening night" suggests an implicit glorification of the dead—Kevin O'Higgins among them—whereas in the final text it is transferred to the moon: "When it has looked in glory from a cloud" (481).

The assassination which probably triggered the second stage of the poem's composition undoubtedly influenced the revisions of the poem's title. The early titles of the poem, written above a draft of Part I and a fair copy with revisions respectively, were symptomatically "The Symbol," revised to "The emblem," and "The Emblem," revised to "An image."[546] The fair copy of Part I is written in black ink, with revisions in blue ink. The corrections made in the third line, the replacement of the original "plumed" (in black ink) with "murderous" and then "bloody" (both in blue ink), I suggest, were probably influenced by the event. (See Figure 18.) The title "Blood and the Moon" does not appear in his preserved holograph drafts, the last leaf of which carries the inscription "August / 1927" below the near fair copy of Part IV (*WS* 94-95). This suggests that Yeats did not have the title "Blood and the Moon" yet when he finished the drafts. "An image" recalls what *Ille* was seeking in Yeats's first tower poem (367, 370) as well as what Michael Robartes called "Mere images" in "The Phases of the Moon" (373). The revisions between symbol, emblem and image indicate the interchangeability of these terms in Yeats's usage, which is also reflected in his

[545] NLI 13,590 (4), 17[r], *WS* 94-95.
[546] NLI 13,590 (4), 6[r], NLI 13,590 (4), 12[r], *WS* 82-85.

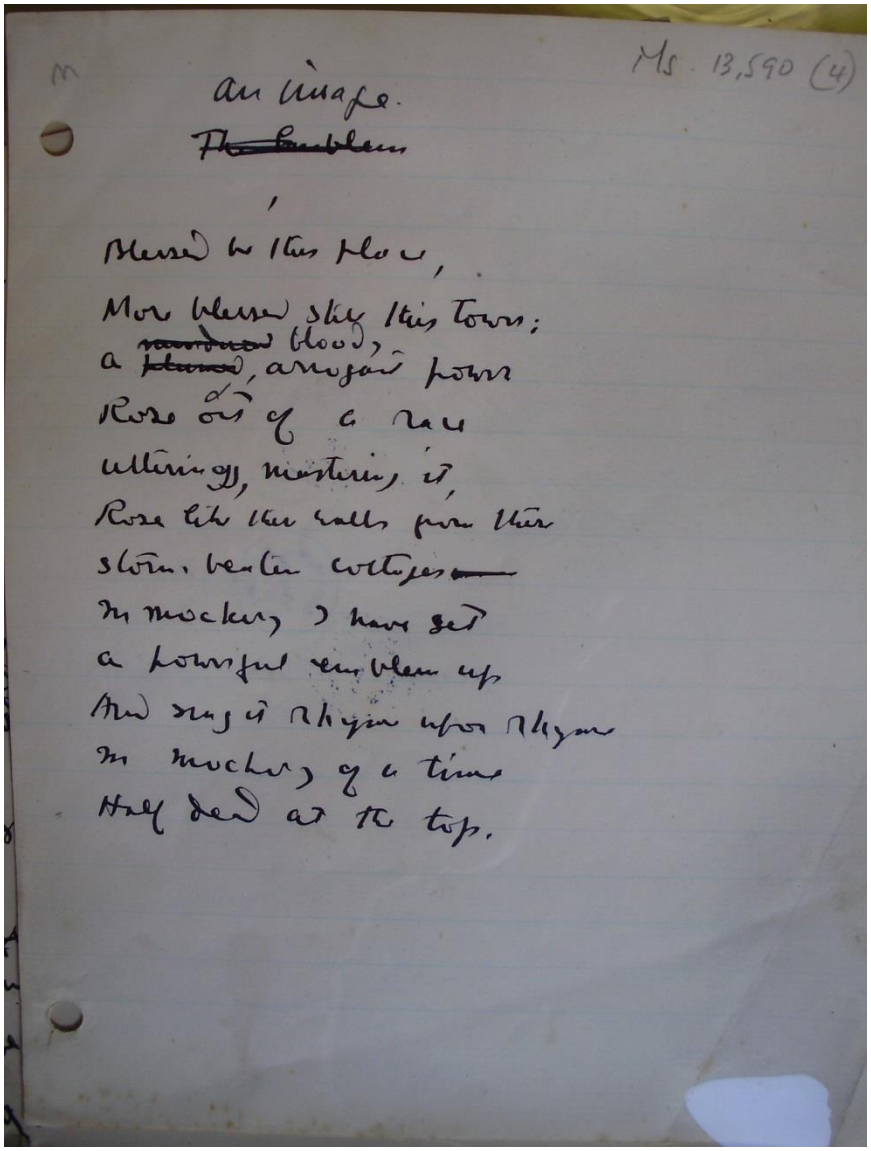

Fig. 18. A fair copy with corrections of Part I, "Blood and the Moon." NLI 13,590 (4), [12^{r}]. Photograph by author. 30 July 2012. (See *WS* 84-85.)

revisions in Part II.[547] In a near fair copy the term "my symbol" is changed to "an emblem," which is again replaced with the former: "I declare this tower ~~my symbol is an emblem~~ is my symbol" (*WS* 86-87).

The history of his titling those two "tower poem[s]" post-dating "The Tower" shows Yeats was intensely self-conscious about their symbolic design. We first see the final title of the poem to which he was "partly driven … by this

[547] Paul de Man notes that "groping for a term," Yeats "sometimes uses 'symbols' or "profound symbols' or 'images that are living souls' before settling, quite consistently, for 'emblems,'" to represent something which has, in Yeats's words in the essay "Symbolism in Painting," the "meaning by a traditional and not by a natural right," *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* 165, 303n28.

murder" (#5013) in his correspondence on 2 October 1927: "a poem called 'Blood & the Moon' (a Tower poem) which were written weeks ago" (to Olivia Shakespear #5034). In the same letter Yeats also refers to his "writing a new tower poem 'Sword & tower.'" Compared to his silence about "The Tower," Yeats's emphasis on his writing a "tower poem" is striking. An undated draft of the notes for *The Winding Stair* (1929) carries as their titles "A dialogue of self & soul, & blood & towr."[548] In a later draft in pencil of the same notes on a separate sheet the earlier option for the title of the earlier written tower poem is found back in place: "A Dialogue of the Self & Soul. / Blood & the Moon."[549] Yeats alternately considered using the word "tower" for each poem ("blood & tower" and "Sword & tower"), though as it turned out neither of these two tower-oriented poems included the word in the final title, restricting his use of the word "tower" as a title almost exclusive to that landmark poem "The Tower," excepting that late phantasmagoric "The Black Tower."

The inscription "Rapallo / March, 1928" (830) at the end of the published note in *The Winding Stair* exhibits a striking contrast to earlier ones at the end of the prefaces: "Ballylee, Co. Galway, / *September* 1918" for *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) and "Thoor Ballylee, / *May* 1922" for *Later Poems* (1922). On the other hand, Yeats consistently incorporated the name "Thoor Ballylee" in both notes to *The Winding Stair* (1929) and *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933) and claimed the continuity of his tower-related poems: "The tower is Thoor Ballylee, or Ballylee Castle, where I have written most of my poems of recent years" (1929; 830); "In this book and elsewhere I have used towers, and one tower in particular…. Part of the symbolism of *Blood and the Moon* was suggested by the fact that Thoor Ballylee has a waste room at the top and that butterflies come in through the loopholes and die against the window-panes" (1933; 831).

Neither in "Death" nor in "Blood and the Moon" is the death of O'Higgins made explicit.[550] Unlike in the later book, no reference to the assassination of

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[548] NLI 30,359, 18[r], *WS* xxiv. Written in the notebook which carries drafts "probably written between September 1927 and 13 March 1928," *WS* xviii.

[549] NLI 30,312. See *WS* xxiv, n18.

[550] The corrected fair copy of "Death" is dated "Sept 13 1927," NLI 13,590 (2), 1[r], *WS* 18-19.

O'Higgins is made in Yeats's notes for *The Winding Stair* (1929). The "Odour of blood" making its way into the tower through its great walls in the poem may, however, signal the impact of the recent murder. Until then, even if there was bloodshed in his tower poems ("Last night they trundled down the road / That dead young soldier in his blood," 425), it happened only outside the fortified tower, within which the poet could be "caught / In the cold snows of a dream" (424). O'Higgins's death is anonymously incorporated into the "Odour of blood on the ancestral stair" (481). If the assassination had been, as Foster explains, closely related to O'Higgins's having "ordered seventy-seven executions of his ex-comrades during the civil war,"[551] with the former executions leading to his assassination,[552] O'Higgins is also, ironically, involved in the cycle of "Soldier, assassin, executioner" who have "shed blood" (482). In his open letter of condolence to Mrs O'Higgins on 12 July 1927 Yeats rather disturbingly highlights the difference between the deaths of "obscure men" "in battle" and "a martyred intellect" in people's memory and history (*UP2* 476).[553] In the poem, however, being left unnamed, the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins seems to be absorbed into the numberless assassinations and executions on Irish soil.

In that letter of "Sympathy with Mrs. O'Higgins," published along with a message by AE (George Russell) as "Messages from W. B. Yeats and 'AE'" in the *Irish Times* on 14 July 1927, Yeats calls O'Higgins the country's "great builder of a nation" (*UP2* 476). AE also uses the metaphor of architecture, calling O'Higgins "the moral architect of the new state": "he would have moulded the Free State into the image of his imagination, but a state we would all have been proud of" (*UP2* 477). The impact of the murder of this "builder" and "architect" of the new Irish nation is in a way embodied by the shifts in architectural figurations, especially in the third part, of Yeats's ongoing poem about building. Yeats closes the message with a sense of "helplessness" where he writes "before certain events one feels most of all the helplessness of human life" (*UP2* 477). These thoughts on "the helplessness of human life" "before

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[551] *Life2* 343.

[552] See Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 80: "earlier executions brought about later assassination…."

[553] *CL InteLex* #5012 is a draft version with revisions.

certain events" and his sense of limitation of human foreknowledge about historical events ("we forsee too little to understand…") [554] which the assassination provoked in Yeats's mind seem crystalized in the emblem of the butterflies clinging on the windows in the unused top room and the sense of "resignation" which closes the poem.[555]

When "Blood and the Moon" was first published in the *Exile*, Spring 1928, the magazine edited by Ezra Pound, it was paired with "Sailing to Byzantium" at the beginning of the magazine bound in a bright red paper cover. The composition of "Sailing to Byzantium" around August and September 1926 overlapped with the supposed first stage composition of "Blood and the Moon." The first publication of "Blood and the Moon"—the poem which elaborately emblematizes the tower, taking it "out of nature" in a sense—paired with "Sailing to Byzantium" forms an apt parallel of the preceding pair of "Sailing to Byzantium" and "The Tower" in *The Tower,* which had just come out in February that year.

In his dedication to Edmund Dulac in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933) Yeats writes "*A Woman Young and Old* was written before the publication of *The Tower*, but left out for some reason I cannot recall…" (831). "Blood and the Moon" had also been written by that time, if not finalised. One of the practical reasons for not including "Blood and the Moon" as well as *A Woman Young and Old* in *The Tower* was Yeats's decision in mid-September 1927 (Kelly 256) to accept an offer from an American to publish his poems in book form (eventually as *The Winding Stair*, 1929). Had it not been for the generous offer of publication at that stage, *The Tower* might have possibly become a bigger volume. The crucial decision not to include "Blood and the Moon" in *The Tower* in effect marks the onset of his next construction of a companion volume *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*, which contains "Blood and the Moon" as its virtual title poem.

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[554] To Olivia Shakespear, after 10 July 1927 #5013.

[555]Vendler notes the poem "is dissolving into resignation to the human and admiration for the celestial," *Our Secret Discipline* 86.

2

"A Dialogue of Self and Soul": the third dialogue and departure from the tower

My Soul. I summon to the winding ancient stair…
My Self. … emblems of the day against the tower…

Yeats's poetic tower project began at the end of 1915 with a dialogue "Ego Dominus Tuus," titled "The Self & the AntiSelf" in a fair copy.[556] The project virtually closes with another dialogue written in late 1927: "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" (477-79). By a parallel design which may be comparable to the technique of chiasmus within a poem, Yeats bids farewell to the tower with a dialogue. As if signalling their link, the speech of the Soul in "A Dialogue"—"Why should the imagination of a man / Long past his prime remember…" (477)—echoes Hic's "though you have passed the best of life, still trace…" (367). In "Ego Dominus Tuus," written more than a year before Yeats acquired the actual tower, the dialogue between "Hic" and "Ille" was set upon "the grey sand beside the shallow stream" under the tower (367). "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," probably written after Yeats left the tower as its summer resident ultimately for good, is set inside the tower, beginning with its initial focus on the "steep ascent" of the "winding ancient stair":

My Soul. I summon to the winding ancient stair;
Set all your mind upon the steep ascent,
Upon the broken, crumbling battlement,
Upon the breathless starlit air,
Upon the star that marks the hidden pole;
Fix every wandering thought upon
That quarter where all thought is done:

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[556] NLI 30,358, 64[v], *WSC* 288-89. See also *WSC* 300-301.

Who can distinguish darkness from the soul? (477).[557]

The tower here functions as a sort of Jacob's ladder, though it requires the mind's efforts ("Set all your mind," "Fix every wandering thought") to make the ladder work properly. The difficulty is implied not only by the "steep ascent" but by the "broken" and "crumbling" state of the "battlement," which should work as a "springboard" [558] to "That quarter." The focus on the top of the tower, however, is immediately counterbalanced by the Self's drawing attention to "Sato's ancient blade" and its silk covering, which it sets up as emblems of "the day against the tower" (477-78). In the poem the tower is soon displaced by the counter-emblems: the sword and silk in Part I and the "ditch" in Part II. If the Soul is involved in winding up the tower project, ascending the winding stair to the tower-top and beyond, with its tongue becoming "a stone," the Self may be winding it down, descending, as it were, the winding stair to find a new path. Part I consists of alternate speeches by the dialogists, though it proves, as it were, unable to contain the Self's speech within its boundary. After the tipping point of the fifth stanza—located in the middle of the finished poem—the poem ventures beyond the range of a dialogue into a soliloquy of the Self. [559]

In terms of poetic form, "A Dialogue" belongs to a group of Yeats's major tower poems. It is written, as Helen Vendler points out, with a slight variation in the rhyme scheme, in the "non-*ottava rima* octave stanzas" which Yeats had used, adopting from the elegy by Abraham Cowley, in three of his preceding tower-oriented poems ("In Memory of Major Robert Gregory," "A Prayer for My Daughter" and Part II of "The Tower").[560] At an early stage in the 2 October 1927 letter Yeats called "A Dialogue" "a new tower poem 'Sword & tower'" (#5034) as seen earlier. The "time … to climb the … stair" at the beginning of

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[557] In the text of the poem published in *The Winding Stair* (1929) the fifth line was lacking and the eighth line was "The pole-star and the silence of the pole." *VP* 477n.

[558] See Ziolkowski 65: "The role of the tower as the symbolic link between man and eternity is made quite clear, the springboard from which the imagination can vault into the heavens."

[559] See David Clark, *WS* xxiii: "the Self's speeches having grown beyond what was appropriate to a dialogue, Yeats decided to construct a two-part poem." The Roman numeral "I" at the beginning of the first part of the poem is missing in *VP* 477.

[560] Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 293. The rhyme scheme of "A Dialogue" is "*abbacddc*," changed from Cowley's "*aabbcddc*," which Yeats had used in those previous tower-oriented poems.

an early draft suggests continuation of the meditation on the process towards death in the closing lines of "The Tower."[561] The consecutive use of adjectives and the word "stain" (if not of blood but of the dark colour of the night) in "the dark steep difficult & winding stair / The purples grapes of night stain the ascent" in the same draft (*WS* 24-25) are still reminiscent of "Blood and the Moon."

