

W. B. YEATS'S *A Vision*  
EXPLICATIONS AND CONTEXTS



*Edited by Neil Mann,  
Matthew Gibson, & Claire Nally*

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Explications and Contexts



W. B. Yeats in New York City, 1920, posing with one of three volumes of *The Works of William Blake: Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical*, edited by Edwin Ellis and W. B. Yeats (1893). Source: George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress.

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The cover illustration is George Yeats's bookplate, designed by Thomas Sturge Moore in 1920. © The Estate of Thomas Sturge Moore/The Trustees of the British Museum.

The unicorn is a complex symbol for reasons that derive from general iconography, W. B. Yeats's literary use, Golden-Dawn symbolism, and the automatic script. It is particularly associated with George Yeats and features in Edmund Dulac's portrait of her. At its simplest, it represents the *Daimon* or the soul. The lightning-struck tower is also rich in meaning from Cabala and Tarot, as well as Yeats's own usage, representing divine influence and the shattering of the "lone tower of absolute self."

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# Preface

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The essays collected in *W. B. Yeats's "A Vision": Explications and Contexts* offer exegesis and interpretation of this notoriously knotty and peculiar work, as well as examining several of the contexts implicated in *A Vision*. However, the collection as a whole is also an effort of advocacy that seeks to demonstrate and champion *A Vision's* interest and value. It is, perhaps surprisingly, the first ever volume of essays devoted to *A Vision*. As such, it could be regarded as part of a third stage in approaches and attitudes to this curious and underanalyzed part of the Yeatsian canon.

The first stage, which prevailed until the sixties, was characterized largely by incomprehension of the work itself and disdain for Yeats's occult interests more generally, most famously summarized in Auden's comment "how embarrassing," and his observation that "though there is scarcely a lyric written to-day in which the influence of his style and rhythm is not detectable, one whole side of Yeats, the side summed up in the *Vision*, has left virtually no trace."<sup>1</sup> The comment may have had some justice with regard to creative influence but says nothing of intrinsic worth.<sup>2</sup> Those for whom Yeats's thought was of interest tended to show a more open-minded acceptance that this "side" was part of the poet's own particular make-up and had been important to his inspiration, and individual critics wrote with varying degrees of personal sympathy. For many, it was a prominent landmark in the terrain that had to be taken into account, with obvious links to some of the most powerful lyrics that Yeats ever wrote, but one to be dealt with as cursorily as possible. For others, including Richard Ellmann, Virginia Moore, Thomas Henn, F. A. C. Wilson, A. G. Stock, and Morton Irving Seiden, *A Vision* had its place as a source and epitome of Yeats's creative ideas in the latter part of Yeats's life. Increasingly, also, there were others who were more in sympathy with that whole "side summed up in the *Vision*" and addressed such interests directly, including Birgit Bjersby, Hazard Adams, Helen Vendler, H. R. Bachchan, T. R. Whitaker, Northrop Frye, Shankar Mokashi-Punekar, Kathleen Raine, Harold Bloom, and A. Norman Jeffares, even if some of them disagreed with Yeats's particular approach.

Most of these latter critics were writing during the sixties at a period that saw wider interest, both general and scholarly, in unconventional spirituality and movements such as Theosophy or the Golden Dawn, so that Yeats's concerns were no longer self-evidently ridiculous. This provided the context for the second stage, which centers around George Mills Harper. In 1974, when Harper published his biographical work, *Yeats's Golden Dawn*,<sup>3</sup> he was also editing both a volume of essays on Yeats and occultism and a critical edition of *A Vision A*, with Walter Kelly Hood. *Yeats and the Occult* (1975) showed both a wider engagement with Yeats's otherworldly thinking than was dreamed of in Auden's philosophy and also the greater willingness of a new generation of scholars to address Yeats's occult interests.<sup>4</sup> *A Critical Edition of Yeats's "A Vision" (1925)* (1978), a facsimile of *A Vision A* with introduction and notes, was a triumph of persuading publishers to listen to scholars and also a major landmark in the study of *A Vision*, providing for the first time an annotated commentary and index to the work. Up until this time readers had tended to rely on the critics who had had access to one of the 600 copies printed, though they could only give a partial picture. It also reminded readers that the two editions of *A Vision* were in many respects two separate versions and raised further questions about the work's place in Yeats's oeuvre.

When Thomas Parkinson reviewed Harper and Hood's critical edition, he noted that:

In the criticism of Yeats, a schism has existed from the very start between the secular critics who took him primarily and sometimes only as a poet and those who saw him as the voice of the perennial philosophy, creating an apparent battle ground where no war was necessary. I hope that it may have special force if one so firmly associated with the "secular" critics as I have been concedes that recent work on Yeats has forced upon him a more comprehensive set of concerns....My expectation is that continued work on the manuscripts associated with "this extraordinary book" will subtilize and clarify the received sense of Yeats as poet. (*YAI* 205).

The introduction to *A Critical Edition of Yeats's "A Vision" (1925)* also gave a full chronology and a form of census of the automatic script, while the notes quoted some of the script and early attempts at synthesis. If the wider availability of *A Vision A* made critics more aware of the development of Yeats's ideas over time, the snippets of the script included in the notes indicated that the unrefined ore might provide further valuable clues about the ideas of *A Vision* and deepen understanding. George Mills Harper went on to offer progressively more direct versions of the script in *The Making of Yeats's "A Vision" (1987)* and *Yeats's "Vision" Papers (1992)*. *The Making of Yeats's "A Vision"* traced the process of the automatic collaboration between W. B. and George Yeats, and Harper focused on the biographical element, the material that fed directly into the plays, such as *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, and the drafting of *A Vision A*. During the eighties, the automatic script and preparatory papers were transcribed in a more thoroughgoing manner through a series of doctoral theses at Florida State University under George Mills Harper's supervision,<sup>5</sup> and their publication in the three volumes of *Yeats's "Vision" Papers* opened a whole new approach to the origins, development and meaning of *A Vision*, as well as revealing new aspects of the Yeatses' lives.<sup>6</sup> A fourth volume of the *Vision Papers* by Harper and his daughter, Margaret, appeared in 2001, publishing the early drafts.

During this second period there were also two books devoted to *A Vision*: one, "*Stylistic Arrangements: A Study of William Butler Yeats's "A Vision"* (1987) by Barbara L. Croft, was the first doctoral thesis on *A Vision* to be published,<sup>7</sup> while the other, *The Book of Yeats's Vision: Romantic Modernism and Antithetical Tradition* (1995) by Hazard Adams, offered the consideration of a critic whose interest in the topic dated back to the fifties. Croft sought to give a clear sense of the differences between the two versions of *A Vision*, maintaining that, "Yeats was attempting in 1925 to create mythological truth in defiance of fact; in 1937, he attempted to create artistic truth that included both myth and fact."<sup>8</sup> For Adams, *A Vision's* purpose was even more artistic and "The occult in it is subordinate to the book's literary purposes, one of which is to dramatize the fate of the poetic way of thinking as Yeats saw it in his age."<sup>9</sup> Both approach *A Vision* section by section and to some extent even page by page, following the presentation of the ideas as set out by Yeats himself, and seeking to draw out implications and ideas more in the form of commentary than conceptual analysis. There were also the lectures given by Graham Hough that became *The Mystery Religion of W. B. Yeats* (1984), which addressed the book largely in its own terms but, controversially, only after dismissing more than half of its contents.

The *Yeats Annual*, which arrived in 1982, established a section dedicated to *A Vision* and related areas, "Mastering What is Most Abstract: A Forum on *A Vision*," while possibly indicating a slightly marginal status by printing its articles in the smaller font used for reviews. Within this forum and elsewhere, critics have increasingly attempted to come to grips with the difficulties not by ignoring or dismissing them but by addressing them directly and these have included James Lovic Allen, Colin McDowell, Neil Mann, Matthew Gibson and Rory Ryan.

The third stage is effectively the field opened up by the publication of the *Vision* papers and, as Parkinson foresaw, "continued work on the manuscripts" is indeed in the process of helping to "subtilize and clarify the received sense of Yeats as poet," as well as thinker. It will be more fully set out once both volumes of *A Vision* are available in annotated critical editions in the *Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*, edited by Margaret Mills Harper and Catherine E. Paul, published by Scribner and Sons. The fact that the *Collected Works* will contain both versions published separately speaks volumes, literally, about how the work's place is now viewed. Though the stages have been and will be defined by the texts that are available, these texts reflect the interest of scholars to research, the willingness of publishers to publish and the existence of an audience of readers and students. Thus the attitudes and the material available continue to feed into each other. Few writers now feel the need to deny Yeats's occult interests nor, with the automatic script laid out in minute detail, to deny that *A Vision* was, at least to the Yeatses themselves, a largely esoteric construct. It is "An Explanation of Life," as the subtitle of *A Vision A* declared, encompassing life after death as well, so that the section dealing with the afterlife is concerned with the literal afterlife of the human soul and not simply a metaphorical or aesthetic process. Once the literality of the primary level is acknowledged, however, the system in fact becomes far more flexible and useful a tool for approaching Yeats's thought.

One element that is now universally recognized is the collaborative nature of the automatic script and the subsequent levels of refinement involved in creating *A Vision*, so that it is by convention rather than conviction that the new editions in the *Collected Works* are put under W. B. Yeats's name without that of his wife, George, and to some extent critical writing follows a similar pattern. It is clear that most of the final form of words and explication is in the voice of W. B. Yeats, all the more so in *A Vision B*, where it is his reading that informs the philosophical dimensions,<sup>10</sup> but it is also clear that the script itself is a complete collaboration of two minds, possibly involving further unconscious or incorporeal voices as well.

In general the vocabulary for dealing with *A Vision* is becoming clearer too. As with any language, studying the etymology presented by the scripts and drafts has often provided a fuller sense of terms' meanings and implications than was possible from the published works alone. That vocabulary is also becoming slightly more familiar. Until now virtually every essay or study that deals with *A Vision* has had to include an element of the primer, reiterating certain basic principles and terms, as well as whatever argument or field it is approaching. While it is still important to help readers find their way through the difficulties of Yeats's terminology, guidance to the literal level is now more accessible from a growing body of criticism, so that it is increasingly possible for critics to go more quickly to the exploration of these concepts' broader and deeper implications rather than linger on their introductory definitions, thus enabling studies that are more thematic and less simple commentary.