"A Dialogue" nevertheless is an unlikely tower poem. It is "a choice of rebirth rather than deliverance from birth," as Yeats explained to Shakespear in the letter on 2 October 1927: "I make my Japanese sword & its silk covering my symbol of life" (#5034). The earliest preserved draft in the form of a synopsis of a dialogue between "He" and "Me" shows that the poem was planned at its inception as an expression of the desire on the part of "Me" to go "back to the world."[562] As "Hic" invites "Ille" to speak up to explain why he is "walk[ing] in the moon" in the first tower dialogue, serving as an interviewer to some extent, the synopsis for "A Dialogue" reveals a plan of a dialogue where "He" in effect invites "Me" to speak his own desire and "set up" his own "emblems." What is most striking about "A Dialogue" from the perspective of Yeats's tower project is that the piece metapoetically shows the poet departing from the tower, carrying a sword and its silk covering with him, as he ventures into a new phase of poetry. "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" marks a watershed prefiguring Yeats's transition from his tower period to the next and final stage of his work.

"A Dialogue" is probably the first poem Yeats wrote consciously as a post-*Tower* work. Its composition seems to have post-dated Yeats's decision to publish *The Tower* without including poems after *October Blast*, such as "Blood and the Moon" and "A Woman Young and Old," except for "Colonus' Praise."[563] Yeats made this final decision about *The Tower* in mid-September, when he accepted the offer by an American publisher Crosbie Gaige about the publication of *The Winding Stair*, a few weeks after he left Ballylee on 26 August 1927.[564] It was indeed five days after this contract for *The Winding Stair* that Yeats wrote to Sturge Moore once again about the cover design of *The Tower*–after four-

[561] NLI 13,589 (29), 3[r], *WS* 24-25.
[562] "~~Syou~~" is revised to "He," *WS* 22-23.
[563] "Colonus' Praise" (446-47) is the only post-*October Blast* poem included (and first published) in *The Tower*.
[564] Yeats to James R. Wells, 16 September 1927 #5028: "I enclose the Contract signed…."

month interval on the subject—making the well-known suggestions: "'The Tower' should not be too unlike the real object, or rather … it should suggest the real object — I like to think of that building as a permanent symbol of my work plainly visible to the passer by. … all my art theories depend upon just this — rooting of mythology in the earth" (21 September 1927 #5030). This comment, made in the very liminal period when he had just decided to embark on his next book of poetry, nearly a month after his leaving Ballylee for Dublin on 26 August—hence "that building"—serves as an assessment of *The Tower* and his tower project by Yeats himself—where the "tower" as a *building* has become an objective correlative of his work. Retracing the compositional history of his tower poems, as we have been doing, shows how carefully he is committed to building it in is work.

Yeats used a leather-bound notebook for "fair copies (with revisions)" of his new poems for *The Winding Stair* (1929) as well as for "material for *A Vision.*" [565] The already written tower-oriented poem "Blood and the Moon" and most of the poems in "A Woman Young and Old" (excepting "Before the World Was Made" and "From the 'Antigone'") were not included in this notebook, visually showing that they predated Yeats's American contract. [566] The very first leaf of the notebook, tellingly, begins with a fair copy of "Silk, [?&] Sword & Tower" (later "A Dialogue of Self and Soul"). [567] A fair copy of the second part of "A Dialogue," dated "Dec 1927," however, appears after the fair copies of a few other poems in the notebook (*WS* 50-53). The order of fair copies in the notebook probably reflects the order of his composition, which is different from the order of poems published in the 1929 book. The interval between Part I and Part II in the notebook suggests that in their composition.

"Blood and the Moon" and "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," in terms of chronology of composition, are distinctive landmarks in Yeats's tower project. "Blood and the Moon" was the last tower poem written in Thoor Ballylee and "A Dialogue," the first poem written after his contract for the book after *The Tower*.

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[565] NLI 30,359. "All drafts probably written between September 1927 … and 13 March 1928," *WS* xviii. A draft of "Notes. (for Winding Stair'" is on the recto of the eighteenth leaf, *WS* xxiv.

[566] *WS* xxiii.

[567] *WS* 44-45.

Yeats appended a note to *The Winding Stair* (1929) which may play down the gap between these two tower-oriented poems: "The tower is Thoor Ballylee … where I have written most of my poems of recent years" (830). Four years later in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*, however, he suggested in the dedication that the composition of "Blood and the Moon" was after "the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins" and that of "A Dialogue" was "the spring of 1928" instead of the winter of 1927 (831-32), which has resulted in making them appear more apart from each other than they actually were in terms of chronological sequence. Associated also with the place name "Cannes" in the dedication ("a Cannes doctor told me to stop writing…"), "A Dialogue" is clearly distinguished from previous tower poems.

The composition of "A Dialogue" is generally dated "July-December 1927," based on George Yeats's list.[568] According to his letter seen earlier, Yeats had begun working upon "A Dialogue" at least by 2 October 1927 and there was an interval of "weeks" between the poem and "Blood and the Moon" (#5034). Yeats virtually finished "Blood and the Moon" in August 1927 and left Ballylee towards the end of that month.[569] It is, therefore, likely that Yeats set about writing "A Dialogue" after he left the tower. The difference in the demonstratives concerning the tower between these two tower-related poems may be signalling the difference in their places of composition. In contrast to the recurrence of "this" and "these" in "Blood and the Moon" ("this place," "this tower," "these walls," "these / Storm-beaten cottages," "This … stair," 480), the only deictic used about the tower in "A Dialogue" is "the" ("the winding ancient stair," "the broken, crumbling battlement," 477).[570] The fact that Yeats wrote "A Dialogue" away from Ballylee is probably subliminally reflected here. From this point of view, then, the Soul's first verb "summon," unusually lacking an object, may be directed not just to the Self in the poem but to the poet composing the

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[568] "July, Sept, 1927? or Dec 1927??" in the "Typescript table of contents for a Selected Poems of W. B. Yeats … (NLI 30,128)" and "July-Dec. 1927" in George's "Typescript (carbon) list of dates for poems, NLI 30,166," quoted in Wayne Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 230, 239. *WS* xxv.

[569] See Yeats to L. A. G. Strong, 20 August 1927 #5015: "having now finished some months of lyric writing, I have taken up 'A Vision' again to rewrite it."

[570] The second preserved draft for the fourth stanza of "A Dialogue" contains the demonstrative "that": "~~the~~ that towr" and "~~That emblem of~~ ancestral night," *WS* 30-31.

poem. Yeats's summoning "all [his] mind" to the place, or summoning the place to his mind, writing away from the tower, may implicitly echo in that "summon." Yeats's 1929 notes to the tower poems say "The tower is Thoor Ballylee … where I have written most of my poems of recent years…" (830), but not "where I have written" these poems.

According to his correspondence and Lady Gregory's journal records, Yeats's departure from Ballylee on 26 August 1927 for the upcoming performances of his Oedipus plays at the Abbey seems to have turned out to be his last departure from the place as its resident, though he still visited there after that.[571] "With his great architectural and historical symbol realized in a great book," Roy Foster remarks, "the real building became redundant."[572] The departure, which nearly coincided with Yeats's final decision about the immediate publication of *The Tower*, was, however, not the result of a simple choice, but rather of contingency. It was Yeats's "first serious illness" (#5055) that precipitated the end of the pattern of his life and work over the past decade. Illness struck him down at least before 13 October 1927.[573] It urged his wintering in the south that year, which necessitated their changing their plans about the places of residence accordingly, making the summers at Ballylee financially as well as physically more difficult than ever.[574] Yeats's illness in 1927 was more serious than that in 1924, for instance, when his doctor told him to "abandon all public work for the present."[575] It seems that Yeats's illness necessitated his departure from Thoor Ballylee and the nearly coinciding completion of *The Tower* enabled the sudden ending. Yeats did not simply "[abandon]" Ballylee when he finished *The Tower* but adapted to the serious

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[571] Yeats wrote "I go there [to Dublin] tomorrow" in a letter on 25 August 1927 #5020. See Kelly 256.

[572] *Life2* 362: "the very year that he abandoned the actual tower for good, he published the book which immortalized the name and the image."

[573] See his correspondence #5037, #5038, #5039. Kelly 256.

[574] See Hanley and Miller, *Thoor Ballylee* 24-25: "Ill-health took Yeats abroad in the winter of 1927 and he was in Rapallo when [*The Tower*] appeared on 14 February 1928. … By 1928 Yeats's use for the Tower had ended. He did not visit it again." Yeats, however, seems to have visited Ballylee even after 1928, though he probably did not stay there.

[575] #4660 (21 October 1924). See also #4673 (12 November 1924).

illness which forced him to re-plan his future, turning the potential crisis into another opportunity of remaking himself. [576]

Meanwhile, Coole had already seen the beginning of the end. The process of selling of Coole recorded in Lady Gregory's 1927 journals seems to counterpoint Yeats's illness and wintering in the south which ultimately led to the end of his residence at Ballylee. In early 1927 when she stayed at 82 Merrion Square she had written: "I told Yeats last evening and George this morning that I am leaving Coole. When I saw him later he said they had been talking it over and have come to the conclusion to give up Ballylee, because without me they would not care to come there, and that to the children also 'Ballylee means Coole'" (30 January 1927 *J2* 164). Yeats had already projected the end of Ballylee at this point. It was under those circumstances that Gregory started writing her essays on Coole: "Yesterday I began writing a sort of farewell to the rooms … just describing the things around me" (25 March 1927 *J2* 178). On 20 October 1927 (*J2* 208) she records: "Today Mr. Reed of the Land Commission and Mr. Donovan of the Forestry Department came and formally took over Coole, took possession. It no longer belongs to anyone of our family or name." It was a decade since Yeats "took possession" of Ballylee Castle and the outcome of her "[keeping] back a sale for these years past." "As to the house," she was determined to "stay and keep it as the children's home as long as I keep strength enough and can earn money enough." The end of Coole and of Ballylee was both in view, therefore, when Lady Gregory visited to "see Yeats as he had wished, before they go to the south of Spain for his convalescence" (28 October 1927 *J2* 209).

It appears that Yeats did go to Ballylee even after the summer of 1927 but that he never stayed there for any length of time, while continuing to visit Coole. Yeats wrote from Rapallo to Lady Gregory on 24 March 1929 about their plans "to go to Ballylee in July [1929]" with the children joining them at "the end of that month" (#5227). While there is a family photograph taken in the garden at Ballylee in the summer of 1929, several of his letters show that he actually stayed

[576]Yeats to Lady Gregory, 18 January 1928 #5068: "we dont want the neighbourhood to get the idea that we are abandoning it [Ballyee]."

at Coole in July and also in September.[577] He wrote to Sturge Moore on 8 October 1930 from Coole, referring to George who was then "at Ballylee, where my young trees grow tall" (#5393). These trees may have been planted in or after 1928 ("We shall do some planting there") and George was still taking care of the garden there in 1930.[578]

In early February 1931, while staying at Coole, Yeats went to see the "new thatch" at Ballylee with Lady Gregory, which shows that the Yeatses were still trying to maintain Ballylee at this late stage.[579] In March, finding the financial burden of Cuala Press rested on his shoulders, Yeats wrote to Gregory that it will be difficult to go to Ballylee that spring (10 March 1931 #5457). After the summer of 1927, it may have been only George and the children that stayed at Ballylee if at all, as another letter to the same recipient may suggest: "there will be no visit for George and Anne and Michael to Ballylee" (20 May 1931 #5472).

Yeats's turbulent and productive years of edifice building—rebuilding the tower at Ballylee, writing *The Tower* and working as a senator in nation building ("the slow exciting work of creating the institutions of a new nation")—came to a close around 1927 and 1928.[580] Writing of "A Dialogue" coincided with his departure from Thoor Balylee. The poem's composition progressed on the threshold of his final period and the compositional history seems to show the pangs of the birth of a new phase. While Roy Foster, like other critics, does not focus on "A Dialogue" in this respect, his discussion about Yeats's new attitudes towards his life and work after moving to Rapallo in mid-February 1928 sounds as if echoing the Self's declaration in Part II of "A Dialogue" ("I am content to live it all again," "I am content to follow to its source," 479): "From now on … he would pursue that lost vigour with a single-minded commitment, determined

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[577] See the photograph reproduced, Saddlemyer, Plate 30. See #5258 (2 July 1929), #5263 (17 July 1929), #5264 (23 July 1929), #5266, #5267 (31 July 1929), #5287 (23 September 1929).

[578] 24 February 1928 #5081. Around 7 October 1930 George Yeats "comes to Coole and tidies up the Ballylee garden while there," Kelly 271. A photograph of George taken at Ballylee in 1930 is reproduced, Saddlemyer, Plate 29.

[579] Lady Gregory records their recent visit there: "as Yeats wanted to see Ballylee—or the new thatch we went there in the afternoon" (9 February 1931 *J2* 592). Yeats had written to George about their prospective visit: "if you want the thatch of the garden side searched for rat holes I shall want the garden key" (4 February 1931 #5440).

[580] Yeats to Olivia Shakespear, 28 June [1923] #4342: "Here one works at the slow exciting work of creating the institutions of a new nation — all coral insects but with some design in our heads of the ultimate island."

to demonstrate that he could recapture the force of youth in his life as well as in his work" (*Life2* 356).

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Yeats may have left Ballylee at the end of the summer (on 26 August 1927) without any idea of ending his residence there. His letter to Olivia Shakespear about two weeks later, though, contains a cryptic passage which, in hindsight, suggests his prevision of an imminent change in his life:

> Curious but I have suddenly awakened out of despondency. I found my self praying between sleaping & waking & then saw a 'Key' & after that a long white walled road…. I constantly notice that change comes from some formula of words used quite lightly. I suppose the words are but the finger on the trigger & that the gun has been long loaded." (7 September 1927 #5023)

When he wrote to the same recipient on 27 October 1927, Yeats had "just recovered" from "such an exhausting cold" (#5040) and was to go south in about a week. In that letter he enclosed "a couple of Ballylee pictures — one my bed & one of the Tower from the river side," as if he were implicitly asking her to share some of his memories of Ballylee and symbolically indicating his transition from the tower.

In early November Yeats and George left Dublin to go south for the winter. They went to Algeciras and then to Seville, before settling into a hotel in Cannes in late November. They stayed there until mid-February 1928, when they finally moved to Rapallo (Kelly 257-59). The exceptionally small number of letters Yeats wrote in late 1927 testifies to his poor state of health that winter. The letter he wrote to Maud Gonne from Algeciras around 11 November 1927 (#5045) opens with a description of herons "just outside" his hotel windows, which would eventually become a basis of the first stanza of "At Algeciras—A Meditation upon Death" (first published in 1929).

Maud Gonne asked for Yeats's help when her son Sean MacBride was suspected of the murder of Kevin O'Higgins, which made them resume their correspondence from September to November 1927.[581] There they argued about politics and their old theme of love and hatred.[582] This temporarily continued correspondence with Gonne, which is in sharp contrast to that with Olivia Shakespear, may have contributed to "that most fecund ditch of all" passage in "A Dialogue": "if he woos / A proud woman not kindred of his soul."[583] The "fecund ditch," together with "pitch," "into" ("if it be life to pitch / Into… / Or into…"), resonates with the passage in the penultimate stanza of Part II of "The Tower." Hanrahan's "every unforeknown, unseeing / Plunge… / Into the labyrinth of another's being" (413) was followed by a sort of an extended metaphor of "remorse" there, which makes another contrast to "A Dialogue," where "cast[ing] out" of "remorse" is imagined (479).

It was on 15 November 1927 that the proofs of *The Tower* left Yeats's hands. Yeats "return[ed] the proofs of my book 'The Tower' to you [Frederick Macmillan] personally," asking him to correct the spelling of the name Porphyry since "here in Seville I have no book I can refer to" (#5047).[584] According to George's letter shortly afterwards (on 19 November), Yeats was "making his last will & testament at all hours of day & night," "hurrying to finish a poem but has not been able to begin yet." [585] Yeats had written his poetic "will" in Part III of "The Tower," but now, experiencing the "first serious illness" (#5055), he may have become even more acutely conscious of his working on his "last will & testament" than ever before. I suggest that "a poem" which George mentions in the letter Yeats was "hurrying to finish" was "A Dialogue," whose first part had probably been written in the notebook noted earlier at this stage. We may

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[581] *Life2* 344-45. See #5033 (29 September 1927), #5035 (3 October 1927), #5036 (7 October 1927), #5039 (c. 25 October 1927), #5045 (c. 11 November 1927).

[582] Yeats wrote to Gonne "we will never change each others politics they are too deeply rooted in our characters" (#5036); "We have argued again the old problem we have faught over since we were in our middle twenties" (#5045).

[583] Later in "A Bronze Head" (619), his last verse on Maud Gonne, Yeats would express his youthful spiritual bond with her, employing the term "propinquity" from *King Lear, I. i.*, which is in antithesis with the expression "not kindred" in "A Dialogue," as well as the word "pitch." The word "propinquity" occurs only once in Yeats as well as in Shakespeare.

[584] Yeats to Lady Gregory, 13 November 1927 #5046: "not yet begun to work—except a little at my proof."

[585] George Yeats to Lennox Robinson, 19 November 1927, *Life2* 354, 727n31.

speculate that the illness paradoxically produced Part II, a very different kind of "will."

Yeats wrote a fair copy of "A Dialogue" on the first two leaves in the manuscript notebook used for his poems for *The Winding Stair*, following it with that of "In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz." Yeats recorded the number of lines, having "agreed & [undertaken] to write a hundred & fifty lines in two months" on 16 September 1927.[586] The line count of 40 at the bottom of the recto of the second leaf and that of 16 on the verso of the first leaf as well as the fact that another poem begins on the recto of the third leaf suggest that Yeats had regarded "A Dialogue" as complete at that point.[587] No matter whether the sixteen lines (revised and crossed out) on the verso of the first leaf were additionally written after he had begun the elegy on the third leaf or not, Part II was still absent from "A Dialogue."

After the fair copies of the elegy and a few other poems[588] in the notebook appears a fair copy of the second part of "A Dialogue," headed with "(part II of 'Silk, sword & Tower'" and dated "Dec 1927." This suggests that Yeats had added the second part to the poem by December.[589] The late development of Part II, or the re-planning of the poem, seems to have corresponded to his re-planning of the course of his life and work to adapt to his ill health. The throes of opening the second part of the poem seem to have been reflected in the fact that the first three lines of Part II are the most revised in the preserved drafts as we will see more later.[590]

His correspondence to Olivia Shakespear from a hotel in Cannes on 29 November summarizes the transitional period of the autumn-winter of 1927:

> when I wrote to you [on 27 October]—being staggered by my first serious illness—I hardly expected to recover but now I do

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[586] See *CL InteLex* #5028, #5034.

[587] See *WS* xxiii: "As if the poem were finished, there is on 2[r] a line count of 40…. No room is left here for part II. … Perhaps Yeats meant at first simply to add [a version of lines 43-56 of the published poem] to the end of part I. He gave a line count of 16 to them as if they were finished…."

[588] "Oedipus child," "Death" and "Before the World Was Made," *WS* xviii, 106-107, 260-63.

[589] *WS* xxiii. The Roman numeral "I" which indicates part I in the fair copy of the first part (*WS* 44-45) may have been added later when Yeats wrote the second part (*WS* 50-53).

[590] *WS* 38-41, 46-47, 50-51, 58.

> expect to <though slowly>. George is planning already winters abroad & various contraptions, which will make it possible for me to give up everything I really dont like & keep every¬thing that I like. I did not know how tired I was till this ever blessed illness began, & now I dream of doing nothing but mystical philosophy and poetry. (#5055)

We see Yeats changing gears and George supporting it here. The comments on their plans made by "exhausted George"[591] to Lennox Robinson on the same day include a reference to Ballylee, which is not in Yeats's: "William is re-planning his future—Resigning from everything he can resign from—no Ballylee—that anyway will be a relief—a house near sea—perhaps Killiney[592]—winter months here [Cannes]…."[593] Struck by illness, Yeats clearly identifies what he wants to do as "mystical philosophy and poetry." The letter to Shakespear shows Yeats working desperately to finish the book which would become *The Winding Stair*:

> Three days ago I spat a little red & that roused me to defy George & begin to work & now though I am better again I write verse a little every morning — I want to finish that book for the American before some doctor gets at me…. How strange is that sub-conscious gaety that leaps up before danger or difficulty. (#5055)

The reference here to his writing verse in spite of illness agrees with his later comments on "A Dialogue" in the dedication in the 1933 book (Yeats's misleading dating "in the spring of 1928" apart): "written … during a long illness, indeed finished the day before a Cannes doctor told me to stop writing" (831-32). It was perhaps what he calls "that sub-conscious gaety that leaps up before danger or difficulty" (#5055), the gaiety paradoxically engendered in serious

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[591] *Life2* 358.

[592] Yeats would later take Joseph Hone's house at South Hill, Killiney, a suburb of Dublin, and stay there from February until May1931, Kelly 272. See #5445, #5447.

[593] *Life2* 358-59, 728n49.

illness, that propelled the second part of "A Dialogue" to develop, in time for the pronouncement of the Cannes doctor on 14 January.[594]

It was four days after the doctor's prognosis, "when things were at their gloomiest,"[595] that Yeats dictated a letter from Cannes to Lady Gregory, where he told her the possibility of their "shut[ting] it [Ballylee] up for the present." It was likely that they had to "winter abroad" for his illness and if so, he explained, they had to "change [their] way of life" in Ireland, including moving out of 82 Merrion Square, and they would "not be able to afford [their] summers at Ballylee":

> We shall keep Ballylee in good repair but shut it up for the present. … we dont want the neighbourhood to get the idea that we are abandoning it. When we get home George will go there to see what repairs may be necessary…. (18 January 1928 #5068)

Shortly after the publication of *The Tower* in the following month, however, Yeats, now in Rapallo, wrote to the same recipient about his intentions to go to Ballylee that summer. He also told her about a bright outlook for his new poetry ("amiable verses") in contrast to the "bitterness" of *The Tower*:

> One thing is I think certain, that we shall be at Balleylee this summer with the children. We shall do some planting there & visit it occassionally for if George & I go alone it will not be expensive. … Ezra Pound has been helping to punctuate my new poems, & thinks the best of all is a little song I wrote at Cannes just before I was ordered to stop work…. Here I shall put off the bitterness of Irish quarrels, & write my most amiable verses. They are already — though I dare not write — crowding my head. "The Tower" astonishes me by its bitterness. (24 February 1928 #5081)

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[594] *Life2* 356. Yeats "obsessively recurred to" this Cannes doctor's pronouncement "as to a sentence of death," *Life2* 355.

[595] *Life2* 359.

This letter where Yeats tries to reassure their neighbour in Coole that they are not "abandoning" (#5068) Ballylee is complemented by those he wrote to Olivia Shakespear and Sturge Moore respectively on the previous day. The one to Shakespear shows no room for Ballylee in his new plans: "We can … spend say from August to April here & the rest of the year in Dublin, with passing visits to London" (23 February 1928 #5079). After referring to financial advantages of this plan ("We shall live much more cheaply…"), Yeats described the change positively: "this change of place & climate at my time of life is a great adventure one longed for many a time."[596] Even though it was forced by reasons of his health, we see Yeats embrace it as an opportunity.

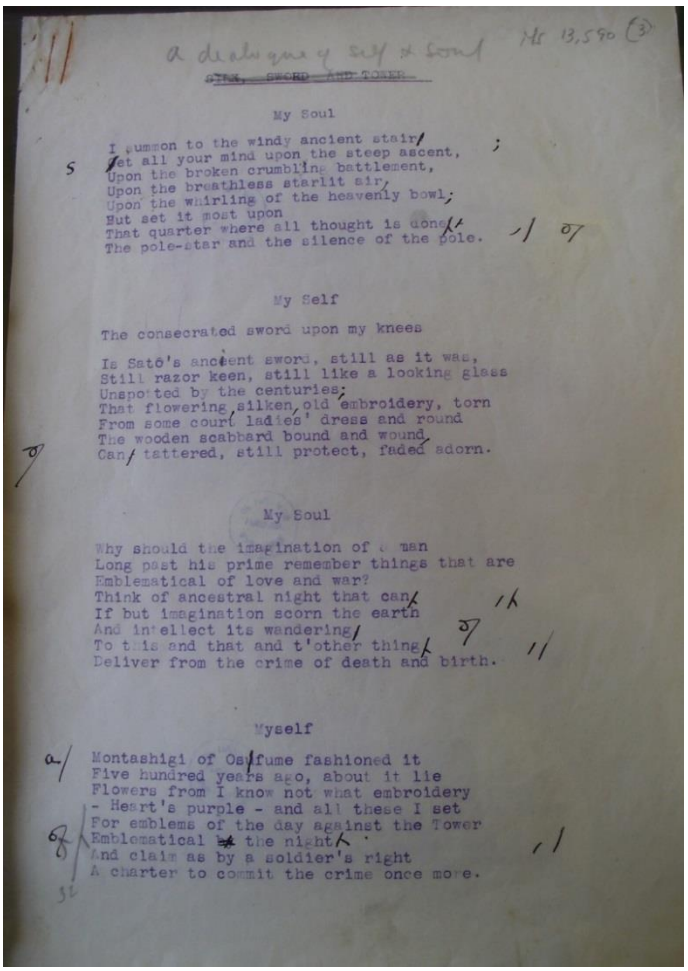
It was indeed in this context of re-planning his life and work that Yeats thanked Sturge Moore for his cover design of the book which had just been published: "Your cover for a 'Tower' is a most rich, grave & beautiful design & admirably like the place" (23 February 1928 #5080). He continued: "I am all the more grateful because I may see but little of that place henceforth. I shall have to spend my winters here…." Yeats's references to Ballylee as "the place" and "that place," writing in Rapallo ("here"), seem to underline his sense of distance from Ballylee.

In the above letter to Shakespear Yeats also mentions the expiration of his term in the Senate and a prospect of "sweetness" for his new type of verse as an alternative to "Irish bitterness": "Once out of the Senate—my time is up in September—& in obedience to the doctors out of all public work there is no reason for more than 3 months of Dublin…. Once out of Irish bitterness I can find some measure of sweetness, and of light, as befits old age—already new poems are floating in my head, bird songs, of an old mans joy in the passing moment, emotion without the bitterness of memory" (#5079). The twice repeated "Once out of…" curiously echoes that in "Sailing to Byzantium": "Once out of nature" (408). His hopeful prospect also resonates with the "sweetness" imagined to be acquired by the Self when he "cast[s] out remorse" and the ensuing laughter, singing and blessings at the closure of "A Dialogue"

[596] This comment remotely recalls the lost opportunity of his lectureship at a university in Japan nine years before: "It looks as if I may have a spirited old age" (to John Quinn, [11 July 1919] #3632).

(479). "When such as I cast out remorse" in "A Dialogue" may paradoxically be in parallel with "Once out of nature" in "Sailing to Byzantium."[597]

As for "A Dialogue," Yeats continued to revise the typescripts with the typed date "Dec. 1927" based on the heavily corrected near fair copy dated "Dec 1927" in the notebook, especially the very passage of the ending (*WS* 54-59). The typed title "SILK, SWORD AND TOWER" is corrected in pencil to "A dialogue of Self & Soul" in the earlier of the two sets of the preserved typescripts.[598] (See Figure 19.) The typescripts and revisions cannot be dated, but it was on 13 March 1928 that Yeats sent a revised typescript to the publisher (*WS* xiii-xiv).



a dialogue of Self & Soul Ms 13,590 (3)

~~SILK, SWORD AND TOWER~~

My Soul

I summon to the windy ancient stair
Set all your mind upon the steep ascent,
Upon the broken crumbling battlement,
Upon the breathless starlit air,
Upon the whirling of the heavenly bowl;
But set it most upon
That quarter where all thought is done
The pole-star and the silence of the pole.

My Self

The consecrated sword upon my knees

Is Saté's ancient sword, still as it was,
Still razor keen, still like a looking glass
Unspotted by the centuries;
That flowering silken, old embroidery, torn
From some court ladies' dress and round
The wooden scabbard bound and wound,
Can tattered, still protect, faded adorn.

My Soul

Why should the imagination of a man
Long past his prime remember things that are
Emblematical of love and war?
Think of ancestral night that can
If but imagination scorn the earth
And intellect its wandering
To this and that and t'other thing
Deliver from the crime of death and birth.

Myself

Montashigi of Osafume fashioned it
Five hundred years ago, about it lie
Flowers from I know not what embroidery
- Heart's purple - and all these I set
For emblems of the day against the Tower
Emblematical of the night
And claim as by a soldier's right
A charter to commit the crime once more.

Fig. 19. The first leaf of the earlier typescript of "A Dialogue of Self and Soul." NLI 13,590 (3) [11^{r}]. Photograph by author. 30 July 2012. (See *WS* 54-55.)

[597] See Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 315: "In writing a dialogue between Self and Soul, Yeats was setting up, one could say, an abstract version of the antinomy of sacred and secular explored in "Sailing to Byzantium."

[598] NLI 13,590 (3), 11^{r}, *WS* 54-55. The final title is typed on the first leaf of the later typescript, NLI 13,590 (3), 7^{r}.

"I shall put off the bitterness of Irish quarrels" (#5081) in the 24 February letter to Gregory is echoed by "I…have cast off a great burden" in his letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell on 20 March 1928 (#5093): "The bitterness of 'The Tower' was probably a foreshadowing of what was to come. Yet I am quite gay—have cast off a great burden—I work on alternate days & only at what I care for." It sounds as if Yeats were subliminally identifying *The Tower* with "a great burden." The poet seems to be consciously moving away from a life built around Ballylee and the tower symbol around which he had constructed his previous book. This unprecedented sense of "cast[ing] off," which resonates with the "cast[ing] out" in the poem (which replaced the previous "throws out" in the typescript sent to the publisher a week before), [599] was probably a driving force in (especially Part II of) "A Dialogue."

Yeats's comments on *The Tower*, written to Shakespear on 25 April 1928 back in 82 Merrion Square and centring yet again around the keyword "bitterness," do justice to it: "… that bitterness gave the book its power and it is the best book I have written. Perhaps if I was in better health I should be content to be bitter" (#5104). Some of his letters written a year or two before this seem to endorse this last comment, showing, as it were, vigorous Yeats enjoying bitterness: "I am in quite good spirits, impersonal, active, enjoying public admiration etc. etc. … this hateful cheerfulness…" (to Olivia Shakespear, 13 March 1927 #4982); "Yours in old age & the friend of bankers but still an incendiary" (to Lady Gregory, 24 March 1926 #4853). Just as Yeats's vigorousness underlay *The Tower*'s bitterness, his serious illness underlay the Self's determined commitment to life in "A Dialogue."

The Yeatses sold their 82 Merrion Square house and moved into 42 Fitzwilliam Square, their new house in Dublin, in August 1928.[600] Yeats did not go to Ballylee that summer but visited Coole for the latter half of August 1928, [601] where he wrote "my notes on Ezra for Cuala"[602] as well as those "upon the

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[599] *WS* 59, 59n.

[600] Kelly 260-61. See Yeats to Lady Gregory, 6 August 1928 #5138.

[601] Yeats had written to Lady Gregory that "George doubts if I shall be well enough for the walk between Ballylee & Coole" on 1 April 1928 #5097. *J2* 305-12.