A work that is so all-encompassing and varied has long invited a wide range of approaches. Even its most severe detractors now admit that it has a place as an indication of Yeats's personal concerns and creative sources, though they may also deplore the work itself and the direction that it represents. Even Parkinson's secularists find that the content of the poetry can be elucidated by the thought of *A Vision*, and many find that Yeats's thought more generally, as expressed in essay and lecture as well as poetry, play and autobiography, is interesting of itself and that *A Vision* takes its place within that context. The poet's life is also central to an appreciation of the poetry, and here again the collaboration with George and the strands of the Yeateses' lives that the work represents have elicited a number of books and essays, as have the genesis and evolution of *A Vision* itself. Those who have engaged more or less directly with the system on its own terms have sought to explicate and understand how it works as a whole, and in particular to consider in more detail how particular aspects of the construct relate to the whole, to Yeats's work and attitudes, and, to some extent, to reality. That said, it is generally regarded within its own mythic framework, accepted for what it is in a very specific context, although there have also been a few attempts to apply it more directly to experience or to astrological schemes of personality and psychology.

Until relatively recently Yeats's work has tended to be approached within the context of "single-author studies," the predominant structure of academic literary studies in twentieth-century universities. With the rise of cross-disciplinary studies, whether Irish, feminist, political or areas tackling occultism and marginal belief, new and potentially enriching avenues are opened up. Within these fields, the problems of authorship that surround *A Vision* and the automatic script take on a new guise that is very different from an approach centered on the concept of the lone creative genius, so that the collaboration of W. B. Yeats with his wife, George/Georgie Hyde-Lees, and of both with questionable spirit entities, is no longer seen as the winnowing of wheat from chaff or Yeats from externals, but allows all of the material to be seen as the manifestation of consciousness in particular places, times and contexts.

Although this volume is subtitled "Explications and Contexts," there is no clear division between the two, since most of the essays contain elements of both. However, the first group of essays presents what are mainly explications of certain broader themes in *A Vision* itself, and adheres to some extent to the divisions that Yeats created, particularly those of *A Vision B*: the system's general principles; incarnate life and the *Faculties*; discarnate life and the *Principles*; how Yeats relates his own work to other broadly philosophical approaches; and his consideration of the historical process. An intermediate group, taking an approach that is based less directly in *A Vision* itself, but still largely textual, and includes an examination of a concept that has remained rather elusive, the *Thirteenth Cone*; a consideration of astrological features in the automatic script; and a view of the poetry within *A Vision*, related to certain plays. The final group of essays looks more squarely at contextual themes, whether of collaboration and influence—between husband, wife, and spirits, or with another poet—or the gender perspective within these interrelations, the historical context of Golden-Dawn occultism or the broader political context of fascism in the 1920s and 1930s. Throughout, the different contributors take a variety of stances with regard to how they approach ideas of hierarchy in the different kinds of text, and particularly with regard to how to treat the automatic script—whether as quarry or textual foundation in its own right.<sup>11</sup>

At the beginning, we suggested that there have been perhaps three stages in the study of *A Vision* but that is, of course, a convenient simplification. In terms of the material available, there are definite boundaries, but in terms of people's attitudes, *A Vision's* very nature always has provoked and will continue to provoke a broad spectrum of views: it is the consensus that evolves gradually. There lingers a suspicion amongst many more "secularist" scholars that *A Vision* is an opaque failure and Yeats's official biographer, Roy Foster, declared that *A Vision* does not "establish a philosophical system, despite WBV's claims in his Introduction. It has found few followers since Frank Pearce Sturm, and it is hard to believe that it deserves them" (*Life* 2 606). Followers, perhaps not, but there are many who appreciate the work's fascination without following it. Until relatively recently even the work's advocates have tended to simplify *A Vision* in order to underline their claims to the work's relevance and to make its more relevant parts lucid, and this involved an avoidance of the more integral, central parts of the book and of the complexities of both the geometry and of Yeats's ideas, or a creative reinterpretation of the work's subject. Generally speaking this volume aims to show that *A Vision*, including most of the geometry and conceptual philosophy, is far more internally consistent than is usually surmised. Yet George Russell (AE) recognized this in *A Vision*'s very first review: "For all its bewildering complexity the metaphysical structure he rears is coherent, and it fits into its parts with the precision of Chinese puzzle-boxes into each other. It coheres together, its parts are related logically to each other, but does it relate so well to life?"<sup>12</sup> That question probably has as many answers as readers, all identifying different degrees and kinds of conformity to reality. Yeats himself proposed that it should be treated as a myth or "stylistic arrangements of experience," helping to reconcile "reality and justice" (*AVB* 25).

AE is commonly and rightly congratulated on his prophetic percipience with regard to *A Vision*:

It is not a book which will affect many in our time. It is possible it may be discussed feverishly by commentators a century hence....I do not doubt that though the seeds of his thought do not instantly take root and fructify in my mind that they will have their own growth, and later I may find myself comprehending much that is now unintelligible.<sup>13</sup>

It is such a growing comprehension and greater intelligibility that the contributors to this volume have themselves found and seek to share here.

## Notes

1. "Yeats as an Example," *Kenyon Review* 10, no. 2 (Spring, 1948), in *CH* 344–351, at 345.
2. Whether through Yeats or alongside, the influence of Hermeticism and the esoteric in literature has gained wider acknowledgement and appreciation: see, for instance, Leon Surette, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, and the Occult* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); Timothy Materer, *Modernist Alchemy: Poetry and the Occult* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); and ed. Leon Surette and Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos, *Literary Modernism and the Occult Tradition* (Orono, ME: National Poetry Society, University of Maine, 1996). Mark Bauer has also, for instance, examined the importance of *A Vision* to James Merrill in *This Composite Voice: The Role of W. B. Yeats in the Poetry of James Merrill* (New York: Routledge, 2003), esp. Ch.2.
3. It was dedicated to Kathleen Raine, who had worked with him on Thomas Taylor's work, and in many ways

held the torch for Yeats as exponent of the “perennial philosophy.”

4. It also showed a defiantly nineteenth-century sense of the meaning of “occult,” which had become somewhat tainted by the tendency to use it as a synonym for witchcraft and satanism, as in the works of Dennis Wheatley.
5. Robert A. Martinich’s “W. B. Yeats’s ‘Sleep and Dream Notebooks’” (1982); Steve L. Adams’s “A Critical Edition of the First Two Months of W. B. Yeats’s Automatic Script” (1985); Barbara J. Frieling’s “A Critical Edition of W. B. Yeats’s automatic script 11 March–30 December 1918” (1987); Sandra L. Sprayberry’s “A Critical Edition of W. B. Yeats’s Automatic Script: 2 January 1919–29 March 1920” (1988). These were revised and supplemented by transcription of the Card File index by Margaret Mills Harper.
6. The number of volumes mentioned by Yeats (“some fifty copy-books” [AVB 17]) does not match the number found by Harper (39 according to *CVA* xviii), and there is some lost material, particularly from the early stages where the pages were not perhaps kept so systematically, some of it known (extant questions without answers and vice versa) and some uncertain. There are also parts and fragments of the automatic script that were not transcribed and published, either because they were incoherent or unplaced (see McDowell in this volume, 201–2). More controversially the majority of diagrams are summarized in words, so that precise details are lacking. Anyone examining the original automatic script can appreciate that it would often be difficult to put into legible form what are sometimes only scrawled tracings and sometimes the diagrams add or change very little, but to be told that something is not significant is never as convincing as being shown.
7. This excludes those such as Helen Vendler’s *Yeats’s “Vision” and the Later Plays* (1963) and Stuart Hirschberg’s *At the Top of the Tower: Yeats’s Poetry Explored through “A Vision”* (1979), which yoked *A Vision* with other works. Vendler’s book, though penetrating and giving *A Vision* major prominence, also chose to deal with it as entirely metaphorical, translating all its formulations into terms of aesthetics.
8. Barbara L. Croft, “*Stylistic Arrangements*”: *A Study of William Butler Yeats’s “A Vision”* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1987), 26.
9. Hazard Adams, *The Book of Yeats’s Vision: Romantic Modernism and Antithetical Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 4.
10. It may, however, have been George Yeats who read the actual words in the case of German or Italian works—see Matthew Gibson’s essay in this volume, p. 128.
11. A working group of college and university teachers, sponsored by the U.S. National Endowment for the Humanities in 2008, produced a report entitled “W. B. Yeats: A Reassessment,” including a section on “*A Vision* and the System,” which among other things proposed its own view of three waves of study for the automatic script:

The earliest generation of serious *Vision* scholars was occupied of necessity with the task of spadework, of assembling, transcribing, recording and archiving the raw material of the Yeats’s own notebooks, card files, and related paper ephemera. It remained to the following generation to move these materials toward definitive publication, and to continue the task of arguing for their significance and validity.

This is probably a slightly false division, since both stages were largely undertaken with the pivotal figure of George Mills Harper in control. The report then goes on to suggest:

It will fall to a “third wave” of researchers to move beyond the inherent fascination of the automatic script as gnomic genetic material for *A Vision* and to consider it more carefully as a rich text in its own right, complicatedly metatextual down to its very bones, alive with experiments in gender, tantalizingly mysterious for its performative context, a challenge to even the most fundamental assumptions about narrativity. (“W. B. Yeats: A Reassessment—Final Report,” [NEH, 2008], Section III, Part 3).

Whether the automatic script offers such riches is one of the key questions currently.

- 12 “A Vision,” *Irish Statesman*, 13 February 1926, 715. The full review is printed in *CH* 269–273. This and the others are also available at [www.YeatsVision.com/Reviews.html](http://www.YeatsVision.com/Reviews.html).
- 13 *Ibid.*, 716.

# Contributors

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# Abbreviations

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Commonly used works, both those by W. B. Yeats and others, are referred to by standard abbreviations. These are in line with those used in the *Yeats Annual*, omitting works not referred to in this volume and adding primary works that are cited in more than one essay, though not criticism. Individual essays may also include their own abbreviations, explained in an endnote at the first occurrence.

We refer throughout to the works of W. B. Yeats in both the editions of the *Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (Scribner and Macmillan) and also the editions that have been standard until recently, generally Macmillan's editions of the prose works and its *Variorum Editions* of the poems and plays. Although this procedure is slightly cumbersome, it is intended to facilitate reference to the texts in question, and it is hoped that readers will not find it obtrusive.