[602] 12 August 1928 #5142. Yeats had begun working on what would become *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (Cuala 1929) in March (#5089). See also #5144, #5146, #5147, *J2* 308.

new coinage."[603] Around the same time Gregory was working on and read to him her articles on Coole, which we will see more in detail in the next section. Before this visit to Coole Yeats had told Shakespear: "I go to Coole to-morrow … in pursuit of tranquillity not obtainable here.—Dublin is always like an electric eel…" (12 August 1928 #5142). The letter shows his sense of being at a turning point in his public life: "I am constantly being urged to go on in the Senate which pleases me as it shows I have not failed there, but of course I will not. … I am tired, I want nothing but the sea-shore & the palms & Ezra to quarrel with, & the Rapallo cats to feed after night fall." Yeats began "To Ezra Pound" with a reference to the Senate: "Do not be elected to the Senate of your country. I think myself, after six years, well out of that of mine."[604]

On 14 October 1928 Yeats and George went to Coole and left the following day (*J2* 326-27). They probably closed Thoor Ballylee on this occasion.[605] Gregory quotes George's note to her (dated 16 October 1928)[606] in her journal entry on 17 October 1928 (*J2* 327): "I was sad at leaving Coole and the woods today. Your long-suffering kindness to me these eleven years has made many things easy that might otherwise have been most difficult." It was indeed eleven years since Yeats's acquisition of Ballylee Castle in March 1917 and their marriage in October. The closure of the tower in October 1928 nearly coincided with his leaving the Senate on 28 November 1928, six years after becoming a member on 11 December 1922.[607] An epoch of Ballylee and Coole had come to a close.

ii

Struck by his "first serious illness" (#5055) in the autumn of 1927, Yeats set about remaking his life and work. It was during this crucial transitional period that Yeats worked upon "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," especially the second part. Through writing the poem he turned the course of his poetry, setting

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[603] See #5142, #5148, #5150. See also *J2* 309. Yeats contributed this article on the Irish Coinage Committee ("What we did or tried to do") to *Coinage of Saorstát Éireann, 1928* (Stationery Office) 1-7, Wade 317.

[604] *A Packet for Ezra Pound* 33, *AVB* 26.

[605] See *Life2* 377-78.

[606] *Life2* 730n110.

[607] *SS* 1, 15.

the new gyre whirling, as it were, in terms of Yeats's philosophy. It seems that the Self "steadily gains" "confidence and energy" not only "as the poem progresses" in the finished poem as Daniel Albright points out, but as the composition progresses in the drafts as we will see.[608] The imperative in the Soul's speech at the opening is made to sound more authoritative by the replacement of "Come to" in the earliest preserved draft where neither the Soul nor the Self appears (*WS* 24-25) with "summon" in a later draft (*WS* 26-27), adding a new image to the winding stair as a place of judgement. The authority of the Soul, however, is soon to be overshadowed by the Self's focus on the counter-emblems. The Soul's falling silent at the end of the fifth stanza could metaphorically suggest a pause before the change of gyres, which is represented by the way the Self's speech over-brims the frame of the poem (Part I) to form a new part (Part II). [609]

It is in the third extant draft of the fourth stanza (*WS* 36-37) that the sword first becomes associated with a soldier. It is as if the persona of the Self were reborn in the process of composition as a soldier, with a sword in his hand, ready to "commit the crime once more." Meta-poetically, it is as if the poet were claiming a "charter" to move on to the second part, out of the tower, to the "blood-saturated ground" of "Soldier, assassin, executioner," in terms of the previously written tower poem "Blood and the Moon." The image of the "finished man among his enemies" in Part II seems to resonate with that of "A great man in his pride / Confronting murderous men" in "Death," a covert elegy for Kevin O'Higgins, which immediately precedes "A Dialogue" in both *The Winding Stair* and *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*. The sword and the Self together with the "Gold-sewn silk," as well as the tower and the Soul, are encapsulated in couplets in "Symbols" ("A storm-beaten old watch-tower, / A blind hermit rings the hour. / All-destroying sword-blade still / Carried by the wandering fool…," 484), a sort of a synopsis in caricature of the emblems established in "A Dialogue" as had been listed in the poem's draft title "SILK,

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[608] Albright, *Poems* 696: " the Soul is at its point of maximum intensity at the beginning … while the Self is at its weakest; as the poem progresses the Soul loses confidence and energy … while the Self steadily gains until it reaches its climax at the poem's end."

[609] Albright, *Poems* 697: "the instant of poise before a change of gyre…." See *AVB* 285: "the stream … seems motionless for an instant before it falls over the rim."

SWORD AND TOWER." Yeats also treasured "the real object" (#5030) of "Sato's ancient blade" (477) which he listed first among his "family treasures" in a letter to his sister Lilly in 1928.[610] In December 1927, when he was working on "A Dialogue" in Cannes, according to the date on the fair copy (*WS* 52-53), Yeats asked Lennox Robinson to look after the sword kept in 82 Merrion Square: "I would be greatly obliged if you would put some olive oil (you will find a little bottle of it in the study cup-board…) on the sword" (15 December 1927 #5058).

A fair copy of stanzas six to nine, headed with "(part II of 'Silk, sword & Tower'" and dated "Dec 1927" (*WS* 50-53), appears after the fair copies of a few other poems in the manuscript notebook. It seems likely that Yeats struck out the previously written fair copy with revisions of stanzas six and seven on the verso of the first leaf in the same notebook (*WS* 46-47) when he wrote these last four stanzas as Part II. Preserved materials seem to indicate that the poem's composition progressed through three phases: first up to stanza five, then stanzas six and seven added at the end of Part I and finally setting out of an independent second part, which comprises stanzas six, seven and late appearing eight and nine. The second part of the poem had neither been planned from the outset nor appeared at a time. Part II, the Self's new path, as it were, gradually unfolded during the ongoing process of composition, during Yeats's illness.

The first three lines in the sixth stanza that open Part II especially cost Yeats many drafts, as noted earlier, probably indicating the difficulty in "[whirling] out" a new gyre.[611] They gradually grew in assurance through revisions. A crucial word "ditch(es)" occurs in the second line of Part II (the sixth stanza) and recurs twice in the penultimate stanza (the eighth stanza) in the published text. Preserved materials for stanza six allow us to observe the process in which Yeats groped for the word, which first appears in the ink revisions in the fair copy. The preserved fair copy of Part II (*WS* 50-51) records the transformation from "my phantasy" to "the ditch" then to the "ditches" in the sixth stanza. The phrase "till my phantasy run pure" is revised in that copy to "I am contented till the ditch…," which is further revised on the facing leaf to

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[610] [19 March 1928] #5092: "the chest of family treasures — my Japanese sword, my Nobel Medal, the old Bible, the family book & so on."

[611] "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," 430.

"What matter if the ditches are impure" (*WS* 51n). The same word "ditch" is also found in the eighth stanza in the same fair copy written on the next leaf in the notebook (*WS* 52-53). These drafts suggest that "A living man" who is "blind" (stanza six) and the "blind man" (stanza eight) allude to the Self in the first place and that "the ditches" (stanza six) and "a blind man's ditch" (stanza eight) primarily refer to the poet's mind, before anything else such as "the 'ditches' of the social world."[612]

We may, then, assume that "the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch" (stanza eight) in the published text suggests creation out of the poet's impure mind. The image of the "frog-spawn" seems to have derived from the adjective "teeming" (whose verb stem "teem" originally meant to "bring forth young," *OED*) found in an ink draft of stanza six: "That teeming phantasy till it run pure?" (*WS* 40-41). Yeats's references to the inception of new types of poems in his mind in his February 1928 correspondence such as "floating in my head" (#5079) and "crowding my head" (#5081) seem to be echoing this "frog-spawn"—and "That teeming phantasy" in the draft. The "frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch" may later feed into "the flood" (the "flood of imagery" in an ink draft) in "Byzantium," composed in 1930, "The smithies break the flood" (498)—and ultimately into "this filthy modern tide," "its formless spawning fury" (611) in "The Statues," composed in 1938.[613]

Yeats's composition of his final poem set inside the tower resulted in reaching, as it were, a turning point of the turning stair. As if to "unwind the winding path" (the phrase he would use in "Byzantium" in a few years), "A Dialogue" is made up of a series of contrasts and reversals. In Part I, the preposition "upon," repeated five times in the Soul's imperatives which command upward turning and imagining the invisible ("Set … upon… / Upon… / Upon… / Upon… / Fix … upon") is echoed in the first speech by the Self, turning our eyes in the opposite direction: "The consecrated blade upon my knees"

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[612] Venler, *Our Secret Discipline* 313: "… [the word 'impure'] is attached to the 'ditches' of the social world and not to 'mankind' or 'the intellect.'"

[613] The ink draft, dated "June 11" [1930], is on 91^{r} in "Rapallo notebook 'D'" (NLI 13,581) *WMP* xvii, 24-25, 25n. The "images" in the published text ("Those images that yet / Fresh images beget," 498) was modified by the adjective "blind" in an earlier draft in the same notebook (89^{r}): "blind images can yet / Blinder images beget," *WMP* 16-17. "Byzantium" also contains the verb "float" ("Before me floats an image," 497).

(477).[614] As opposed to "That quarter," which is invisible and intangible, the Self uses the same deictic ("That") to indicate what is visible and tangible: "That flowering, silken, old embroidery." The "winding" of the stair, to which the Soul summons the "mind" of the Self, and which winds upward, leading to the "battlement" and the "darkness" beyond, suggestive of winding up the journey of "the soul" ("Who can distinguish darkness from the soul?"), is reversed by the Self into the passive "wound," which is emphasized by the internal rhyme "bound" / "wound" as well as the end rhyme "round" / "wound," with "winding" and "wound" suggesting opposite movements of two gyres. When the Self establishes its own "emblems" in its second speech, the fourth stanza, it also recycles the verb in the Soul's first imperative ("Set all your mind…"): "all these I set / For emblems of the day against the tower" (478).

The Self's speech in Part II also comprises multiple chiastic reversals of the Soul's speech in Part I. As the Soul ends its speech by illustrating salvation at the end of Part I, so does the Self at the end of Part II. The Self's claim of active "forgive[ness]" and "sweetness" ("forgive myself the lot! / When such as I cast out remorse / So great a sweetness flows into the breast," 479) is set against the Soul's version of salvation ("Such fullness in that quarter overflows… / Only the dead can be forgiven," 478),[615] half-repeating the Soul's "overflows" and "forgiven." The "frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch" one is said to "pitch / Into" in Part II is in sharp contrast to the "basin of the mind" into which the "fullness" "falls" in "that quarter." The word "pitch," like Hanrahan's "[p]lunge," emphasizes the downward movement and makes a contrast with the "steep ascent" and "ascends to Heaven" which the Soul advocates. The Self's intention of singing ("we must sing") is in striking antithesis to the Soul's loss of speech ("my tongue's a stone"), which would later be worked upon again in the seventh section of "Vacillation" (502).

Confirming the continuity with earlier *Tower* poems, the "blind man" in "A Dialogue" evokes Oedipus as well as Homer and Raftery. The imperative "Endure" in the sixth stanza of "A Dialogue" ("Endure that toil of growing up;"

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[614] The word "sword" in the text published in *The Winding Stair* was replaced with "blade" in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*, *VP* 477n.

[615] See Albright, *Poems* 697, 699.

478) echoes the first line "Endure what life God gives…" (459) of "From 'Oedipus at Colonus,'" the last finished poem (probably around March 1927) in *October Blast*.[616] It was indeed the performances of his Oedipus plays at the Abbey, as already noted, that had brought Yeats from Ballylee back to Dublin in late August 1927. Explaining what would eventually be published as *A Vision* (1937) in the second section of "To Ezra Pound," written in 1928, Yeats sets Oedipus, who "lay upon the earth" and "sank down into the earth soul & body," against Christ, who "crucified standing up, went into the abstract sky soul and body," while connecting the former with Homer and Raftery.[617] The inhabitant of the "storm-beaten old watch-tower" in "Symbols," the compressed companion to "A Dialogue," is "A blind hermit" (484), who is in striking antithesis to the protagonist who "stare[s]," "pac[ing] upon the battlements" in "The Tower" (409).

Both Homer and Raftery had been incorporated in Yeats's tower poems. Homer had been invoked in "Ancestral Houses"; Raftery, unnamed, had been associated with Homer in Part II of "The Tower." Homer would be evoked twice in "Vacillation," a sequence to be written around early 1932, in sections seven (another companion to "A Dialogue") and eight, respectively (502-503).[618] Raftery and Homer would also accompany Yeats's final piece deeply rooted in the two places which may "[seem]" "dear than life" (491). In the next final section we will dwell on Yeats's tower project at its closure.

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"Coole and Ballylee, 1931": an epilogue

Under my window-ledge the waters race…

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[616] In his letter to Olivia Shakespear on 13 March 1927 (#4982) Yeats mentions his work upon the play ("am back at 'Oedipus at Colonus'") and quotes two stanzas from a chorus, which would become "From 'Oedipus at Colonus.'"

[617] *A Packet for Ezra Pound* 35-36. Slightly changed in *AVB* 27-28.

[618] *WMP* 65, 65n, 88-89. *The Identity of Yeats* 292.

Yeats first described the gestation of "Coole and Ballylee, 1931" in a letter from Coole to his wife George on 3 February 1932:[619]

> I am tired owing to the fact that I have at last found a rich theme for verse. I am turning the introductory verses to Lady Gregorys "Coole" (Cuala) into a poem of some length — various sections with more or less symbolic subject matter. Yesterday I wrote an account of the sudden ascent of a swan — a symbol of inspiration I think. (#5583)

His use of "at last" here may carry weight as he had told George the previous month that he had been "writing much poetry" (#5561) and had recently finished twenty-one poems including "Vacillation."[620]

It was "at last," in a way, for him to return to Coole Lough and the swan(s) in his poetry after setting out on the construction of his own actual and textual tower in Ballylee more than a decade earlier. "Coole and Ballylee, 1931," where Yeats returns from Thoor Ballylee to Coole Lough, is in part a sequel to "The Wild Swans at Coole," from where, symbolically, he had set out on his tower-building enterprise, which was intimated with the poem's final question: "Among what rushes will they build…" (323). The phrase "But all is changed" (492) which appears in the third last line of "Coole and Ballylee, 1931" links it with "The Wild Swans at Coole" which contains the recollected scene of the swans in 1899 and the poet's reflections "All's changed" (322), which itself implicitly resonates with "All changed, changed utterly" (392) in "Easter, 1916," its contemporary in terms of the writing period.[621]

In Yeats's poetic "demesne," Coole and Ballylee are neighbours with contrasting as well as shared characteristics. The two places share their values of

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[619] The title of the poem is as it was printed in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*. It was "Coole Park and Ballylee 1932" in the first publication in *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems.*

[620] Yeats to George, 24 January 1932 #5571: "I have finished my group of poems which I now call 'Vacillation' … I have written all my recent verse into the big MSS … 21 poems in all…."

[621] See Albright, *Poems* 550. In the first published text the phrase in question was "But fashion's changed." See *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems*, rept. (Dublin: Cuala, 1932; Shannon: Irish UP, 1970) 9-11.

"custom" and "ceremony" in antithesis to "arrogance and hatred" ("A Prayer for My Daughter," 406). It was "For an old neighbour's friendship" that Yeats "chose the house" in Ballylee ("My Descendants," 423). As if winding up—or "dreaming back"—his construction project in Ballylee, the water in the opening stanza of "Coole and Ballylee, 1931" leads us, starting right below "my window-ledge" of Thoor Ballylee—which has now become firmly established in his poetic terrain—back to Coole Lake, a symbolic point of departure. The water on the way "drop[s]" "through 'dark' Raftery's 'cellar,'" referring us back to Yeats's first visit to Ballylee and his initiation into the stories in the neighbourhood through Lady Gregory over three decades earlier, which he recorded in his 1899 essay on the local blind Gaelic poet Raftery and his muse ("'Dust hath closed Helen's Eye'") as already discussed.[622] Four years after departing from Thoor Ballylee and writing the final poem set in the tower ("A Dialogue of Self and Soul") in late 1927, Yeats opened his monumental *ottava rima* proleptic elegy for his poetic demesne with a synecdochic and metonymic representation of his tower: "Under my window-ledge the waters race…" (490). This highly-economical representation of the tower juxtaposed with the watercourse is also yet another variation of the fundamental image—"The tower set on the stream's edge" (326)—in the 1918 elegy for Robert Gregory, the "inheritor" of Coole Park, set in the bare tower Yeats had recently obtained.