In the case of *A Vision*, reference is given: to the *Collected Works* edition of *A Vision* (1925), edited by M. M. Harper and C. E. Paul (*CW13*); to the original T. Werner Laurie's 1925 edition (*AVA*)—which is largely identical with the central facsimile section of *A Critical Edition of Yeats's "A Vision" (1925)* edited by G. M. Harper and W. K. Hood (*CVA*), not cited directly; and to the Macmillan edition of the 1937 version, in the printing of 1962 corrected by George Yeats and Thomas Mark (*AVB*). Where text occurs in both the 1925 and 1937 editions, all of the references are given, the order of the references indicating whether the primary reference is to *A Vision A* or to *A Vision B*; the inclusion of "cf." before the second reference indicates that the texts are not identical, though the differences vary from typography/punctuation to changes of text.

In the case of the poems and the plays, the primary reference is to the *Variorum* editions. With the secondary reference to the poems in particular, there is a problem of potential confusion caused by Scribner's publication of the poems in a variety of similar but different editions. Scribner has issued to date some six different versions of Richard J. Finneran's editing of the poems, five of them with "Collected" in the title and with three different paginations. The edition referred to here is *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats, Volume I: The Poems* in its second edition (1997), where Richard Finneran gives a full explanation of the development of the collection (*CW1 xxvi-xxvii*), which accounts for most of the variations. This revised second edition was completely reset, so its pagination is not the same as that of the first edition (1989; revised 1990), which, though it was the first edition as Volume I of the *Collected Works*, was actually a revised version of *Poems: A New Edition* (1983; 1984 in Britain). For the text of the "canonical" poems these earlier editions all share identical pagination, as does *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (1989; emphasis added), an edition aimed at a broader public (and itself superseded by a revised edition in 1996). After the canonical poems, however, the editions diverge, since *The Collected Poems* (1989; 1996) does not include "Additional Poems" and has abbreviated notes, while *The Collected Works, Volume I* (1989; 1990), includes four "Additional Poems" not in *Poems: A New Edition* (1983). The pagination of the notes in these three versions (and their revised variants) is therefore different, and the notes in *The Collected Poems* do not include complete or verbatim versions of Yeats's own notes in most cases. On a practical level, the references given here will usually be within a few pages of the equivalent in the other volumes for poems cited, but not for the endnotes.

References to the books found in the Yeates's library are usually dual: firstly to Wayne K. Chapman's *The W. B. and George Yeats Library: A Short Title Catalog*, based on the

library given by the Yeats family to the National Library of Ireland. This updates and corrects the earlier list published by Edward O'Shea, which is cited second, although marginalia are currently only available in O'Shea's catalog. For full details, see *WBGYL* and *YL* in the list below.

- Au* *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1955).
- AVA* *A Vision: An Explanation of Life Founded upon the Writings of Giralduus and upon certain Doctrines attributed to Kusta Ben Luka* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1925).
- AVB* *A Vision* (1937; revised, London: Macmillan, 1962).
- BG* Ann Saddlemeyer, *Becoming George: The Life of Mrs. W. B. Yeats*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- BL Add. MS Additional Manuscript, The British Library, London (followed by number).
- CH* *W. B. Yeats: The Critical Heritage*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (London: Henley; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).
- CL* *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*
- CL1* *Volume I, 1865–1895*, ed. John Kelly and Eric Domville (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).
- CL2* *Volume II, 1896–1900*, ed. Warwick Gould, John Kelly, Deirdre Toomey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).
- CL3* *Volume III, 1901–1904*, ed. John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).
- CL4* *Volume IV, 1905–1907*, ed. John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).
- CL Intalex* *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, gen. ed. John Kelly, Oxford University Press (Intalex Electronic Edition) 2002; letters cited by accession number.
- CVA* *A Critical Edition of Yeats's A Vision (1925)*, ed. George Mills Harper and Walter Kelly Hood (London: Macmillan, 1978).
- CW* *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*
- CW1* *Volume I: The Poems (Second Edition)*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (1989; New York: Scribner, 1997).
- CW2* *Volume II: The Plays*, ed. David R. Clark & Rosalind E. Clark (New York & London: Palgrave, 2001; New York: Scribner, 2001).
- CW3* *Volume III: Autobiographies*, ed. William H. O'Donnell, Douglas N. Archibald, J. Fraser Cocks III, Gretchen L. Schwenker (New York: Scribner, 1999).
- CW4* *Volume IV: Early Essays*, ed. Richard Finneran & George Bornstein (New York: Scribner, 2007).
- CW5* *Volume V: Later Essays*, ed. William H. O'Donnell with Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994).
- CW6* *Volume VI: Prefaces and Introductions*, ed. William H. O'Donnell (London: Macmillan, 1988).

- CW9 *Volume IX: Early Articles and Reviews*, ed. John P. Frayne & Madeleine Marchaterre (New York & London: Palgrave, 2001; New York: Scribner, 2004).
- CW10 *Volume X: Later Articles and Reviews*, ed. Colton Johnson (New York: Scribner, 2000).
- CW12 *Volume XII: John Sherman and Dhoya*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan, 1994).
- CW13 *Volume XIII: A Vision (1925)*, ed. Catherine E. Paul & Margaret Mills Harper (New York: Scribner, 2008).
- E&I* *Essays and Introductions* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1961).
- Ex* *Explorations*, selected by Mrs. W. B. Yeats (London: Macmillan, 1962; New York: Macmillan, 1963).
- FPS* *Frank Pearce Sturm: His Life, Letters, and Collected Work*, ed. R. Taylor (Urbana, Chicago & London: University of Illinois Press, 1969).
- FFTIP* *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, edited and selected by W. B. Yeats (London: Walter Scott, 1888).
- G-YL* *The Gonne-Yeats Letters 1893–1938: Always Your Friend*, ed. Anna MacBride White and A. Norman Jeffares (London: Hutchinson, 1992).
- L* *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954; New York: Macmillan, 1955).
- Life* Roy F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life*, 2 vols.
- Life1* *Volume 1: The Apprentice Mage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- Life2* *Volume 2: The Arch-Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- LMR* “*Ab, Sweet Dancer*”: *W. B. Yeats / Margot Ruddock, A Correspondence*, ed. Roger McHugh (London and New York: Macmillan, 1970).
- LTWBY* *Letters to W. B. Yeats*, ed. Richard J. Finneran, George Mills Harper and William M. Murphy with Alan B. Himber, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan; New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).
- Mem* *Memoirs: Autobiography – First Draft: Journal*, transcribed & ed. Denis Donoghue (London: Macmillan, 1972; New York: Macmillan, 1973).
- Myth* *Mythologies* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1959).
- M2005* *Mythologies*, ed. Warwick Gould & Deirdre Toomey (London: Macmillan, 2005).
- MYV1, 2* George Mills Harper, *The Making of Yeats’s “A Vision”: A Study of the Automatic Script*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan; Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987).
- NC* *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats* by A. Norman Jeffares (London: Macmillan; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984).
- NLI* Manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland (followed by number).
- OBMV* *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1895–1935*, chosen by W. B. Yeats (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936).
- PEP* *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (Dundrum: Cuala, 1929; *facsimile*: Shannon: Irish University Press, 1970).

- SB *The Speckled Bird by William Butler Yeats: an Autobiographical Novel with Variant Versions: New Edition, incorporating recently discovered manuscripts*, ed. and annotated William H. O'Donnell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
- SMRF *Stories of Michael Robartes and his Friends: An Extract from a Record Made by his Pupils: and a play in prose [The Resurrection]* (Dundrum: Cuala Press, 1931; facsimile: Shannon: Irish University Press, 1970).
- TSMC *W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence, 1901-1937*, ed. Ursula Bridge (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).
- UPI *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats*, Vol. 1, ed. John P. Frayne (London: Macmillan; New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).
- UP2 *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats*, Vol. 2, ed. John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson (London: Macmillan, 1975; New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).
- VP *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957). Cited from the corrected third printing of 1966.
- VPI *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Russell K. Alspach assisted by Catherine C. Alspach (London and New York: Macmillan, 1966). Cited from the corrected second printing of 1966.
- VSR *The Secret Rose, Stories by W. B. Yeats: A Variorum Edition*, ed. Phillip L. Marcus, Warwick Gould and Michael J. Sidnell (1981; second edition, London: Macmillan, 1992).
- Wade Allan Wade, *A Bibliography of the Writings of W. B. Yeats*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., rev. Russell K. Alspach (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968). Item nos. and/or page nos. preceded by "p."
- WBGYL *The W. B. and George Yeats Library: A Short-Title Catalog*, Wayne K. Chapman (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Digital Press, 2006; online: <http://www.clemson.edu/cedp/cudp/pubs/YeatsSTC/index.htm>).
- WWB1, 2, 3 *The Works of William Blake Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical, edited with lithographs of the illustrated "Prophetic Books," and a memoir and interpretation*, Edwin John Ellis and William Butler Yeats, 3 vols. (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893).
- YA *Yeats Annual* (London: Macmillan, 1982–2000; Palgrave, 2001–), cited by issue number.
- YAACTS *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies* (publishers vary, 1983), cited by issue number.
- YGD George Mills Harper, *Yeats's Golden Dawn* (London: Macmillan, 1974).
- YL *A Descriptive Catalog of W. B. Yeats's Library*, Edward O'Shea, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1985). Item numbers and/or page numbers preceded by "p."
- YO *Yeats and the Occult*, ed. George Mills Harper (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada; Niagara Falls, NY: Maclean-Hunter Press, 1975).

- YVP                   Yeats's "Vision" Papers, George Mills Harper (General Editor) assisted by Mary Jane Harper:
- YVP1                   *Volume 1: The Automatic Script: 5 November 1917–18 June 1918*, ed. Steve L. Adams, Barbara J. Frieling and Sandra L. Sprayberry (London & Iowa City: Macmillan & University of Iowa Press, 1992).
- YVP2                   *Volume 2: The Automatic Script: 25 June 1918–29 March 1920*, ed. Steve L. Adams, Barbara J. Frieling and Sandra L. Sprayberry (London & Iowa City: Macmillan & University of Iowa Press, 1992).
- YVP3                   *Volume 3: Sleep and Dream Notebooks, Vision Notebooks 1 and 2, Card File*, ed. Robert Anthony Martinich and Margaret Mills Harper (London & Iowa City: Macmillan & University of Iowa Press, 1992).
- YVP4                   *Volume 4: "The Discoveries of Michael Robartes," Version B ("The Great Wheel" and "The Twenty-Eight Embodiments")*, ed. George Mills Harper and Margaret Mills Harper, with Richard W. Stoops, Jr. (London: Palgrave, 2001).

“EVERYWHERE THAT ANTINOMY OF THE ONE AND THE MANY”:  
THE FOUNDATIONS OF *A VISION*

by Neil Mann

I

Yeats wrote of *A Vision* that, “I will never think any thoughts but these, or some modification or extension of these; when I write prose or verse they must be somewhere present though not it may be in the words...” (*PEP* 32). If the claim contains any truth then these thoughts merit attention when approaching Yeats’s “prose or verse,” yet although there certainly are poems and plays where *A Vision*’s more detailed machinery or its presentation of history obtrude very obviously, in the majority of cases what is present in the art is the system’s broader perspective and the context that these thoughts formed for Yeats’s ideas, and it is these more general principles that offer a deeper understanding of his art.<sup>1</sup>

However, these broader concepts are difficult to find in Yeats’s expositions, since they are seldom expressed directly, and it is no easy matter to extract them from Yeats’s presentation. As Graham Hough noted in his engaging but brief survey *The Mystery Religion of W. B. Yeats*, “a good deal of the bewilderment that faces the unprepared reader of *A Vision* comes simply because the fundamentals of its creed are never explicitly set out.”<sup>2</sup> These fundamentals include both underlying assumptions, which are implicit but buried, and the central concepts of the system, which are often hidden in or overshadowed by local detail. There are several reasons for this neglect on Yeats’s part, one of which is a deliberate choice to hedge the ideas in fictions and an attempt to create a myth, another is the almost impossible task of wrestling the material of the automatic script into coherent and sequential ideas, and yet another is a cast of mind and a style of writing ill-suited to lucid expository prose.

A further important source of difficulty is that some of the concepts had much in common with those that Yeats had encountered in his esoteric apprenticeship, and that he assumes a similar background on the part of his readers. Hough comments that “Yeats takes for granted the conception of the destiny of the human soul” that is “common to the occult tradition,”<sup>3</sup> and Yeats wrote that *A Vision* was “intended, to use a phrase of Jacob Boehme’s, for my ‘schoolmates only’” (*CW* 5 219; *E&I* xi), for whom it might well have been otiose to repeat basic principles. However, even for those who were “schoolmates,” more versed in the occult tradition than the general reader today, there were problems, as is witnessed by some contemporary reviews,<sup>4</sup> while the unspoken *differences* from tradition are potentially almost as much of a stumbling block as the unspoken common ground.

Some of the clearest explanations of the central ideas of *A Vision* appear not in *A Vision* itself but in the notes and introductions to volumes of poetry or plays, notably *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, *The Resurrection*, *The Words upon the Window Pane*, and also in *Autobiographies*. The ideas affect the poetry and creative works directly enough to merit elucidation and, since Yeats was aware that he was writing for a wider audience and

needed to start from first principles, he largely avoided specialized vocabulary and put forward some of the key concepts succinctly. However, these explanations are necessarily brief and fragmentary and usually couched in the fictions of Michael Robartes's discoveries in Cracow and Arabia, which can obfuscate their import. These glimpses—some published before the private edition of *A Vision A* of 1925 and all before the appearance of a generally available edition of *A Vision B* in 1937—no doubt led interested readers to hope for proper illumination in this fuller exposition. In *A Vision*, these readers certainly received a more complete picture, with far more detail, but the detail often swamps the general picture, the technicalities crowd out the principles, and the strength of one symbol threatens to unbalance the whole. Yeats gives no clear overview of the system within *A Vision* itself and the central theses are not given the prominence that they deserve, so that to some extent they need to be teased out of the presentation.

Certain assumptions underlying *A Vision* are few but key. They were already largely familiar to both of the Yeatses and were indeed concepts that Yeats had been exploring for many years, including sometimes in his writings. They include a doctrine of divine manifestation in stages of emanation; of sparks from the divine fire descending as spirits into material existence, evolving with a goal of experience and wisdom, and seeking to return to and reunite with godhead; as corollaries of this evolution, the immortality of the spirit and the concept of reincarnation; a multilayered constitution of the human being that goes beyond the simple dualisms of mind-body or spirit-body; a similar multilayered constitution to the universe and a framework of correspondence between the human microcosm and the universal macrocosm, embracing astrology and a "soul of the world."<sup>5</sup> Also important is the idea of expressing truth in symbol and a preference for ancient sources together with new revelations (viz. *CW13* liv; *AVA* x), so that Yeats was not surprised that unknown communicators might offer him a new "Explanation of Life," as the subtitle of *A Vision A* announced, nor that it took a traditional form.

When such elements emerge implicitly in the automatic script and communications they are largely unquestioned, taken as natural. To judge from the associated notebooks and drafts, Yeats himself was more curious about establishing details of their process rather than tackling these fundamental concepts, which were already well known to him. In *A Vision* he then faced the difficulty of trying to present a digested and clear view of a complex subject that he was still exploring and trying to understand. Mastering the detail accumulated in the preparatory material was far more of a challenge than even the vast syncretic corpus of Theosophy or the Golden Dawn, since it lacked the contributions of many minds over time and the helpful winnowing of the transmission process, clearing away extraneous material and clarifying the outlines. He writes of one section in *A Vision A* that "These few pages have taken me many months of exhausting labour" as he "had to discover all from unconnected psychological notes and from a few inadequate diagrams" (*CW13* 138; *AVA* 170),<sup>6</sup> yet almost four years after that publication, in October 1929, he writes that "The Vision...requires another six months of simplification, but is already fairly simple" (*FPS* 100), indicating a long process of gradual clearing and focusing.

Though both husband and wife worked on all stages, as the system was collated, adapted and reformulated, it became more his than theirs.<sup>7</sup> Yet it remained independent in a way that he was not accustomed to, and he did not usually feel at liberty to change the terminology without approval from George's communicators, feeling himself confronted

with a body of knowledge greater than the part to which he was personally privy (see *AVB* 21–22). The revelations had been fed to him piecemeal, possibly to prevent his committing himself precipitously to “some hasty application” of the ideas (*AVB* 11), but they were also said to contain “frustration,” disinformation, as well as false starts and incomplete ideas, and selection was an important element in the initial stages of construction. Indeed *Yeats’s “Vision” Papers* show that, of the material which the Yeatses received, only a fraction went on to make the basis of *A Vision* itself, while large portions of *A Vision* have no direct sources in the automatic script, being Yeats’s own fleshing out of the bare bones provided. Whatever we as readers feel about the nature of the inspiration behind the automatic script, it is evident that Yeats himself felt constrained by the often peremptory voices of his instructors, guides and controls, yet *A Vision* is also very much his own creation.

This is emphasized by the fictions which preface both *A Vision A* and *A Vision B*, which enact or partly dramatize elements of the system in stories which are Yeats’s creation but are not truly independent of it: once the system is understood to some degree, however, its central themes can be seen to underlie the fictions, which in turn contribute further important elements.<sup>8</sup> Yeats’s mind was naturally fictive and the first expositions of the system were through dialogues from poetic and philosophical models (see the drafts in *YVP4*), while the elements of an Arabian sect and a European writer, Giraldus, date back to the earliest conception of publishing the ideas.<sup>9</sup> Much of the effort for Yeats was to cast off this frame of mind and to attempt expository clarity. It is possible that *A Vision* shows Yeats at his weakest as a writer, since straightforward prose explication was not his strength, as he himself acknowledged: “I have no gift for explanation & am the least mathematical of men” (*FPS* 90; 20 January 1926). This is not to say that Yeats failed in *A Vision*, and the books must remain at the core of our understanding of the system in the form that Yeats felt confident enough to present to his audience.<sup>10</sup> At the same time we can also add that the system of *A Vision* can sometimes be better understood with the help of material found outside either edition’s covers. Ultimately *A Vision B* is the final published and “official” form of the system, an independent work and the closest to an authoritative version, but it is also the last stage of a work in progress, remaining a version rather than a Bible.

In both *A Vision A* and *A Vision B* the exposition starts by introducing one of the main symbols: *A Vision A* with the Great Wheel and *A Vision B* with the gyres. *A Vision A* opens its direct presentation of the system in a section entitled “What the Caliph Partly Learned,” indicating that this is the more accessible material, at a level that the fictional Caliph was willing and able to learn. In opening with a presentation of the Great Wheel, *A Vision A* immediately engages the reader with an imaginatively vital symbol, albeit one that is actually secondary. However, Yeats’s strategy is to present the most readily comprehensible element first and he then intends to deepen that understanding by going into fundamental principles once the reader has grasped some of the system’s practical application. This has many advantages and it follows logically from the introductory poem, “The Phases of the Moon.” The lunar phases are indeed a symbol of such power that they all but take over our understanding of the system, and they also dominate Yeats’s own thinking in many ways, not only as an elegant expression of the cycle’s stages, but also through the myriad poetic and symbolic associations that the vivid interplay of sun and moon affords. Ultimately, however, the circle of the moon’s phases is just one expression of the system’s

more fundamental antitheses and the detailed character delineations of the phases have far less repercussion for Yeats outside the ambit of *A Vision* itself than the more general concepts of the gyres and their nature. This is as true of Yeats's own work as it is of any broader application that Yeats might have envisaged.

Yeats later saw the initial presentation of the Wheel in *A Vision A* as "an unexplained rule of thumb that somehow explained the world" (*AVB* 81) rather than an exposition of first principles. In contrast, therefore, *A Vision B's* exposition opens with the "principal symbol," the antinomies and the gyres, building up to presentation of the *Tinctures*, before then moving on to the *Faculties*. This also seems to be a clear and logical strategy, and one that is evidence of a more considered and meditated approach. It risks starting with rather abstract matter that is unconnected to the reader's experience, but does so in order to build a solid foundation. However the presentation is couched in a language that is far from perspicuous, a syntax that is seldom straightforward, and relies upon references to a bewildering array of sources and writers. Within the first six pages, over twenty writers or works are mentioned, most in reference to an idea or work of some complexity, and constituting an allusive shorthand.<sup>11</sup> It seems that Yeats is so concerned with showing us the analogues and parallels between his ideas and those of great minds of the past that he scants his own concepts,<sup>12</sup> and as a consequence the reader is faced with abstract ideas presented with a confusing profusion of reference. The structure of the underlying exposition can be discerned, but additional examples are overlaid at every possible juncture so that the underlying shape is lost amid the accreted elements. The clutter of names soon gives way to the technicalities of applied detail as the introductory exposition then continues with the gyres' more mechanical operations, before the overpowering symbol of the lunar phases is introduced. From here Yeats moves further and further into rules for placing the *Faculties* within the framework of the Great Wheel and quasi-astrological categories. Readers are therefore never really given a clear view of "The Principal Symbol" announced by the section's subtitle and it is only with time and effort that they can strip away the agglomerated detail to appreciate the fundamental structure and sense of the system.