The topographical and metaphorical opening stanza foregrounds the connection between Coole Park and Thoor Ballylee, knitting Cloon River and Coole Lough together—as if "the best knit to the best"—by the course of water which serves as an emblem of the journey of the soul.[623] (See Figure 20.) The subterranean water under the tower had sometimes half surfaced in Yeats's poetic text, as in the case of the third stanza in the first published version of "My House" in "Meditations in Time of Civil War": "The river rises, and it sinks again; / One hears the rumble of it far below / Under its rocky hole … / Symbols of the soul … / The subterranean streams, / Tower where a candle gleams, / A

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[622] *Myth* 22-30.

[623] "Upon a House shaken by the Land Agitation": "the sweet laughing eagle thoughts … / That comes of the best knit to the best..." (264). See Paul de Man 133-43,194-95 for the discussion about the "dual role of the emblem image" in Yeats's poetry.

suffering passion and a labouring thought…" (420n). The stanza was entirely deleted from the text of the poem on its inclusion in *The Tower* as we have seen in the third chapter. Yeats had also included the subterranean aspect as one of the features of the tower in the drafts of "The Phases of the Moon," but it had disappeared—as if itself mimicking the mysterious water disappearing—from a typescript of the poem as seen in chapter one.[624] Yeats had focused on the upper

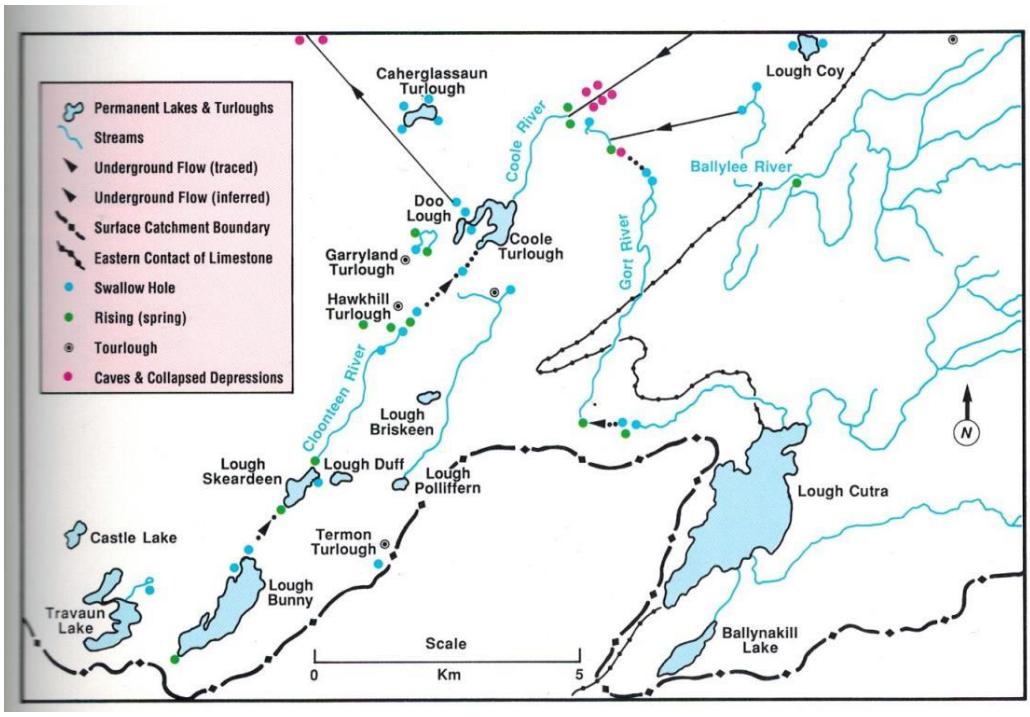

Fig. 20. A topographical map of the waters in the neighbourhood of Coole and Ballylee. A digital scan of the reproduction in John Feehan and Grace O'Donovan, *The Magic of Coole* (Dublin: the Stationery Office, 1993) 27.

structure of the tower, as if he had dictated that the "subterranean streams" should stay "below."[625] The time may have "at last" been ripe for him to put those aspects of the tower which he had repeatedly suppressed in his verse on Thoor Ballylee—"That hidden stream an emblem of the soul" (in the words of an early draft of the poem) and the Coole dimension—into the foreground of his verse.[626] (See Figure 21.) The underground water finally surfaces in his text in

[624] "… the river bubbling up / From subterranean caverns, images that / Shelleyan like the first or natural wisdom," *WSC* 354-55. See *WSC* 316-17, 324-25, 366.

[625] "O how this mother swells up toward my heart! / *Hysterica passio!* Down, thou climbing sorrow, / Thy element's below...," 2.4.52-54. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*, 162.

[626] *WMP* 184-85. See also "hidden water" and "hidden streams," *WMP* 190-91.

"Coole and Ballylee, 1931," just as the water finally "rise[s] in a rocky place / In Coole demesne" (490):

> Under my window-ledge the waters race,
> Otters below and moor-hens on the top,
> Run for a mile undimmed in Heaven's face
> Then darkening through 'dark' Raftery's 'cellar' drop,
> Run underground, rise in a rocky place
> In Coole demesne, and there to finish up
> Spread to a lake and drop into a hole.
> What's water but the generated soul?

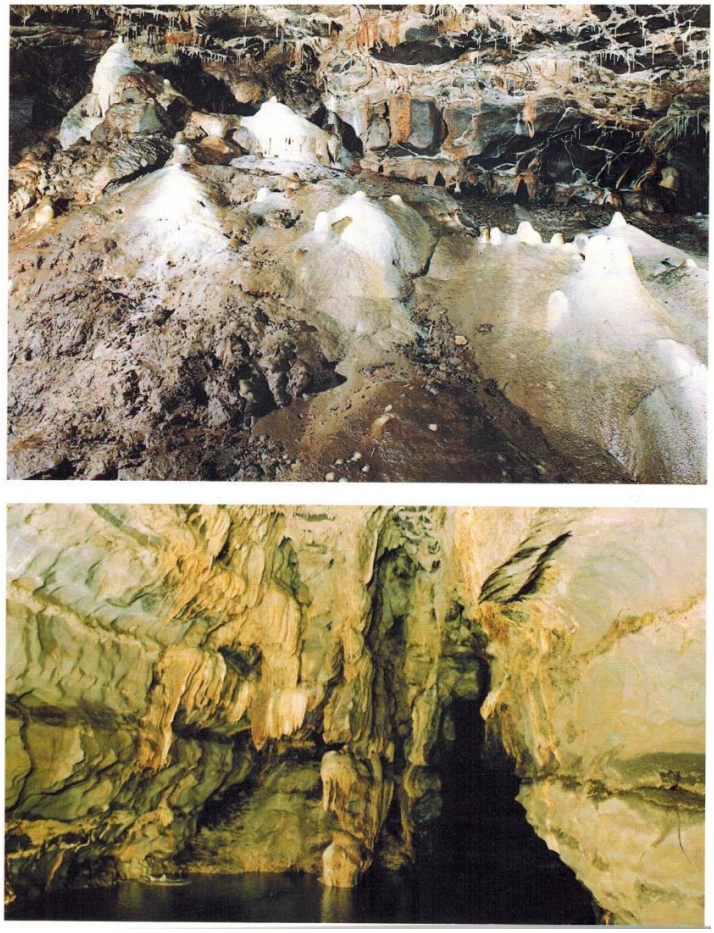

Fig. 21. Photographs of Coole Cave by Terry Dunne. A digital scan of the reproduction in John Feehan and Grace O'Donovan, *The Magic of Coole* 28.

Over three pages of laborious drafts of "an account of the sudden ascent of a swan" (#5583), preserved in the "large manuscript book bound in white vellum"

(*WMP* xvi, 174-81), allow us to see why Yeats wrote to George he was "tired" (#5583). "An Image of inspiration," a phrase similar to "a symbol of inspiration" in the letter, is found struck out in one of those early drafts (*WMP* 176-77). Five days later Yeats expressed confidence about the poem in progress: "My poem on Coole may grow into the finest I have written for some years" (to George Yeats, 8 February [1932] #5590).

"Coole and Ballylee, 1931" is the second of the paired elegies which stand out in Yeats's *oeuvre*. "Coole Park, 1929," the earlier written, was an occasional poem Yeats wrote for Lady Gregory—a "Poem on Coole to go with Lady G s / Cuala essays," as he wrote above its "Prose sketch."[627] As a proem to Gregory's *Coole* (Cuala, 1931), her "farewell" (*J2* 178) essays to the demesne, it was titled "Coole Park" and inscribed and dated at the end "W. B. Yeats. September 7th. 1929."[628] The year "1929" was added to the title on its inclusion in *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems* (Cuala, 1932), where the second elegy, written after the publication of *Coole* (July 1931), was first published, titled "Coole Park and Ballylee 1932." The poem was retitled "Coole and Ballylee, 1931" on its inclusion in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (Macmillan, 1933). A heavily revised late ink draft of the poem has the title "Coole 1932" and is dated "Feb 13—1932."[629] Yeats's note below that date records his idea of bringing two elegies together into "a single poem" with several headings, which testifies to the fact that the two poems were closely related in his mind.[630] "Coole Park" served as a prologue to *Coole*; "Coole and Ballylee, 1931" may serve as an epilogue, not only to *Coole* but also to the whole literary construction rooted in the property of

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[627] Written on the recto of the thirteenth leaf of "Rapallo notebook 'D,'" *WMP* xvii, 104-105.

[628] The poem had not yet been finished at the end of September 1929, according to Yeats's letter to Lady Gregory (30 September 1929 #5289): "however though [the poem] has taken a new leap into life today it is not finished — & now I must not delay longer."

[629] *WMP* 194-95. A prose sketch is headed "Coole Park II," *WMP* 170-71.

[630] See *WMP* 194, 194n for Yeats's draft for headings: "'A flight of Swallows'" (for the first elegy, "dated"), "'The Wood' or 'Swan & Waters'" (for the first three stanzas of the second elegy), "'The House'" (for the fourth and fifth stanzas) and "'The Comment' or 'The high horse' or 'The last romantics'" (for the sixth and seventh stanzas). The stanzas of the first elegy were numbered with Roman numerals only in the text published in *Coole*. As to the second elegy, while stanzas in an ink draft and typescripts carry Roman numerals, no published texts are with numbered stanzas. Yeats had decided not to number stanzas in the paired elegies on their inclusion in *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems*.

Coole Park—the "place where," Lady Gregory had once remarked, "so many children of our minds were born"—and Thoor Ballylee.[631]

"Coole Park, 1929" seems to be more closely related to Yeats's own autobiographical essays than to Lady Gregory's *Coole*. Among the drafts of the autobiography begun in 1915 and completed "at the end of 1916 or the beginning of 1917" is found Yeats's account of his encounter with Coole.[632] Writing about Lady Gregory's "house [which] is at the edge of [a] lake," Yeats explained how he "found at last what [he] had been seeking always, a life of order and of labour, where all outward things were the image of an inward life" (*Mem* 101). The first elegy also seems partly a versification of the last section (VI) of "The Stirring of the Bones" (written in 1920-22, published in 1922), towards the end of which he writes: "If [her personal] influence were lacking, Ireland would be greatly impoverished, so much has been planned out in the library or among the woods at Coole…."[633] Earlier in the same autobiographical essay Yeats remarks "the woods at Coole … are so much … knitted to my thought that when I am dead they will have … my longest visit."[634] "Dramatis Personae: 1896-1902," which would be written in 1934, two years after Lady Gregory's death, and covers his first years at Coole, may serve as a prose postscript to and a commentary on "Coole Park, 1929."

The second elegy "Coole and Ballylee, 1931," by contrast, though this has not, as far as I am aware, been argued before, has a strong intertextual connection with *Coole*.[635] It seems likely, based on its intertextual relationship with *Coole*, that reading Lady Gregory's memoir in part inspired Yeats to write the second

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[631] In her "cautiously" written letter to stop Yeats from publishing "The New Faces" "just now," *Life1* 477.

[632] *Mem* 9, 13.

[633] *Au* (*CW3*) 7, 285-86.

[634] *Au* (*CW3*) 283.

[635] It seems the intertextuality between *Coole* and "Coole and Ballylee, 1931" has never been discussed. Jeffares (*A New Commentary* 131, 132) quotes from Gregory's passages on the river and the swans in *Coole* in his commentary on "The Wild Swans at Coole." Daniel Harris remarks that "Coole Park, 1929" "emphasizes Coole's cultural importance," "balancing *Coole*'s modest and private focus on family, literature, local geography," *Yeats: Coole Park and Ballylee* 225. Roy Foster, introducing his account of "Coole Park, 1929," notes that the "tone [of *Coole*] is proudly elegiac, and WBY was ready to match it," following his quotation of Gregory's passage on the shelf whose front is filled with Yeats's books from a chapter not included in the book's publication from Cuala in 1931, *Life2* 391. "Poem ["Coole Park, 1929"] and book [*Coole*] took their place in the historicizing process which enshrined both house and literary revival together," *Life2* 408.

elegy, with a swan and the lake—absent from the first elegy—finally at its centre leading to further autobiographical meditation. "Coole Park, 1929," which might have been headed "A flight of Swallows," had he pursued the idea of making the two elegies "a single poem," revolves around the metaphor of swallows, as Yeats had planned from the outset in the "Prose sketch" of the poem.[636] The lake is found in early drafts, but did not remain in the poem.[637] The first elegy "Coole Park, 1929" constructs a monument to the Golden Age of Lady Gregory's Coole and closes with a stanza which might serve as an anticipatory epitaph for Lady Gregory. The second elegy "Coole and Ballylee, 1931" meditates on departure—in many senses—of Lady Gregory and Coole Park and of Yeats himself.

After her husband Sir William Gregory's death in 1892, Lady Gregory "spent more of her time alone at Coole" and "reorganised her life," editing her husband's autobiography and then his grandfather's letters, as well as resuming her attempt to learn Gaelic.[638] Meeting Yeats and listening to his visions for a theatre in August 1896, four years after her husband's death, marked a watershed in her life.[639] Her later efforts to maintain Coole as long as her strength continues present a striking contrast to the unsettled state of herself and Coole reflected in her letter written shortly after her husband's death.[640] As we know from her journals, she "began writing a sort of farewell" to Coole on 24 March 1927 (*J2* 178). A week later (31 March) she was "writing" and "sowing and planting"—half preparing for and half resisting the coming disintegration of her Coole—when Margaret, Robert's widow, was sent "the Deed of Sale … to sign" (*J2* 180): "I don't know if I shall realise then, I cannot now, that Coole has passed altogether away from us. / I go on writing my little 'Farewell' to the

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[636] *WMP* 194, 194n. "… address the swallows," *WMP* 104-105.

[637] In early drafts of the first stanza the lake was incorporated in the landscape, as in "shadowed in foliage, the lake luminous," *WMP* 106-107, 110-11, 122-23. In a later draft where the water is last found ("A windy water s edge"), the adjective "luminous" modifies the cloud instead of the lake, as in the published text, *WMP* 156-57.

[638] Daniel J. Murphy, "Foreword," *J1* ix-x.

[639] *J1* xi.