In this examination of the foundations of the Yeatses' system much detail has necessarily been left to one side in order to give a clearer overall view. The explication of *A Vision* naturally leads off into minutiae and qualification, and Yeats's own difficulties in keeping the fundamental lines clear and visible become all too understandable for anyone who attempts to follow him in writing on the material. Furthermore, Yeats's prose characteristically twists together several strands of thought within a sentence or paragraph, so that the presentation of an idea is, in Wilde's words, "rarely pure and never simple."<sup>13</sup> One strand that I am deliberately omitting as much as possible is the frequent appeal to names and authorities that I referred to earlier, because, although the references add a richness to Yeats's exposition, they can also lead away from the core and the complication is, initially at least, distracting. I shall also keep to general outlines in most areas and try to avoid too many details, relegating as much of Yeats's special terminology as possible to notes and asides. The concepts can be understood without the terminology, and it is useful to try to express *A Vision's* ideas in more usual language, although the terms are the key to what Yeats himself wrote both in *A Vision* and elsewhere, encapsulating the ideas in their most succinct form.

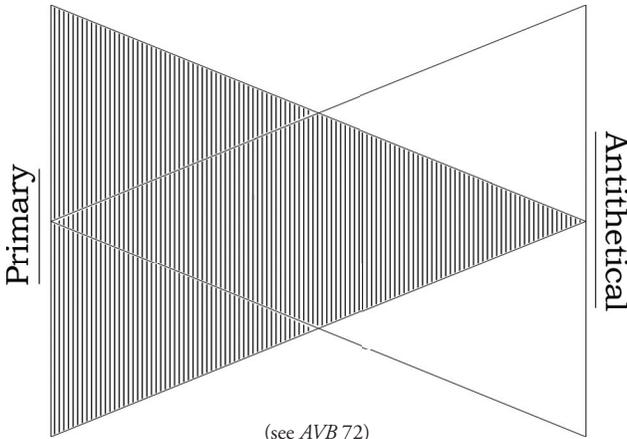
## II

Yeats's clearest statement of the system's foundation comes at the opening of the second book of *A Vision B*, "The Completed Symbol." Even so, it is not given the prominence that it may seem to warrant, placed as a supporting comment amid exposition of another point: "The whole system is founded upon the belief that the ultimate reality, symbolised as the Sphere, falls in human consciousness...into a series of antinomies" (AVB 187). The system that he proposes is not a dualism because the ultimate reality is one, represented in the Sphere; however all manifestations of the system that human consciousness can apprehend are dualistic because of this "fall," and a form of duality or multiplicity is essential to consciousness, because "things that are of one kind are unconscious" (AVB 82). The most fundamental antinomy is that which embodies the dualism itself, the One and the Many, and the most important manifestation of these two poles is that of God and humanity, while within individual human consciousness the polarity is also that of the objective and the subjective. Yet Yeats is less concerned with the poles themselves than with the forces pulling in either direction—*towards* the One and *towards* the Many: the unifying and the dispersing, the centripetal and the centrifugal, the homogenizing and the differentiating, the objectifying and the subjectifying.

The dynamic essences are the *primary* and the *antithetical Tinctures*: the *primary* named because it comes first and "brings us back to the mass where we begin" (AVB 72), the *antithetical* "because it is achieved and defended by continual conflict with its opposite" (AVB 71–72). *Tincture* as the common term for both forces is drawn from alchemy (via Boehme, see AVB 72) where it represents the purified state of the Great Work: the white or lunar tincture will transform base metals to silver, while the red or solar tincture will transform them to gold and needs only further concentration to become the Philosopher's Stone. The term is suggestive, drawing as it does on dynamic principles of transformation, and in *A Vision A* Yeats conceives of the "Solar and Lunar" as the more inclusive forms of the *Tinctures* (CW13 112; AVA 139) and, though *A Vision B* largely dispenses with this imagery, it still infuses his understanding. Another correspondence has a more "scientific" or philosophic slant, where the *primary Tincture* is taken as space and the *antithetical Tincture* as time, so that the two together create the continuum of space-time.

The twin *Tinctures* and their opposition, reflected at all levels of creation, are embodied in the central symbol of the gyre, a spiral expressing the two forces or essences in space and time. In order to express this concept visually, time is symbolized geometrically by a straight line, "a movement without extension" (AVB 70), while space is reduced to a plane at right-angles to it, creating three-dimensional space and within it the spiral gyre: the "straight line...represents, now time, now emotion, now subjective life," and the "plane at right angles to this line...represents, now space, now intellect, now objective life" (Notes on "The Second Coming," *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, VP 824; CW1 659). While a single gyre can express the whole scale of this duality, since the minimum of one automatically implies a maximum of its counterpart, it is generally doubled to make the opposition clearer and is "marked out by two gyres which represent the conflict, as it were, of plane and line, by two movements, which circle about a centre," and "the circling is always narrowing or spreading, because one movement or other is always the stronger"

(VP 824; CWI 659). This key symbol of the double gyre “is frequently drawn as a double cone, the narrow end of each cone being in the centre of the broad end of the other” (VP 824; CWI 658), the minimum of one *Tincture* coinciding with the maximum of the other, and on the page these often become simply triangles, but it needs to be borne in mind that this is a flattening of the cone, which is in turn a three-dimensional representation collapsing a dynamic process in space and time.



Yeats views the *Tinctures* as including or taking part in almost every polarity of the cosmos by means of extended correspondences, in the perennial manner of occult thought. Many of these correspondences are relatively traditional and once he had stated that the *primary Tincture* was solar and objective, while the *antithetical* was lunar and subjective, Yeats would be aware that his esoterically trained “schoolmates” would automatically make a series of further attributions by correspondence. Most of these are confirmed by passing references throughout *A Vision*, but not all, and they are never clearly set forth either for the schoolmates or the more general reader. The solar is traditionally associated with the spirit, the logical, the linear, the word, the idea, the Apollonian and the masculine, while the lunar with the soul, the emotional, the non-linear, the image, the form, the Dionysian and the feminine. The clearest lists of the attributes of Yeats’s *Tinctures* are set forth in the context of their historical manifestations, which are necessarily slightly limited and skewed.<sup>14</sup> The *primary* is associated in historical civilization with “an age of necessity, truth, goodness, mechanism, science, democracy, abstraction, peace” and the *antithetical* with “an age of freedom, fiction, evil, kindred, art, aristocracy, particularity, war” (AVB 52); similarly in its religious manifestation, “A *primary* dispensation looking beyond itself towards transcendent power is dogmatic, levelling, unifying, feminine, humane, peace its means and end; an *antithetical* dispensation obeys imminent [for immanent] power, is expressive, hierarchical, multiple, masculine, harsh, surgical” (AVB 263). The attribution of feminine to the solar and masculine to the lunar is an unexpected twist, and the associated mixing of attributes has consequences that are important since sexual imagery and polarity underlie many of Yeats’s ideas and the ways that he uses them in his poetry and plays.<sup>15</sup>

As stated already, while Yeats’s cosmos is founded on this duality, it is non-dualistic: “The cones of the *Tinctures* mirror reality but are themselves pursuit and illusion....the

sphere is reality" (*AVB* 73). The duality is illusory, like the *maya* of Indian philosophy, but in contrast to the conventional aim of the Indian sage, Yeats embraces the dualism and the illusion.<sup>16</sup> Although ultimate reality may be non-dual, human monotheism is no truer than human polytheism, nor are human conceptions of unity any more valid than human conceptions of multiplicity, since they are both expressions of the antinomy. For Yeats the cosmos can be expressed in human thought equally well and equally imperfectly as either a single godhead or a community of spirits, and he himself prefers the latter: "I think that two conceptions, that of reality as a congeries of beings, that of reality as a single being, alternate in our emotion and in history, and must always remain something that human reason, because subject always to one or the other, cannot reconcile" (*Pages from a Diary Written in 1930, Ex* 305). What monotheists conceive of as "God's abstract or separate thoughts" are for Yeats "spaceless, timeless beings that behold and determine each other" (*Ex* 305).

Yeats's natural contemplation is not directed towards divine unity, although it remains the opposite pole of his dialectic and he does not deny it, but towards the multiplicity of individual souls and their community or congeries. These souls are eternal and some of them are born into earthly incarnation, repeatedly:

All ancient nations believed in the re-birth of the soul and probably had empirical evidence....Even though we may think temporal existence illusionary it cannot be capricious; it is...the characteristic act of the soul and must reflect the soul's coherence. All our thought seems to lead by antithesis to some new affirmation of the supernatural...We may come to think that nothing exists but a stream of souls, that all knowledge is biography, and...that every soul is unique....

(*Introduction to The Resurrection, VPI* 934–35; *CW2* 725; *Ex* 396–97)

Although his comment is couched in the language of possibility, Yeats suggests that he conceives that "nothing exists but a stream of souls." This stream is both the souls' passage through their series of incarnations and also the stream of space, time and consciousness, which proceeds from the souls' "characteristic act," "temporal existence." In Yeats's conception, the souls are responsible for the whole fabric of the universe, and the majority of these souls are not incarnate as human beings. In *A Vision A* Yeats quotes the opinion that "time and space [are] the work of our ancestors" and then states that "With the system in my bones I must declare that those ancestors still live and that time and space would vanish if they closed their eyes" (*CW13* 128; *AVA* 158), yet those ancestors are not a separate class of being and are also the earlier lives of souls who continue being born into the stream of space and time themselves.