[640] "I have no plans. I am trying to get rid of my homes…. I must sell this [London] house & if I can let Coole (where I cd not live alone except in summer) it wd be a relief to my income which I must make the most of for Robert's sake," Lady Gregory to Count de Basterot, 17 March 1892, quoted in *Life1* 169.

things around me—to the rooms. And I go on sowing and planting in the garden." On the next day Lady Gregory put "[her] name as witness to the sale of Coole—all-house-woods-gardens…" (*J2* 180). Visiting Dublin to see Yeats "before they go to the south of Spain for his convalescence" that autumn, she recorded Lennox Robinson's comment on Coole she heard from Yeats ("Balzac would have written 200 pages about the staircase only at Coole") and added: "So perhaps I am not wasting time in writing of my surroundings."[641]

Lady Gregory read to Yeats from her essays on Coole while she was writing them in 1928.[642] Yeats himself read them. She quotes his letter in her journal entry dated 23 Oct 1930 (*J2* 559): "Yeats writes about my *Coole* that is to be printed at Cuala. 'It is a lovely book—as I read it I felt myself to be on the very spot you wrote about.'"[643] The word "spot" would enter the second elegy: "A spot whereon the founders lived and died" (491). Her passages about the swans on the lake in the chapter titled "Woods, Visions, and the Lake" included a quotation from Yeats's poem "The Wild Swans at Coole" among others, which must have once again brought back to him memories centring on that landmark poem. The composition of "The Wild Swans at Coole," which had "immortalised" itself and the swans at Coole Lough,[644] had almost coincided with Yeats's venturing on the construction of the tower which he would name "Thoor Ballylee" in 1922. Reading Gregory's text may well have inspired him to write a second, final, poem set by that lake, after about a fifteen-year

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[641] 28 October 1927 *J2* 209.

[642] On 6 May 1928 at 82 Merrion Square she read "the 'Library' to Willie—he had asked if I had any articles that would make a volume for the Cuala Press. He seemed to like it very much, said 'it has style'…. I may perhaps go over one or two of the others in the same way," *J2* 255. On 19 August 1928 "[Yeats] asked me to read one of my little articles to him and I read the Garden one, just finished, and he likes it and wants it with one or two others for a Cuala volume. So I'll finish the 'Woods and Lake,'" *J2* 308. On 30 August 1928 she read him "my rough copy of the 'Woods and Lake,' and he liked it and says the three, it, the 'Library', the 'Garden', will make a little book for Cuala," *J2* 311. She also records Yeats's comments on the "cygnets" as "a good omen" (*J2* 311), which would enter her essay. See Kelly 257, 259, 261, 262.

[643] Only the "Stray envelope addressed to Coole, postmark 'OCT 23 30 [1930]'" (#5395) is preserved in the Berg Collection.

[644] Feehan and O'Donovan, *The Magic of Coole* 20: "The most striking animals of the larger turloughs (including Coole) are the birds which arrive in winter. The most famous of all the birds here of course are the swans, immortalised in Yeats's famous poem."

interval.[645] His discarded motifs for the earlier poem such as "They are but images on water" and "climbed the river" may have partly come alive in the emblematic representation of the swan and the focus on the river in the later poem.[646]

Her quotation of the first eight lines and the penultimate stanza from "The Wild Swans at Coole" occurs in her prose which is woven with memories, folklore, topographical details and literary quotations, with Yeats as a *dramatis persona* appearing here and there.[647] Lady Gregory prefaced Yeats's poem with George Moore's autobiographical recollection of the "thirty-six" swans "striving to rise from [the] surface" of Coole Lough in 1899 from his passage depicting the early period of their Irish literary movement.[648] Yeats's stanzas were followed—after the meta-narrative foregrounding of her writing process ("I had written so far")—by Gregory's account of the "stately" sailing of a swan family she and Yeats had recently observed at Coole. It is as if it were an implicit postscript to Yeats's question "Among what rushes will they build…?" at the close of the poem:

> And yesterday evening, August sixteenth, 1928, some days after I had written so far, Yeats having come to stay for a while, we walked down to the river in the evening…. And there … two swans were sailing along towards the lake, one leading, one to the rear, very white and stately; and between them, in single file three cygnets, grey. And Yeats said 'I have known your lake for thirty years, and that is the first time a swan has built here. That is a good omen'…[649] They passed on, dignified, not breaking their line

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[645] Lady Gregory, for instance, records her experience of hearing Yeats's poems (to be included in *October Blast*) during composition and reading them after publication: "I had heard him read or repeat the poems little by little, but they are even finer than I thought…," *J2* 203.

[646] *WSC* 14-15, 18-19, 22-23.

[647] See, for instance, *Coole* 31: "I think it was these Coole woods and not those of Alban that were in Synge's mind later when he wrote 'Who'll pity Deirdre has lost the twilight in the woods with Naisi, when beech trees were silver and copper and ash trees were fine gold.' For when staying here he never went out upon the roads, these sylvan walks were his delight."

[648] *Coole* 36-37. *Hail and Farewel* 190-91.

[649] This ellipsis is in the original.

> until they were out of sight in the wider water, beyond a ridge of rocks. (*Coole* 37-38)[650]

Yeats's solitary swan in "Coole and Ballylee, 1931" stands out against the backdrop of all these grouped swans.[651] It evokes the flight of Shelley's in *Alastor* and recalls the comparison of "the solitary soul" to a swan which "leap[s] into the desolate heaven" in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen."[652] It is also in contrast to those Yeats wrote to his daughter Anne about around the very time of his composition of the elegy: "sixty two wild swans on the Lake, this is seven or eight more than I ever saw."[653] He told her "I have been writing a poem which contains a description of a wild swan suddenly flying up from the side of the Lake" (#5584), referring to the following lines:

> At sudden thunder of the mounting swan
> I turned about and looked where branches break
> The glittering reaches of the flooded lake. (490)

The close relationship between Yeats's "Coole and Ballylee, 1931" and Gregory's *Coole* is not confined to the swans. It seems likely that her text served as a prose inspiration for the water's journey from Ballylee to Coole in the opening stanza.[654] Several pages before their observing the swans "sailing" from the river to the lake, "the wider water, beyond a ridge of rocks," Gregory noted the topographical details of the mysterious course of "Our own river," accompanied by some quotations from a French writer:

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[650] Yeats wrote about the same swan family to Margaret Gregory, 30 August 1928 #5153.

[651] In an early draft below his prose "scenario" headed "Coole Park II" is written plural "wild swans" (*WMP* 170-71), which soon becomes the singular "mounting swan" on the verso of the next leaf in the same notebook, *WMP* 172-73.

[652] See *Alastor*, ll. 275-80: "the sea-shore. A swan was there, / Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds. / It rose as he approached, and with strong wings / Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course…. / His eyes pursued its flight…." *Shelley: Poetical Works* 21.

[653] 3 February 1932 #5584. Two months later Yeats wrote to Anne from London (7 April 1932 #5632): "the only swans are those tame creatures in the parks."

[654] There is no reference to Ballylee in Yeats's prose sketch of the poem, *WMP* 170-71. Yeats may have revised the "first" stanza in the scenario to "second" when he moved the Ballylee stanza to the opening of the poem.

> Our own river that we catch a glimpse of now and again through hazel and ash, or outshining the silver beech stems of Kyle Dortha, has ever been an idler. Its transit is as has been said of human life 'from a mystery through a mystery to a mystery'; suddenly appearing, as a French writer has put down in his book…. And dipping presently under great limestone flags that form a natural bridge…. Then, flowing free, it helps to form a lake, whose fullness, finding no channel above ground is forced 'de chercher sa route par les passages souterains …'; into which it flows under the very shadow of the Dun of the ancient legendary King Guaire…. (*Coole* 27-28)

Her comparison of the "transit" of the river to "human life" ("'from a mystery through a mystery to a mystery'") as well as allusion to a legendary figure ("under the very shadow of the Dun of the ancient legendary King Guaire…") could have inspired Yeats's allegorical picture of the journey of the soul / water over- and under-ground and his naming of a deep pool "'dark' Raftery's 'cellar'" by combining words quoted from a poem by Raftery and Yeats's early essay on it.[655] The final destination of the water indicated at the end of the first stanza ("Spread to a lake and drop into a hole"[656]) also corresponds to her account: "Then, flowing free, it helps to form a lake, whose fullness, finding no channel above ground is forced 'de chercher sa route par les passages souterains de lac vers la mer'…" (*Coole* 28). The mysterious disappearance of the river at Coole had probably been rooted in Yeats's mind for over three decades since his first acquaintance with the place. It had been prefigured in the 1900 version of his unpublished "fictional autobiography": "a river that flows out of a small lake at the upper end of the valley and sinks suddenly into the ground midway between the lake and the house" (*SB* ix, 115, 217n3). The watercourse knitting the two places together in the first stanza not only meta-poetically embodies the intertextuality between *Coole* and "Coole and Ballylee, 1931," but it symbolically traces back his past three decades—from his original encounter

[655] *Myth* 23-24, 28.
[656] It was "… run into a hole" in *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems*, 9.

with the place through the inception of his tower project to the closure of Coole and Ballylee—as if weaving the years into a unified flow combined with the mysterious river at Coole, which finally surfaces Yeats's published poetic text.

The association of the water with the soul articulated at the end of the first stanza ("What's water but the generated soul?") leads to the sudden appearance—like the water Gregory illustrates ("suddenly appearing")—of the swan / soul in front of the poet in the second and third stanzas. The unnamed "wood" "[u]pon the border of that [lake]" with "a copse of beeches" in the second stanza of the present poem was named "Kyle Dortha," as in Gregory's text, in some of the poem's early drafts.[657] The metaphor vividly capturing the moment's picture which burst into the poet's view at the end of the second stanza ("where branches break / The glittering reaches of the flooded lake") seems likely to have originated from the source of her textual river "shining through the spreading beech trees of Kyle Dortha…" (*Coole* 30).[658]

Yeats's second "anticipatory elegy" for Coole—and Ballylee this time—was probably "[begotten]"—to use a verb in the first elegy ("those walls begot")—in this way, while he was staying in the place to keep Lady Gregory company in her final days.[659] Asked by the family of Lady Gregory, who was terminally ill, Yeats had been staying at Coole more "continuously" than ever—probably especially since October 1931.[660] The visit to Coole offered him the last opportunity to work there. It was during this last and longest winter he spent at Coole that Yeats composed "Coole and Ballylee, 1931." Lady Gregory's "never delivered" note—"her own anticipatory farewell"—to Yeats, in retrospect, synchronized with his writing of the elegy.[661] Yeats was not only "turning the introductory verses to Lady Gregory's 'Coole' (Cuala) into a poem of some length" (#5583), but was in part "turning" her *Coole* into an elegy for the two

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[657] *WMP* 170-71, 172-73.

[658] The rhyming words "break / lake" are written below an early draft, *WMP* 170-71.

[659] "'Coole Park, 1929' … was already written as a kind of anticipatory elegy…," *Life2* 439.

[660] Yeats wrote in "The Death of Lady Gregory," dated "June 19, 1932," "I had been at Coole continuously for a year, with the exception of brief periods when business called me away," *J2* 638. See Yeats to T. Sturge Moore (22 October 1931 #5527): "Lady Gregory's family have asked me to stay here & look after her & I have consented to do so for old sake's sake & out of gratitude for all the past. I shall be here for months, going to Dublin for a week now & again, or my wife coming here."

[661] *Life2* 437, 439.

places—by extending to Ballylee that mysterious water Gregory described. The poem captures the final stage of Coole Park and Lady Gregory—and also of Yeats himself at Coole—poised on the verge of departure, which is symbolized by the swan's "[drifting] upon a darkening flood," perhaps with a faint echo from the final stanza of "The Wild Swans at Coole" ("they drift on the still water…," 323). It is as if not only "a last inheritor" but the "demesne" itself were metamorphosed into the single symbolic swan on the brink of disappearance.[662] The reappearance of the word "darkening" ("… darkening through 'dark' Raftery's 'cellar' drop…") as the penultimate word in the poem ("… the swan drifts upon a darkening flood…") indicates the imminent "drop[ping] into a hole" as formulated in the first stanza, suggesting the continuous, "winding" water's journey.

"Coole and Ballylee, 1931" underwent two of Yeats's most radical "architectonic" revisions: one is the transposition of a stanza to the opening of the poem during composition, and the other is the removal of a stanza after the first publication.[663] In an early draft the present first stanza appears as the fifth stanza, following the image of "poor Arab tribesman and his tent" (*WMP* 182-83) and beginning a section where the poet meditates on his life and work (*WMP* 184-85). The stanza set in Ballylee was originally written in that context, and the stanza on the "choice" followed it as the sixth stanza, continuing the meditations.

In the later draft dated "Feb 13—1932" the Ballylee stanza is transposed to the beginning, as in the published text (*WMP* 190-91). This revision resulted in bringing together two separate passages about water (the former first and fifth stanzas). The river water now directly leads from Ballylee to the lake at Coole and the swan in the present second stanza ("Upon the border of that lake's a wood…," *WMP* 190-91). This revision, which echoes the one executed after the first publication of "The Wild Swans at Coole" (the transposition of the original

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[662] Roy Foster suggests the association between Gregory and the swan: "the mysterious swan also leads directly to the journey of the soul, and then to the dying Gregory herself.… He already knew … how cut adrift he himself would feel when his fellow romantic, her work done, vanished like the swan into darkness," *Life2* 439-40.

[663] See Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline* 3-4: "[Yeats] was also seeking the 'right' architectonic form: his well-known rearrangement of the completed stanzas of 'The Wild Swans at Coole' to create an entirely different ending is merely one instance of his keen critical awareness of the import of different structural shapes."

third stanza to the end of the poem), also highlights the correspondence between the present first stanza and the final stanza, both invoking Raftery (who inevitably recalls Part II of "The Tower") and sharing the word "darkening," as if they were mirroring each other.

The other revision was the removal of the "choice" stanza from the poem on its inclusion in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* after the first publication. The deleted stanza was collected in the same volume as an independent poem "The Choice." The revision, which may reflect Yeats's departure from Coole, removes the whole question of choice from the elegy.