The stream of souls or community of spirits (the two terms are equivalent in this general context)<sup>17</sup> is a vital element of Yeats's conception of the cosmos, and is not limited to those who are or have been human, and includes beings "that have never lived in mortal bodies" ("The Twisting of the Rope and Hanrahan the Red," *VSR* 199). It is most clearly outlined in *A Vision A* Book IV, "The Gates of Pluto," where the cloud of spirit witnesses is given some treatment: *Daimons*, *Ghostly Selves*, associated spirits, spirits between death and birth, spirits at Phase 1 and Phase 15, *Covens*, *Teaching Spirits*, *Arcons*.<sup>18</sup> Not all of

these are dealt with clearly, mainly because Yeats himself was far from certain about their exact nature, however he gives the reader a sense of the supernatural night-side of reality that is entered more fully in dreams and after death. In *A Vision B* this material is incorporated in Book III, "The Soul in Judgment," but made subservient to the process of the individual's afterlife and the exposition of the *Principles* rather than the more animate universe that *A Vision A* sketches. Yeats laments that "Because we no longer discover the still unpurified dead through our own and others' dreams, and those in freedom through contemplation, religion cannot answer the atheist" (*AVB* 223),<sup>19</sup> but *A Vision B* itself marginalizes this material, perhaps out of fear of being associated with "popular spiritualism" (*AVB* 24). In *A Vision A* Yeats writes of seeking to restore the ancient world's perspective, where "every condition of mind discovered by analysis, even that which is timeless, spaceless, is present vivid experience to some being" (*CW13* 207; *AVA* 252), and he advocated this "hierarchy of beings from man up to the One" in a letter to Joseph Hone as a solution to "much of the confusion of modern philosophy, perhaps the whole realism versus idealism quarrel": "What I do not see but may see or have seen, is perceived by another being. In other words is part of the fabric of another being... We are in the midst of life and there is nothing but life" (24 September [1927?], *L* 728).

This extended web of being was the basis for an aphoristic distillation of Yeats's thinking, written in one of the notebooks he was using to redraft *A Vision* during 1929. He put the system's complexities to one side for a while to focus on its core and constructed a simple set of propositions around the conception of the universe as a congeries of souls or spirits, which went so far as to make all of experienced reality a manifestation of the individual spirit and its fellows.<sup>20</sup>

1. Reality is a timeless & spaceless community of Spirits which perceive each other. Each Spirit is determined by & determines those it perceives, and each Spirit is unique.
2. When these Spirits reflect themselves into time & space they are so many destinies which determine each other, & each Spirit sees the others as thoughts, images, objects of sense. Time & space are unreal.
3. This reflection into time & space is only complete at certain moments of birth, or passivity, which recur many times in each destiny. At these moments the destiny receives its character until the next such moment from all other Spirits or from the whole external universe. The horoscope is a set of geometrical relations between the Spirit's reflection and the principal masses in the universe and defines that character.
4. The emotional character of a timeless & spaceless Spirit reflects itself as its condition in time, its intellectual character as its condition in space. The position of a Spirit in space & time therefore defines character.
5. Human life is either the struggle of a destiny against all other destinies, or a transformation of the character defined in the horoscope into timeless & space-

less existence. The whole passage from birth to birth should be an epitome of the whole passage of the universe through time & back into its timeless & spaceless condition.

6. The acts and nature of a Spirit during any one life are a section or abstraction of reality & are unhappy because incomplete. They are a gyre or part of a gyre, whereas reality is a sphere.

7. Though the Spirits are determined by each other they cannot completely lose their freedom. Every possible statement or perception contains both terms—the self & that which is perceived.<sup>21</sup>

If Martin Buber famously proposed two ways of perceiving the world, an “I–It” that objectifies and an “I–Thou” that relates, Yeats puts both of these into an “I–Ye” dualism.<sup>22</sup> Yeats conceives of reality as the product of collective perception in which all impinge upon “each other,” affecting and affected by their fellows, partaking in the whole but asserting independence (Propositions 1 and 7). It is very much an *antithetical* answer to what Yeats understood as Berkeley’s *primary* conception of reality, where physical reality persists because it is “the thought of a more powerful spirit which he named God” (*CW*13 128; *AVA* 158). Yeats accepts much of Berkeley’s idealism but substitutes a multitudinous community of perceivers for a single “powerful spirit” or deity. He also notes that Berkeley “thought that ‘we perceive’ and are passive whereas God creates in perceiving. He creates what we perceive” (*Ex* 320), but here Yeats’s spirits are both passive and creative in their perception.<sup>23</sup> The other spirits are part of the flow of consciousness as well as the stream of phenomena, “thoughts, images, objects of sense” (Proposition 2).

Yeats also sees in this conception a justification of astrology, since the planets and zodiac are simply massive and predictable parts of this spiritual web, and views the spirit’s incarnation in terms of taking on emotional, *antithetical* time and intellectual, *primary* space (Propositions 3 and 4).<sup>24</sup> This web of time and space is part of the soul’s destiny and its disposition at a particular moment molds the character that it will temporarily assume during incarnation, which is captured in the moment and place reflected in the horoscope (Propositions 4 and 5). The term “horoscope” here stands for a complex group of elements in *A Vision*, including both the birth chart of traditional astrology, which delineates the more superficial character, and also Yeats’s special anatomy of the being (the *Faculties*), which shows the soul’s deeper spiritual task in life and which is expressed through and alongside the horoscopic character, which may help or hinder it.<sup>25</sup> Overarching all is the distinction between the two *Tinctures*: the *antithetical* being should strive during its life for greater individuation, against the spiritual collective, “the struggle of a destiny against all other destinies” to bring the soul and spirit into deeper contact with emotional experience, while the *primary* being should strive to unify itself with the collective, in “a transformation of the character defined in the horoscope into timeless & spaceless existence” to bring the soul and spirit to intellectual understanding (Proposition 5).

Intrinsically, however, human life is *antithetical* and what we call afterlife *primary*, so each incarnation at birth starts on its *antithetical* search for individuation and physical experience, while at death it starts its *primary* search to understand and reintegrate that

experience into its self. This mirrors the universe's fall into experience and gradual redemption from the physical, divine manifestation and return, so that the "whole passage from birth to birth should be an epitome of the whole passage of the universe through time & back into its timeless & spaceless condition" (Proposition 5).<sup>26</sup> The search for individuation is the urge to freedom, which constantly comes up against limits and, in searching to lose itself in what is greater than itself, the self is constantly made aware of its separateness and difference (Propositions 5 and 6).

Both elements of the polarity are, of course, present throughout experience: "Every possible statement or perception contains both terms—the self & that which is perceived" (Proposition 7) so that there is always an "I" and always "another." In more complete terms, "Every action of man declares the soul's ultimate, particular freedom, and the soul's disappearance in God; declares that reality is a congeries of beings and a single being" (*AVB* 52). "Every action" includes every poetic or creative act, and each contains in some degree the *antithetical* assertion of the individual freedom and the *primary* acceptance of final unity, the *antithetical* congeries and the *primary* whole. Yeats, writing in his 1930 diary, saw more of a dichotomy: "I am always, in all I do, driven to a moment which is the realisation of myself as unique and free, or to a moment which is the surrender to God of all that I am" (*Ex* 305). He felt that he expressed the *primary* badly in comparison with the *antithetical*: trying to sing the approach of a time "where all shall [be] as particular and concrete as human intensity permits," the coming *antithetical* world-cycle, he notices that he has "almost understood [his] intention" to express these multitudinous forces in poetry. However: "Again and again with remorse, a sense of defeat, I have failed when I would write of God, written coldly and conventionally" (*Ex* 305). Yet he acknowledges that the triumph of one or the other is unthinkable: "Could those two impulses, one as much a part of truth as the other, be reconciled, or if one or the other could prevail, all life would cease" (*Ex* 305). It is the tension of the two and their conflict that is the basis of life, and once that movement stops the process of life is over.<sup>27</sup> It is possible that the end of time and life is the beginning of fuller being but that is not where Yeats's interests lie. He is happy to be an *antithetical* man, acknowledging his partiality and incompleteness, without any desire to rid himself of it. Gazing on the austere, sensuous delights of Capri in winter: "I murmured as I have countless times, 'I have been part of it always and there is maybe no escape, forgetting and returning life after life like an insect in the roots of the grass.' But murmured it without terror, in exultation almost" (*CW13* lvi; *AVA* xiii). The desire to surrender into union with godhead is weak, and he can even relish the possibility of limitless incarnations, the very opposite of Buddhist or Hindu teaching.

Though he sees himself as a man in whom the *antithetical Tincture* predominates, giving him a subjective, creative emphasis in his current incarnation, he considers he is at a point in the cycle where this influence is weakening, so that with successive lives the *primary* will become stronger until it will inevitably predominate for a while. Then he will no longer savor being tied to the wheel but want the path of the saint out of the circle.<sup>28</sup> Once the cycle reaches the maximum of *primary* objectivity, in "complete plasticity" (*AVB* 183; *CW13* 94; *AVA* 116), the soul will then start another series, at a more developed level. Within its various series of incarnations, the individual spirit therefore expresses many characters and approaches to living, moving from objective search for worldly reality to subjective individuality to objective social and spiritual emphasis and then back

again. The language sometimes implies that the character comes from outside (in Yeats's astrological terms, that the planets impose their influence), but in fact that character represents the inner necessity to bring certain elements to the fore, so that time and space are the external expression of the inner state. Yet, since the individual life can only hope to express a fraction of the spirit's whole, its fractured nature is an inevitable source of unhappiness (Proposition 6).<sup>29</sup>

Yeats conceives of an eternal archetype of the soul, "the timeless individuality or daimon," and "This timeless individuality contains archetypes of all possible existences whether of man or brute, and as it traverses its circle of allotted lives, now one, now another, prevails. We may fail to express an archetype, or alter it by reason, but all done from nature is its unfolding into time" ("Introduction to *The Words upon the Window-Pane*," *VPI* 970; *CW* 2 721; *Ex* 368).<sup>30</sup> The complete soul is expressed aspect by aspect, appearing in space and time only partially at any given moment and place, and epitomizing on a microcosmic scale the reflection into time and space of the macrocosmic reality: "Time must continue [till] reality has been completely displayed as a series."<sup>31</sup> Yeats also refers approvingly to Berkeley's thought that the Seven Days of Genesis were "not the creation of sun and moon, beast and man, but their entrance into time, or into human perception, or into that of some spirit" (*CW* 5 107; *E&I* 403), and in a similar way, the complete soul may contain all the possibilities of existence *in potentia*, but they must be realized through entrance into incarnation, or through perception by other spirits.