The title of the elegy also underwent a dramatic change with the late entrance of the name Ballylee. A typescript signed "WB Yeats," which is preserved in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library, carries the title "COOLE. 1932."[664] This ribbon copy was "Removed from inside front cover of Gregory. Journal. v. 46," according to "a note" in the collection.[665] This suggests it was the copy Yeats gave Lady Gregory and that the title of the poem she knew did not include "Ballylee." It is in Yeats's ink revision in a later typescript that we first find the name Ballylee in the title of the poem: "Coole & Thoor Ballylee 1931."[666] (See Figure 22.) While the two place names in the title continued to vacillate between Coole and Coole Park, Ballylee and Thoor Ballylee in drafts, and even after publication concerning Coole and Coole Park, the name Ballylee stayed thereafter.[667] The year 1932 in the title of the elegy in *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems*, published in the same year, probably signified not only the actual year of composition but also the year of Lady Gregory's death.[668]

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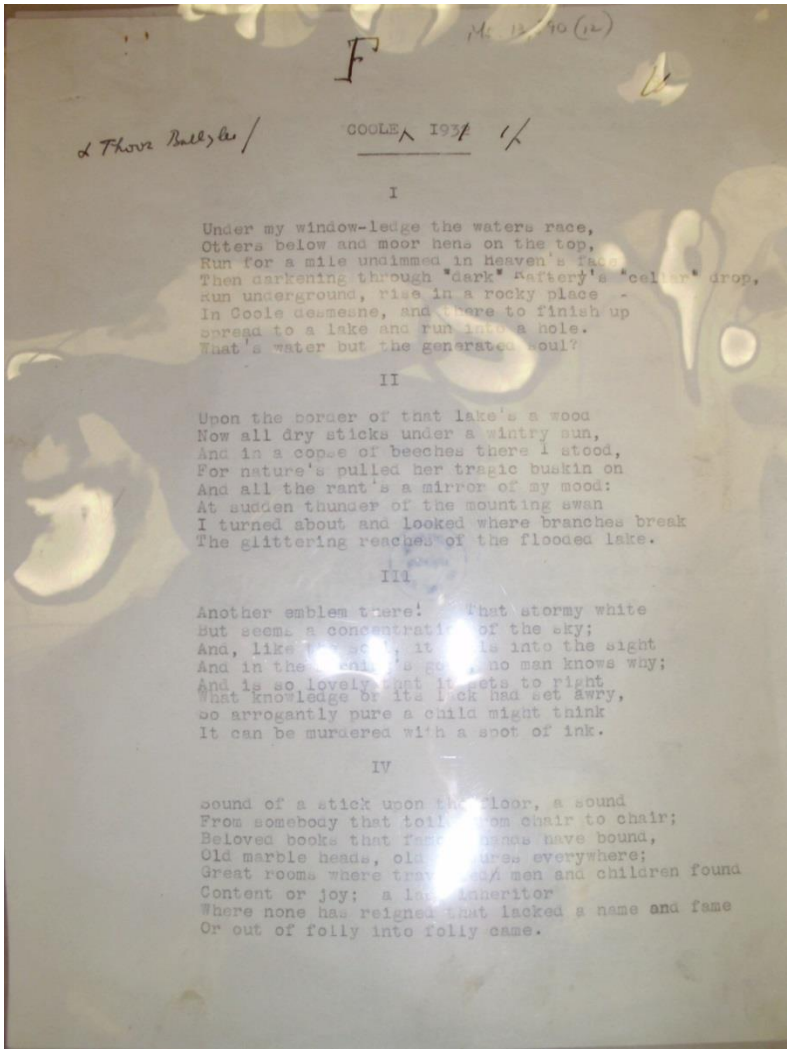
[664] *WMP* xxiii-xxiv, 196-97.
[665] *WMP* xxiii-xxiv.
[666] NLI 13,590 (12), *WMP* xviii.
[667] See for the transformations of the title *WMP* 196n and Richard J. Finneran, *Editing Yeats's Poems* 34. Yeats had "agreed to [the editor at Macmillan, Thomas] Mark's suggestion that the title be shortened from 'Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931', 'to avoid having &' in the running titles…" and "Coole and Ballylee, 1931" had been used since *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), Finneran 34. "Park" was posthumously added back in the title in *The Poems of W B. Yeats* (1949) (Wade 210), which the variorum edition uses as the text of the poem (490), and in the "Second Edition, with later poems added" of *The Collected Poems* (1950) (Wade 211).
[668] See *Life2* 439: "identifying it as an ode on Gregory's death…."



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& Thoor Ballylee /

COOLE, 1931 /

I

Under my window-ledge the waters race,
Otters below and moor hens on the top,
Run for a mile undimmed in Heaven's face
Then darkening through 'dark' Raftery's 'cellar' drop,
Run underground, rise in a rocky place
In Coole demesne, and there to finish up
Spread to a lake and run into a hole.
What's water but the generated soul?

II

Upon the border of that lake's a wood
Now all dry sticks under a wintry sun,
And in a copse of beeches there I stood,
For nature's pulled her tragic buskin on
And all the rant's a mirror of my mood:
At sudden thunder of the mounting swan
I turned about and looked where branches break
The glittering reaches of the flooded lake.

III

Another emblem there! That stormy white
But seems a concentration of the sky;
And, like the soul, it [illegible] into the sight
And in the morning's gone, no man knows why;
And is so lovely that it sets to right
What knowledge or its lack had set awry,
So arrogantly pure a child might think
It can be murdered with a spot of ink.

IV

Sound of a stick upon the floor, a sound
From somebody that toils from chair to chair;
Beloved books that famous hands have bound,
Old marble heads, old pictures everywhere;
Great rooms where travelled men and children found
Content or joy; a last inheritor
Where none has reigned that lacked a name and fame
Or out of folly into folly came.

Fig. 22. The first leaf of the later typescript of "Coole and Ballylee, 1931," NLI 13,590 (12). Photograph by author. 1 August 2012.

On the other hand, the present revised date of 1931, used since *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*, refers to the final full year Yeats and Lady Gregory shared at Coole, the longest time since his first visit in 1896. In early February 1931 they went to see Ballylee together as noted earlier, which was the last recorded visit of theirs to Ballylee (*J2* 592). Yeats incorporated Thoor Ballylee in the second elegy, which was made "plainly visible" (#5030) by his last-minute inclusion of the place name in the title of the poem. With the present title "Coole and Ballylee, 1931," Yeats formally joined the great symbol of Lady Gregory, Coole Park, with his "permanent symbol" (#5030) and "powerful emblem" ("Blood and the Moon") which he had established as Thoor Ballylee.

Two years after "Coole and Ballylee, 1931," Yeats dedicated his play *The Words Upon the Window Pane* (Cuala 1934) to Lady Gregory and her house ("IN MEMORY OF / LADY GREGORY / IN WHOSE HOUSE IT WAS WRITTEN" *VPl* 937). His next publication from Cuala in the same year, *The King of the Great Clock Tower, Commentaries and Poems*, contained another tower which was symbolically in antithesis to Yeatsian tower. He virtually commemorated the closure of Coole and an epoch of his "imaginative life" in the preface to the book, which used Robert Gregory's "woodcut, *in red*, of bell and fish" as a colophon (Wade 179): "A year ago I found that I had written no verse for two years; I had never been so long barren; I had nothing in my head, and there used to be more than I could write. Perhaps Coole Park where I had escaped from politics, from all that Dublin talked of, when it was shut, shut me out from my theme; or did the subconscious drama that was my imaginative life end with its owner? ..." (*VP* 855).

Thoor Ballylee, after *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*, remained notably absent from his final poems, without even a passing reference. "An acre of green grass" (575) in a poem first published in 1938 ("An Acre of Grass") may underscore the absence of "An acre of stony ground" (419). "Now that my ladder's gone" (630) in a poem first published in January 1939 ("The Circus Animals' Desertion"[669]) may hint at the absence of the tower and its winding stair. In posthumous "Under Ben Bulben," which concludes with his own epitaph, the reference to "Palmer's phrase" (639) may be reminiscent of "that tower Palmer drew."[670] These are the faintest of after-echoes rather than sustained allusions. This is in contrast to Sligo's recurring in several of his late poems, as if prefiguring what he calls "dreaming back."[671] Yeats's poetic imagination, however, may have hovered around Thoor Ballylee one last time when he composed his last poem "The Black Tower" (635-36) before the end of his life. In this enigmatic and apocalyptic satire which has invited various

[669] "Animal's" was used in the title until *Last Poems and Two Plays* (Cuala, 1939), 629n.
[670] "General Introduction for my Work," *E&I* 522.
[671] "Ben Bulben and Knocknarea" and "Rosses' crawling tide" (549) in "Alternative Song for the Severed Head in 'The King of the Great Clock Tower,'" "Sligo at Drumcliff" (604) in "Are you Content?" as well as "Under Ben Bulben" (636-40) and the "Alt" (632) in "The Man and the Echo."

explications,[672] Yeats seems to have implicitly and daringly combined the mountains in Sligo with his tower in Ballylee, both unnamed.[673] The poem sets the mock-heroic representation of soldiers waiting for their king and the caricature of the "tower's old cook" in "the old black tower"—suggestive of "images" being "in the Great Memory stored" ("The Tower," 412)—where the image of "*the tomb*" "*upon the mountain*" is, as it were, superimposed, or vice versa. The notable absence of the tower after "Coole and Ballylee, 1931," however, underscores the closure of Yeats's tower period—along with Coole—and highlights it as an epoch.

[672] See Henn, *The Lonely Tower* 338-40, Jeffares, *A New Commentary* 409-10, Albright, *Poems* 816-17.

[673] In the drafts occur phrases which invoke Thoor Ballylee, such as [cancelled:] "It seem but a desolate home" (*LP* 106-107), "this ancient tower" (*LP* 114-15), [cancelled:] "You say that the tower master has forgotten / & we are left master less men"] (*LP* 116-17), as well as the noun "father" which suggests his ancestral place ("Our fathers stand in the tomb up right," *LP* 114-15).

CONCLUSION

In the midst of "the flooded stream": Agency and Contingency in W. B. Yeats's Construction of the Tower

1

My close-up chronological study of Yeats's tower has foregrounded the sheer constructive *work* of Yeats's on the representation of the tower—as a place of his own, a place "set out for wisdom," "sedentary toil" and "trade," a place of defensive withdrawal from the political conflict afflicting his country, as "emblems of adversity" in the context of terrible turbulence including the destruction of Anglo-Irish ancestral houses. As the "adversity" of the Anglo-Ireland becomes deeper in the later stages of his tower project, Yeats's tower becomes aligned with the Ascendancy of the "people of Burke and of Grattan" ("The Tower," 414) and "Goldsmith and the Dean, Berkeley and Burke" ("Blood and the Moon," 481) for symbolic affirmation. Each tower poem in Yeats's developing tower project, though independent, also functions as part of a great kinetic sequence, where multiple phases of the tower appear in response to increasingly violent historical circumstances. Viewed in long perspective, some are also chiastically configured. The first tower-oriented dialogue ("Ego Dominus Tuus"), followed by a sort of its sequel ("The Phases of the Moon"), is counterpoised with the final tower dialogue ("A Dialogue of Self and Soul"). "The Wild Swans at Coole," set in Coole Lough, is a symbolic point of departure for the project and is immediately followed by an elegy for the heir of Coole killed in the Great War set in the newly-obtained tower at Ballylee ("In Memory of Major Robert Gregory"). This pair is mirrored by the paired Coole elegies in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* ("Coole Park, 1929" and "Coole and Ballylee, 1931"), the second of which combines the two places and closes the whole project rooted in his territory of Ballylee, independent of Coole.

Before we end, it is worth "[c]ast[ing] a cold eye" over the story we have been tracing. It was more than two years after writing "Ego Dominus Tuus" in London in December 1915 that Yeats composed his second tower-oriented poem "A Prayer on going into my House" at Coole in April 1918. The Easter Rising and its aftermaths, including the personal impact of the execution of John MacBride upon the course of Yeats's private life, intervened between his first two tower-oriented poems. Struck by the uprising and subsequent executions of its leaders, Yeats, away from Ireland, had begun to compose what would become "Easter, 1916" in London by 11 May 1916, "two days after the last execution."[674] After visiting Dublin in early June, which "helped fix in [his] mind the idea of irrevocable change as a subject" for the elegy, Yeats went to Colleville, Normandy to stay with Maud Gonne and her children.[675] Aiming to build his life anew in the personal sphere, he made marriage proposals to Maud and then to Iseult Gonne and was declined by each, while working on the Easter poem there. Arriving back in London at the end of August, Yeats went to Dublin in mid-September and then to Coole, where he stayed until early October. It was during this stay at Coole that Yeats finished and dated the elegy "Sept 25. 1916" (*MRD* 74-75), which was shortly followed by the composition of "The Wild Swans at Coole" and his setting about the acquisition of Ballylee Castle.[676]

The elegies, "Easter, 1916" and "The Wild Swans at Coole"—one a public group elegy, the other a self-elegy—are subliminally interrelated with each other and mark the genesis of Yeats's tower project. In the following year 1917 Yeats acquired Ballylee Castle in March and married George Hyde-Lees in October, after being refused by Iseult once again in August. In 1917 Yeats wrote more Easter elegies, "The Rose Tree" and "Sixteen Dead Men," while preparing for the publication of *The Wild Swans at Coole, Other Verses and a Play in Verse* from Cuala Press in November 1917 (Wade 118), including the topographical revision from the "sea" to the "stream" in "Ego Dominus Tuus." Yeats also worked on the essays to be published in January 1918 as *Per Amica Silentia*

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[674] Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 84.
[675] *Life 2* 54.
[676] See for the circumstances of his composition of the elegy *Life 2* 50-66, Kelly 185-87.

Lunae (Macmillan, Wade 120, 121), for which "Ego Dominus Tuus" had originally been written.

The placement of Yeats's Easter poems in his book of verse was postponed until *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* from Cuala Press (1921) by contingencies of consecutive wars and their fight for bringing the pictures bequeathed by Hugh Lane back to Ireland. Only a few copies of "Easter, 1916" had been "sent to selected friends in the autumn [of 1916] (Gonne, Gregory, Ernest Boyd)" and Yeats had read the poem "to a small group" on 7 December 1916,[677] before its 25 copies were privately printed by Clement Shorter probably in April 1917.[678] An early undated draft of the table of contents for the 1917 Cuala volume began with "1916" and did not contain "The Wild Swans at Coole," probably predating the eventual title piece.[679] Yeats's letter on as late as 16 May 1917 suggests that he was still entertaining the possibility of including his work on the Rising in his next book of verse from Cuala: "The Swans at Coole (I think this will be the title) a volume of 24 or 25 lyrics or a little more if the war ending enables me to add two poems I have written about Easter Week in Dublin" (#3244). A hint of indecision about the title "I think this will be…" may even suggest his thinking of "Easter, 1916" as an alternative title for the collection. It is not surprising that "The Wild Swans at Coole," which expresses the chasm between the past and the present with "All's changed" (322) and ends by obliquely prefiguring some building work elsewhere ("will they build," 323), may have subliminally been haunted and counterpointed by that elegy which as Tom Paulin noted still "remained a secret or underground text."[680]

Yeats's "poetic imagination," adapting what Seamus Heaney said, *both* "impose[d] its vision upon a place" *and* "accept[ed] a vision from it."[681] All the tower-oriented poems in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), except for "Two Songs of a Fool," were written ahead of the Yeatses' actual move into the tower at Ballylee. Except for the earliest "Ego Dominus Tuus," they were all written at

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[677] *Life 2* 64. See also *J1* 20, 21.
[678] Wade 117. See Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making* 84-85, Tom Paulin, *Minotaur* 139.
[679] *WSC* xvii, xxvi.
[680] Tom Paulin, *Minotaur* 139.
[681] *Place of Writing* 20: "the poetic imagination in its strongest manifestation imposes its vision upon a place rather than accepts a vision from it…."

or near Coole. At this early stage Yeats began his poetic construction of the tower *outside* the building, with only his imagination dwelling *in* it. His 1899 essay on Raftery and versions of his unfinished novel *The Speckled Bird* testify to the fact that Ballylee Castle had become rooted in his imagination much earlier—soon after his first visit there in 1896 or 1897. The landscape had already become some "one image" to "brood over … his life long," as Yeats had put it in his 1900 essay on Shelley (*E&I* 95). Lady Gregory's suggestion years later in January 1915 that he should buy the property must have triggered a phantasy of textual and architectural investment in the building, which was indirectly precipitated by the Easter Rising in April 1916. Once he moved in, Yeats worked on his tower-related poems predominantly in the building itself, as I have documented, taking full advantage of its special features including the "surpris[ing]" silence of the stone stairs.[682] Yeats wrote his central tower poems almost without exception in the tower at Ballylee during his extended stays there, in contrast to early and late tower poems composed elsewhere before his moving into or after his leaving the property. Yeats almost ceased to write about it when he ceased to dwell in it. The departure was precipitated by "accidental circumstances of life" (*E&I* 87) including his serious illness, but the tower was almost completed at that stage. The notable absence of the building in his poetry after he left Ballylee highlights the period of his tower writing as an epoch.

Briefly recapitulating the story of the tower poems in this way confirms the intertwining of the biographical, historical, topographical and architectural dimensions of the "one image" Yeats "brood[ed] over" for decades. It also foregrounds the subliminal connection between the genesis of what I have called his "tower project" and the political trauma of "Easter, 1916." His poetic project was deeply rooted in the physical place Yeats renamed Thoor Ballylee and was shaped in reaction to the turbulent national history of his time. The poetic architecture Yeats called "the tower" is "[d]eep[ly] rooted" (603) in Ballylee and history.

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[682] "Stone stairs to my surprise are the most silent of all stairs & sitting as [I] am now up stairs in the Tower I have a sense of solitude & silence" (Yeats to Olivia Shakespear 7 June [1922] #4135). Yeats also wrote to the same recipient: "I am in better health than I was & I do really believe that I owe it to Plotinus as much as to the tower" (2 July 1926 #4891).