If the soul's "characteristic act" is "temporal existence," what it expresses is the archetype contained in the *Daimon*. The *Daimon* is a somewhat awkward figure within the system, an unpredictable element within the regularity of *A Vision*. It remained elusive even to Yeats, seen variously as the individual archetype, a twin being, controlling angel and theatrical director (*AVB* 84), but it is a form of guiding essence and he writes of a person's "*Daimon* or ultimate self" (*AVB* 83), referring also to "my own *Daimon*, my own buried self" (*CW* 3 279; *Au* 371). More allusively, he notes that "revelation is from the self, but from that age-long memoried self, that shapes the elaborate shell of the mollusc and the child in the womb, that teaches the birds to make their nest; and that genius is a crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind" (*CW* 3 216–17; *Au* 272), phrasing that echoes *A Vision A* where he writes that the *Daimon* "is that being united to man which knows neither good nor evil, and shapes the body in the womb, and impresses upon the mind its form. She is revealed to man in moments of prevision and illumination and in much that we call good and evil fortune..." (*CW* 13 182; *AVA* 220).<sup>32</sup> In notes for *A Vision B* Yeats speculates about the *Daimon* in terms that partly unfold the implications of the phrase "that age-long memoried self," seeing it as embodying a continuum of memory, yet pointing to the paradox that the *Daimon* is truly fullness rather than memory of the past, pre-existent archetype rather than remembered or lived experience: "Is not the *Daimon* in some sense that being which can stretch its memory...through 28 incarnations & man that being whose memory includes one only....The *Daimon* in its essence is always the timeless moment, the symbolic sphere,— the fullness which includes every movement."<sup>33</sup> This timeless moment is a form of eternity, beyond or without time, and links the *Daimon* to the unfallen unity that precedes the antinomy, which is expressed in *A Vision A* in terms of its remaining "always in the Thirteenth Cycle" (*CW* 13 182; *AVA* 220), a formulation for eternity or the divine.<sup>34</sup> In many ways the *Daimon* is a link

to the divine, separate from our selves but tied to us, through which we can relate to the eternal personally. Yet as the more complete archetype, the *Daimon* also embodies opposition to the human, being a perpetual opposite, embodying all of the archetype that is *not* being expressed in the incarnation in question: it is *primary* if the human is *antithetical* and *antithetical* if the human is *primary*, male if female and female if male, pursuing and engineering the soul's crises.<sup>35</sup>

Within the incompleteness of the single life that the human can perceive, the core of Yeats's morality is completeness of experience: finding the soul's inner purpose and realizing this, exploring it as fully as possible. The purpose varies according to the life's place in the cycle of reincarnation: the soul starts its journey discovering the objective reality of the world through a number of *primary* incarnations, gradually feeling the growing importance of selfhood and inner dreams, which become stronger until they take over as the main focus and the subjective, *antithetical* element becomes dominant. Once the soul's experience has reached a maximum of subjectivity, in a supernatural stage of isolation and separation from the whole, it begins to seek an intellectual frame of reference and objectivity again until that objectivity in turn takes over, and the social and spiritual objective becomes paramount, bringing a different engagement with the outside world in its train. This too reaches a degree of maximum objectivity, where a supernatural stage of union with the whole of creation overwhelms all individuality, until the cycle starts again at a higher, more advanced level, not so much a circle as a kind of helix.

Within this system it is pointless for the soul to seek to express itself with subjective intellectual sincerity when it is in an incarnation that requires it to explore worldly or spiritual objectivity, and similarly a soul whose purpose is to explore imaginative creativity should not attempt to lead the life of a social reformer or saint. In creating a sect of fictional believers in the system, an Arab people called the Judwalis, Yeats had them "known among other Arabs for the violent contrast of character amongst them, for one finds amongst them holy men, and others extremely licentious. Fanatical on all matters of doctrine they seem tolerant of human frailty beyond any people I have ever met" ("The Discoveries of Michael Robartes," *YVP* 4 16; cf. *CW* 13 lx, *AVA* xviii–xix). It is not the spectrum of character that is surprising, but the tolerance of them all, since unlike the adherents of some conventional religions, this sect considers that holiness is only appropriate for a small group of people, and that licentiousness is just as appropriate for another group and necessary for them to explore the limits of that particular incarnation.

Whether directed towards the *antithetical* licentiousness of sensuous self-absorption or the *primary* holiness of connection with supernatural reality, incarnate life is for the gathering of experience; a symbolic "day and night constitute an incarnation and the discarnate period which follows...the incarnation, symbolised by the moon at night" (*AVB* 79). Human life therefore is symbolic night, the lunar or *antithetical* half of a cycle during which the soul weaves, creates and complicates. In contrast, symbolic day is the solar, *primary* half, the afterlife, where the soul clarifies, seeks to understand, simplify and absorb the experience into the immortal being, an idea that *A Vision* shares with Theosophical reincarnation. True understanding is therefore impossible to the living, and "Wisdom is the property of the dead, / A something incompatible with life" (*VP* 482; *CW* 1 242); even true judgment may be impossible, so that it is only the dead forebears who can "judge what I have done," since "Eyes spiritualised by death can judge, / I cannot" (*VP* 604;

*CWI* 329). This understanding is achieved through the processes of the afterlife, a series of dream-like states and self-searching meditations where the soul repeatedly goes over the life just lived in “expiation,” exploring it from as many angles as possible, changing elements in the reliving, such as motive or even role, until the maximum experience has been wrung from the material offered by the life. It follows that a life lived to the full, perhaps even full of errors or bad motives, will provide richer material for the afterlife, since whatever has been experienced will be explored and reversed at various stages after death, and “The more complete the expiation, or the less the need for it, the more fortunate the succeeding life. The more fully a life is lived, the less the need for—or the more complete is—the expiation” (*AVB* 236).<sup>36</sup> This is as close as the system’s amoral humanism seems to come to any concept of reward or punishment. Certainly there is no sense of good and evil in terms of morality and they are almost relative terms, categories which must be reversed during the afterlife so that the soul can be “purified of good and evil,” before they “vanish into the whole” of total reality (*AVB* 231–32). A life fully lived also means that the cycle of incarnations can be completed in fewer steps, while a life misdirected or frustrated in some way will lead to a repetition at the same stage.

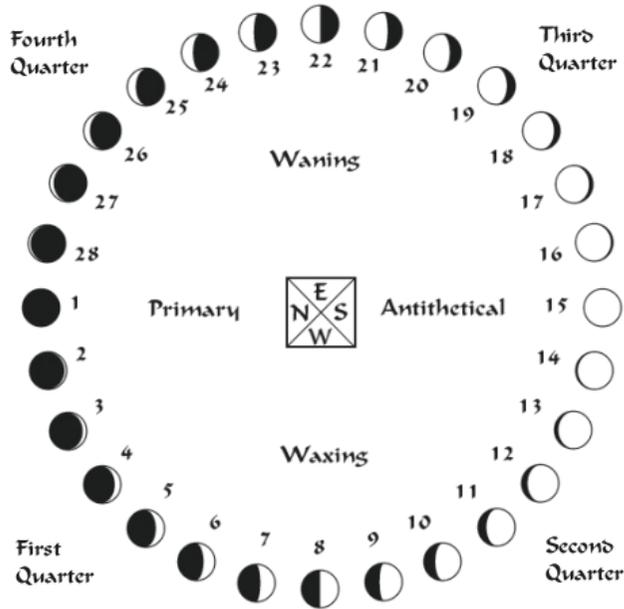
While human life is intrinsically *antithetical*, the driving force of the afterlife is towards *primary* unity: “We come at birth into a multitude and after death would perish into the One...” (*AVB* 52). Yeats writes that the aim of the dead “is to enter at last into their own archetype, or into all being: into that which is there always” (*VPI* 969; *CW2* 720; *Ex* 366), and once the process of the soul’s reliving and understanding is complete, it is briefly united with “the Divine Ideas in their unity” (*AVB* 187).<sup>37</sup> At this point “pure mind” contains “within itself pure truth, that which depends only upon itself” (*AVB* 189), but, unless the full archetype has been expressed in time and space and its twelve cycles are finished, the being is then drawn back to birth and multitude.<sup>38</sup> In *A Vision* Yeats writes of these spirits as having drunk “the Cup of Lethe” (*CWI3* 195; *AVA* 236), and the remainder of the afterlife is actually rather “before-life,” preparatory to the coming incarnation. They are no longer “the dead” but “spirits” (*AVB* 235) who await the right circumstances for rebirth and whose purpose is to purify their intention of complexity and thereby attain a vision of perfection (*AVB* 233–34), moving in a world of Platonic form.<sup>39</sup> It is the stage to which Yeats assigned most of the spirits who communicated the system of *A Vision* as well as the creative support that poetic tradition offers the individual poet (*AVB* 234).

The paradigmatic cycle of reincarnation is one of twenty-eight stages, or as it is put in an early typescript draft: “The philosophy is founded upon the conception that the typical man lives through ~~twelve~~ 13 cycles each of twenty-eight incarnations corresponding to the 28 lunar mansions” adding that the reason for the phrase “typal man” is that “sin may increase or virtue decrease the number of incarnations” (*YVP4* 17).<sup>40</sup> (The language of sin and virtue was later rejected, but for Yeats sin is in effect the misdirection of the soul from its life’s ordained purpose and virtue is the living of this purpose to the fullest possible degree.<sup>41</sup>) The twenty-eight lunar mansions are taken as marking the phases of the moon and these are the notation which Yeats uses to express the cyclical growth and withering of the *primary* and *antithetical* *Tinctures*.<sup>42</sup>

The Great Wheel of the phases is one of the images of *A Vision* that first strikes any reader, whether in Edmund Dulac’s archaized engraving (*AVB* 66; *CWI3* lviii; *AVA* fac-

ing xiii) or in the diagram (AVB 81; CW13 14; AVA 13), and announced in the poem "The Phases of the Moon" (AVB 59–64; CW13 3–9; AVA 3–8; VP 372–77; CW1 164–68). It is easy to see both why Yeats put this symbol first in *A Vision A* and, on more mature reflection in *A Vision B*, deferred its presentation, as it is mythically vivid but tends to submerge the vital, central dualism and to impose its quasi-astrological aspect upon the reader's understanding. Of course it also dominated Yeats's own thinking in many respects too, and provided him with the

most evocative of symbols in the waxing and waning of the moon. It is a natural image of increase and decrease, symbolizing the cyclical interchange of two principles, sun and moon, light and dark, and already a powerful element of Yeats's own poetic mythology. It is however a partial image or symbol, which can sometimes distract attention from more fundamental and simpler ideas, as Yeats recognized in *A Vision B* where he refers to the



Wheel in *A Vision A* as "an unexplained rule of thumb" (AVB 81) rather than the foundation of the ideas. The phases are, though, essential as the nomenclature for registering the two *Tinctures'* relative strengths and directions of movement, so that even when the symbol of the moon's waxing and waning is not immediately relevant they remain as the notation.