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Out of this diachronic account of Yeats's tower has emerged, as it were, the poet constructing "emblems of adversity" (420) or "a deliberately chosen symbol of some difficult truths" (#4900) in the midst of the "flooded stream" (403) of Irish history. We have witnessed in his tower project a repeated pattern of interaction between Yeats's agency and contingency, his addressing contingent events as sprung to poetic construction. The restlessly moving "stilted water-hen" (419) is the poet's symbolic self-caricature, partly derived from his comment in answer to Prime Minister Asquith's reference to Yeats's "hav[ing] water both below and above" at the end of November 1916: "I think I may manage with stilts below but I must put on a roof" (*J1* 17).[683]

The death of Robert Gregory in the First World War intervened in the first stage of Yeats's tower writing. The elegy "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" is also a foundational tower poem. It established the tower as a place of meditation, partly functioning as a monumental tomb for Robert Gregory, for whom Lady Gregory wanted Yeats to write an elegy, "his monument—all that remains" (# 3446). A house for a newly-wed couple, where Robert's sepia drawing of Ballylee is implicitly incorporated, is subliminally identified with the speaker's "thoughts," serving as a storehouse of memories and offering space for reflections on those who are absent, "being dead" (324). The elegy is housed in an epithalamic tower poem, structurally mirroring the Yeatses' philosophical search in the form of automatic writing based in their new house.

The two tower-oriented poems in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (Cuala, 1921), the book which contains "Easter, 1916" after the poem's four-year postponement of publication, demonstrate how Yeats's construction of his poetic architecture progressed, implicitly reflecting the shadow of "Easter, 1916"—its "trouble[d]" stream—on his symbolic building. The compositional history of

[683] The crucial adjective "stilted" was added during the composition in time of the Civil War as we have seen (*J1* 17).

"A Prayer for My Daughter" during the early phases of the Anglo-Irish War reveals a striking trajectory where the poem grows to be anchored by the tower rooted in Ballylee beside "the flooded stream" at a late stage. The transformation of the other tower poem which closes the book, "To be Carved on a Stone at Ballylee," also exemplifies the dynamic progress of Yeats's tower project.

The last minute decision to include the revised version of the inscription poem in the book signals the ways in which contingencies of war and the issues of material construction work upon the stone tower intervened in Yeats's poetic construction. The earlier unpublished version which wishes for the preservation of the restored tower was composed by 23 July 1918, clearly intended to be carved on a stone.[684] In the published version, which Yeats inserted in hand at the end of the Cuala's third proof of the book by September 1920, the focus of the poem has been shifted from the restored stone building to its eventual ruin and the survival of the textual tower, "these characters." Between these two versions the First World War had ended and the Anglo-Irish War had begun. The tower, whose restoration work had been delayed, was damaged by the British auxiliary force, the Black and Tans. The war's escalation and atrocities, which would spur Yeats to write a sequence by May 1921 (entitled "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" in *The Tower*), combined with frustrating changes in the rebuilding work (including the problem with their "beautiful slates" [#3709] which turned out to be unable to "withstand the storms" [#4133] at Ballylee) should have inspired the inscription poem's radical transformation into a sort of an epitaph for the tower, a poem more appropriate to be printed in his book of verse. The revised version itself explains why the "characters" were not "[c]arved on a stone" at the tower in Yeats's lifetime. Yeats adopted the "sea-green slates"—reminiscent of the actual "beautiful slates" as well as the "slates … of a curiously blue-green colour" in *The Speckled Bird* (115)—in the published version of his textual tower, from which the other agents, the architect and the builder in the earlier version, have been deleted, leaving the poet as its sole agent. It was in the poem's title—which the intended inscription itself did not include—that the place name "Ballylee" first entered his poetry. The name,

[684] *MRD* 198-99, 199n.

"Thoor," was added to the title on the poem's inclusion in *Later Poems* (Macmillan, 1922, Wade 134), the only instance in his poetry. The revised final line "When all is ruin once again" (406) anticipates the sense to be expressed in that tower-less sequence within a year: "no work can stand" (429). The writing of "these characters" or the building is carried out in the perspective of historical violence. Again, the emphasis on *construction* is a counterpoint to destruction. Incidentally, the stone plaque we now see inscribed with the lines (different from Yeats's published text in punctuation) on the wall of Thoor Ballylee was posthumously erected by the board of the Abbey Theatre in 1948, which was beyond the control of Yeats's authorial intention.

That association of the tower with post-revolutionary violence comes to a head with *The Tower* (Macmillan, 1928), where "Meditations in Time of Civil War," mainly written from June to September 1922 during his second and longest stay at Ballylee, revives the original function of the medieval keep as a fort against violence and establishes the tower as the poet's workplace, a stronghold for "a lonely mind" against "adversity." The tower also in part functions as a symbol of Ireland under siege of unforeseeable violence and its battlements, on the first appearance in his tower poetry, as a stage for a series of the poet's visions. George's "pin[ing] for Ballylee" propelled their going back there, braving the approaching dangers of the Irish Civil War in the spring of 1922. It provided Yeats with this opportunity to construct his first tower sequence, virtually "confined" in contingent circumstances, including the bombing of the bridge by the tower, which "trouble[d]" the actual stream and caused flood. When he constructed "emblems of adversity" Yeats found "no sign of peace, though … long[ing] for some more evidence of strength" in the state of affairs in Ireland and was placed "between the flood at Ballylee and the firing in Dublin," as recorded in Lady Gregory's journals.[685] Heaney's "place of writing" is also a place of fighting.

The post-Civil war title piece "The Tower" was substantially composed from June to October in 1925 during his third extended stay at Ballylee (the first since he became a senator in December 1922). This central architectural focus of

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[685] *J1* 393 (12 September 1922), *J1* 396 (20 September 1922).

the volume, constructed with summative and testamentary force, functions as the poet's theatrical stage, the podium of the Seanad, as well as an echo chamber, a storage or a nest of "images and memories," orchestrating his past, present and future, synthesizing his life and work, while fulfilling the announcement made a decade earlier at the end of "The Fisherman." Yeats's tower, started as a half-neglected place of "sedentary toil" (370) in "Ego Dominus Tuus," has now been established as "The Tower," a seat of the poet's work, "[t]his sedentary trade" (416).

It was, unexpectedly, an American publisher's offer in mid-September 1927 of a "quite satisfactory" contract to have "16 pages [of his new verse] … privately printed" that prompted Yeats's launch of *The Tower* in the present form.[686] On this occasion Yeats decided not to include *A Woman Young and Old* and "Blood and the Moon"—the latter an emblematic tower sequence which he had last written at Ballylee—in *The Tower*, but to give them to the American publisher. Though Yeats was himself to some extent concerned about the length of *The Tower* ("If … you think the book to small…," #5029), it is striking to find his literary agent A. P. Watt & Son apologize about it to Macmillan, which probably indicates that the latter had complained about it: "I am sorry that I was under the impression that 'THE TOWER' was a much longer book."[687] It is remarkable how the interplay of agency and contingency was at work in Yeats's decision-making about his most renowned book of poetry, which also meant his embarking on his post-*Tower* work, *The Winding Stair* (the Fountain Press, 1929) and eventually the enlarged volume and companion to *The Tower*: *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (Macmillan, 1933).

In the final phases of Yeats's tower construction Ballylee is again the chosen setting for the dialectical relationship between violence and creation or a dialogue reflecting self-building. The assassination of Kevin O'Higgins in July 1927 unpredictably intervened in Yeats's composition of "The Blood and the Moon" probably from June 1926 to August 1927 at Ballylee and left its mark anonymously in the form of the "[o]dour of blood on the ancestral stair" (482) in

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[686] Yeats to James R. Wells, 16 September 1927 #5028. Yeats to Sir Frederick Macmillan on the same day #5029. See also Yeats to Olivia Shakespear, 2 October 1927 #5034.

[687] 3 November 1927 #5044.

the "powerful emblem" set "In mockery," with its winding stair representing ancestral steps of thought. Yeats's emblematic architecture, which figures half-deadness "at the top," nevertheless, also keeps ambivalent equilibrium. It was Yeats's serious illness that intervened in the composition of "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" and paradoxically propelled its completion. Begun in Dublin after he left Ballylee and finished in Cannes in December 1927, his final tower-oriented dialogue recorded in itself the dynamic process of Yeats's departure from his tower poetry based in Ballylee for his next phase of work and life.

With "Under my window ledge the waters race" (490) at the beginning of the second of the paired proleptic elegies on Yeats's poetic demesne, "Coole and Ballylee, 1931" (composed at Coole in February 1932), Yeats synecdochically and metonymically glanced at Thoor Ballylee for the last time (except for the phantasmal representation in "The Black Tower"). With the opening water taking us from the tower back to Coole Lough, the poet effectively brings his poetic investment in the tower to an end. Yeats's final representation of the subterranean relationship between the two places via water, I suggest, signifies the profound interdependence of the tower project and the larger Irish Renaissance project associated with Coole Park as well as the hard-won independence of Yeats's signature work rooted in Ballylee. Ballylee's deliberate textual independence from Coole was intricately related with Yeats's stylistic suppression of "his femininity" (which was probably associated with the "subterranean streams" in "My House," representing "A suffering passion," in the poem's published text before its inclusion in *The Tower*) and emphasis on "a hard, cold, masculine identity" (associated with "Tower where a candle gleams," which is compared to "a labouring thought").[688] The subterranean river under the tower had been repeatedly suppressed during Yeats's ongoing tower construction, as seen in the drafts of "The Phases of the Moon" as well as in the post-publication revision of "My House." Only with Lady Gregory's imminent death, could the poet afford to acknowledge the interflow between his great

[688] *VP* 420n. Ramazani, *Yeats and the Poetry of Death* 141: "Yeats often uses gender to distinguish the various phases of his career Typically, his revised self is emphatically male, the poet suppressing what he represents as his femininity to win a hard, cold, masculine identity."

symbolic project and Coole. The journey of the water, also associated with the figure of the swan—which had accompanied Yeats's poetic journey from "The Wild Swans at Coole" through "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," "The Tower" to the present poem—symbolically combines his past, present and future as well as Ballylee and Coole. This elegy for Coole—and Ballylee—brings us back to the original site of "The Wild Swans at Coole," echoing the Easter elegy once again with "all is changed" (492)—evoking all the changes he has since wrought as well as seen—and bringing his tower project full circle. Having left Thoor Ballylee behind at this closure of his tower project and my account of it, we witness the figure of "the swan" at Coole again on the verge of the next departure, "mysterious[ly]" "drift[ing] upon a darkening flood" (492).

Yeats's long tower project, which had subliminally germinated since his first visit to Ballylee, was triggered by the sale of Ballylee Castle during the First World War, catalyzed by the Easter Rising and grew to be his major poetic project in the midst of contingencies: Robert Gregory's death in the First World War, the Anglo-Irish War, the Irish Civil War, the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins, Yeats's serious illness and Lady Gregory's terminal illness. His rebuilding of Ballylee Castle, marriage to George Hyde-Lees, building of his family, writing of *A Vision* (1925) and his work on symbolic nation-building as a senator of the Irish Free State, including the work on the new Irish coinage—all these multiple and interrelated building works converged around the turbulent and transformative years following the birth of "terrible beauty." Yeats's historically dynamic as well as unified figure of the tower has been established as a product of his seventeen-year labour. Combining Yeats's biography and genetic analysis of his tower poems, I have offered a dynamic reading of Yeats's evolving poetic architecture, a biography of Yeats's tower, and have documented the sheer work –"harder than" "break[ing] stones" (204-205)—that went into the gradual construction of the "image." At the end of my journey of reconstructing Yeats's tower construction I hope we can now see the tower as a symbol of his *work.*

ABBREVIATIONS

Au (*CW3*)	*Autobiographies*. Ed. William H. O'Donnell and Douglas N. Archibald. New York: Scribner, 1999. Vol. III of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats.*
AVA (*CW13*)	*A Vision: The Original 1925 Version*. Ed. Catherine E. Paul and Margaret Mills Harper. NY: Scribner, 2008. Vol. XIII of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats.*
AVB	*A Vision.* London: Macmillan, 1962 [1937].
CL1, 2, 3, 4	*The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats.* General Ed. John Kelly. 4 vols. Oxford: OUP, 1986, 1997, 1994, 2005.
CL InteLex	*The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats.* General Ed. John Kelly. InteLex Electronic Edition. Oxford: OUP, 2002.
E&I	*Essays and Introductions*. London: Macmillan, 1989 [1961].
IY	Ellmann, Richard. *The Identity of Yeats.* London: Faber, 1983 [1954].
J1, 2	*Lady Gregory's Journals.* Ed. Daniel J. Murphy. 2 vols. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1978, 1987.
Kelly	Kelly, John S. *A W. B. Yeats Chronology*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003.
Life1	Foster, R. F. *W. B. Yeats: A Life, I: The Apprentice Mage, 1865-1914*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.
Life2	Foster, R. F. *W. B. Yeats: A Life, II: The Arch-Poet, 1915-1939*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003.
LP	*"Last Poems": Manuscript Materials by W. B. Yeats*. Ed. James Pethica. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1997.
LTSM	*W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence, 1901-1937*. Ed. Ursula Bridge. London: Routledge, 1953.
Mem	*Memoirs: Autobiography—First Draft: Journal.* Ed. Denis Donoghue. London: Macmillan, 1972.

MRD	*"Michael Robartes and the Dancer": Manuscript Materials by W. B. Yeats.* Ed. Thomas Parkinson with Anne Brannen. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1994.
Myth	*Mythologies.* London and NY: Macmillan, 1959.
Myth 2005	*Mythologies*. Ed. Warwick Gould and Deirdre Toomey. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005.
MYV1, 2	Harper, George Mills. *The Making of Yeats's "A Vision": A Study of the Automatic Script.*2 vols. London: Macmillan, 1987.
NLI	Manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland, Dublin.
R	*"Responsibilities": Manuscript Materials by W. B. Yeats*. Ed. William H. O'Donnell. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2003.
SB	*The Speckled Bird by William Butler Yeats: An Autobiographical Novel, with Variant Versions: New Edition, incorporating recently discovered manuscripts.* Ed. and annotated by William H. O'Donnell. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
SS	*The Senate Speeches of W. B. Yeats.* Ed. Donald R. Pearce. London: Prendeville, 2001 [1960].
T	*"The Tower"(1928): Manuscript Materials by W. B. Yeats*. Ed. Richard J. Finneran with Jared Curtis and Ann Saddlemyer. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2007.
UP1	*The Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats.* Vol. I. Ed. John P. Frayne. London: Macmillan, 1970.
UP2	*The Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats.* Vol. II. Ed. John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson. London: Macmillan, 1975.
VP	*The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*. Ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach. New York: Macmillan, 1957.
VPl	*The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats.* Ed. Russell K. Alspach, assisted by Catharine C. Alspach. London: Macmillan, 1966.
VSR	*The Secret Rose, Stories by W. B. Yeats: A Variorum Edition.* Ed. Warwick Gould, Philip L. Marcus, and Michael J. Sidnell. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 1992.

Wade — Wade, Allan. *A Bibliography of the Writings of W. B. Yeats*. 3rd ed., rev. Russell K. Alspach. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968 [1951].

WMP — *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems: Manuscript Materials by W. B. Yeats*. Ed. David R. Clark. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1995.

WS — *The Winding Stair (1929): Manuscript Materials by W. B. Yeats*. Ed. David R. Clark. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1995.

WSC — *The Wild Swans at Coole: Manuscript Materials by W. B. Yeats*. Ed. Stephen Parrish. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1994.

YVP1, 2, 3, 4 — *Yeats's "Vision" Papers.* 4 vols. Gen ed. George Mills Harper. Assisted by Mary Jane Harper. London: Macmillan, 1992.

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