The order of the incarnations is largely immutable and differences between adjacent steps are relatively small within the quarters, until the crucial phases are reached. These cardinal points of the cycle, Phases 1, 8, 15 and 22, are simplest in terms of delineation since they are complete absolutes or perfect balances, but they are the most problematic in terms of human life.<sup>43</sup> The new moon's Phase 1 and the full moon's Phase 15 represent complete objectivity and complete subjectivity respectively, states which are impossible for humanity, as "human life cannot be completely objective" (AVB 183; CW13 94; AVA 116) or subjective, and the incarnations are supernatural and non-physical, forming yet another part of the great spirit world that Yeats thinks of as surrounding us. The half-moon phases, Phase 8 and Phase 22, are less problematic in conceptual terms but more difficult to live, since in them the soul shifts from *primary* to *antithetical* goals or *vice versa*. The moment of balance comes during the life itself and, before that tipping point, the bias is to one side and, after it, to the other, so that it is almost impossible to

live either of these lives adequately, which frequently entails repetitions.<sup>44</sup> In comparison the incarnations of the other Phases are straightforward, since the goal of a *primary* or an *antithetical* life is relatively clear, although the emphasis in Yeats's descriptions on the life "out of phase" points to the fundamental difficulty that he sees in self-understanding and self-knowledge.

The system presented in *A Vision* deals almost exclusively with human life and with the human condition, both at the individual level and in more general historical terms, where the cycle of the two *Tinctures* is expressed in broadly similar stages. Yeats divides the historical cycle into twelve gyres rather than twenty-eight phases, placing two steps between each of the cardinal points. The nomenclature of the phases is retained, however, since the broader steps effectively subsume several phases and Yeats understandably does not wish to multiply labels. Within historical time there is actually a myriad of cycles in operation simultaneously, from individual acts and lives to the great cultural movements. The ones that most concern Yeats, however, are those of some 2,000 years and those of some 1,000 years, in which religions and their civilizations are seen to move.<sup>45</sup> A religious dispensation lasts for some 2,000 years and is either *primary* or *antithetical*. It in turn gives rise to a corresponding civilization, which starts (its Phase 1) at the dispensation's mid-point (Phase 15) and also lasts for some 2,000 years. At the mid-point of this civilization, its Phase 15, the religious dispensation of the opposite *Tincture* arises (starting at its Phase 1) and so on in syncopated succession. Specifically, the *primary* Christian religion arose at the height of the *antithetical* classical civilization, and the *primary* culture of Christendom arose around 1000 CE. This culture reaches its high point around 2000 CE when there will be the origin of the next *antithetical* religion, which Yeats looks forward to in poems such as "The Second Coming" and "The Gyres." The cycle only really applies to western European civilization, at least in this form, but the treatment of this element of the system is particularly prominent in the poetry, making it the point where many readers of Yeats's poetry first encounter the ideas of *A Vision*.

The imminence of the new dispensation in his own time was particularly important for Yeats, who saw himself as a forerunner, even prophet, of the new era. *Antithetical* in character, he was in sympathy with the *antithetical* dispensation to come rather than the final throes of the *primary* one. Indeed in *A Vision A* he seems to see the book as part of the philosophy that prepares the way for the new:

During the period said to commence in 1927, with the 11th gyre, must arise a form of philosophy, which will become religious and ethical in the 12th gyre and be in all things opposite of that vast plaster Herculean image, final *primary* thought. It will be concrete in expression, establish itself by immediate experience, seek no general agreement, make little of God or any exterior unity, and it will call that good which a man can contemplate himself as doing always and no other doing at all. It will make a cardinal truth of man's immortality that its virtue may not lack sanction, and of the soul's re-embodiment that it may restore to virtue that long preparation none can give and hold death an interruption.... Men will no longer separate the idea of God from that of human genius, human productivity in all its forms. (*CW13* 177; *AVA* 214–15)

In many ways this is *A Vision's* self-description. Yeats has Owen Aherne comment on the work's "concrete expression" (*CW13* lxiv; *AVA* xxiii), it seeks "no general agreement," makes "little of God," but makes "a cardinal truth of man's immortality" and reincarnation. Generally it both seeks to present the system as a whole and, even more, to be a manifesto for the *antithetical* side of that system, in which God will be perceived in creative human genius and *antithetical* multiplicity.

This statement was removed from the 1937 version of *A Vision*, along with the earlier version's comments on the present day and future. In its place Yeats ponders the nature of the symbol, the possibility of revelation and how much can be foreseen, alluding to the techniques of meditation he had learned during his training with the Golden Dawn. He questions how to "work out upon the phases the gradual coming and increase of the counter-movement, the *antithetical* multiform influx" but realizes that:

I have already said all that can be said. The particulars are the work of the *Thirteenth Cone* or cycle which is in every man and called by every man his freedom. Doubtless, for it can do all things and knows all things, it knows what it will do with its own freedom but it has kept the secret. (*AVB* 302)

The entry of the new religious dispensation may be predictable, even its general character, but its particular form is not (*viz.* *AVB* 263).

The key to the future lies in the troublesome form of the *Thirteenth Cone* or Cycle. It is troublesome because it stands for God in Yeats's system, but he never deals with it clearly and its nature is very different from that of most believers' conception of God. Though it is not a cone, nor the thirteenth of anything, its name alludes to the soul's twelve cycles of incarnation, after which the soul's archetype will have been manifested fully into space and time and it will enter the full possession of itself in the cycle beyond, which is out of time but can be seen as the thirteenth. Each cycle in time is like the circular colure of an armillary sphere and as these move on in succession form a sphere and are integrated into a new order of whole. Even in their partial earthly lives the "eternal archetypes" (*Ex* 397) are present "in every man" and through them humanity may partake of their timeless state, so that through them the final completed whole, the *Thirteenth Cone*, is implicit.<sup>46</sup> In a radically recast sense, the kingdom of heaven is within (*cf.* *YVP4* 40; 103). The *Thirteenth Cone's* relation to time and the whole of creation is similar to that of the *Daimon's* relation to the individual being, a perpetual opposite (*viz.* *AVB* 210), though its opposition is illusory, since its true form is the all-inclusive sphere (*AVB* 193 & 240).

Ultimately the purely *primary* is the beginning and end of the Wheel. Religions and schools that teach reincarnation, including Theosophy and the Golden Dawn, tend to stress the importance of personal development and escape from the wheel of repetition and suffering. Yeats's system ostensibly shares this goal, in the phaseless sphere, which "becomes, the moment it is thought of...the thirteenth cone" (*AVB* 193), or does so when he writes from the *primary* perspective of conventional spirituality, as in the "Seven Propositions." This eternal moment "is in every man and called by every man his freedom" (*AVB* 302), but it is not conventional release from incarnation, it is the archetype of all incarnation, which constantly coexists with the process of the two antinomies. Yeats, though, is generally too partisan to champion even such ideas with any conviction:

There is perhaps no final happy state except in so far as men may gradually grow better; escape may be for individuals alone who know how to exhaust their possible lives, to set, as it were, the hands of the clock racing. Perhaps we shall learn to accept even innumerable lives with happy humility—"I have been always an insect in the roots of the grass"—and putting aside calculating scruples be ever ready to wager all upon the dice.

(“Introduction to *The Resurrection*,” *VPI* 935; *CW2* 725; cf. *Ex* 398)

For Yeats the process has taken over from the end, and he views interminable process with equanimity.<sup>47</sup> Even the individuals who know how to set “the hands of the clock racing” must strive to live the life of the sensual libertine at Phase 13 as fully and wholeheartedly as the life of the saint at Phase 27 in order to speed their progress around the wheel. While in the grip of the *antithetical* and seeking to assert human individuality, their rebellion paradoxically speeds their progress towards the divine: “Hatred of God may bring the soul to God” (*CW1* 292; *VP* 558). Every element evokes its opposite, so that the assertion of “the soul’s ultimate, particular freedom” is tied to “the soul’s disappearance in God” (*AVB* 52) and, if the tension of these opposites is lost, life ends, since the oscillation of the opposites is the rhythm of life.

If the entry of the soul’s archetype into time is a gyre, spun like a thread from a spherical spindle, Yeats also seems to conceive of the streams of souls being braided and wound again, to conjoin into a single whole:

We may come to think that nothing exists but a stream of souls...that these souls, these eternal archetypes, combine into greater units as days and nights into months, months into years, and at last into the final unit that differs in nothing from that which they were at the beginning: everywhere that antinomy of the One and the Many...

(“Introduction to *The Resurrection*,” *VPI* 934–35; *CW2* 725; *Ex* 396–97)

The antinomy ultimately resides in the opposition of the many individuals and the One; these “two eternities” (*VP* 637; *CW1* 333) are represented as the self and the soul, the soul and the race, man and God. We are impelled towards one or the other but neither movement is more real than the other, for “if either circuit, that which carries us into man or that which carries us into God, were reality, the generation had long since found its term” (*Ex* 307) and time would have come to an end.

The tension maintained by the antinomies is essential to life and to Yeats’s art, which dramatizes the tensions, by taking now one perspective and now another, and “conceives of the world as a continual conflict,” which Yeats names the “Vision of Evil” (*AVB* 144; *CW13* 65; *AVA* 78). *A Vision* itself proposes this view of existence, a dualism that pits a whole series of opposites against each other and sets a gulf between them but also views them as no more than “the two scales of a balance, the two butt-ends of a see-saw” (*AVB* 29). From the two antinomies arises a vast array of subtleties that can be bewildering yet are ultimately founded upon a simple opposition.

Recognizing the antinomies’ dynamic within Yeats’s later works enriches the reading and illuminates the poet’s thought. Yeats himself felt that such a recognition could applied

more broadly: "I cannot prove that this drama exists...but I assert that he who accepts it though it be but as a Myth like something thought out upon a painted stage sees the world breaking into life."<sup>48</sup> Whether or not this is true, the dramatic philosophy that springs from the conflict of the antinomies informs Yeats's own writing and view of reality. This is not to reduce the poetry and plays to a single theme or idea, especially since Yeats himself demonstrates how much complexity they elaborate in his own system, but it acknowledges a source of Yeats's creativity and underlines the vigor and richness of the vision.

### Notes

- 1 Space sadly precludes any real consideration of the system in Yeats's art in this essay, but see Wayne Chapman, "Metaphors for Poetry," 217–251.
- 2 *The Mystery Religion of W. B. Yeats* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984), 64. Hough's approach, which derives from the book's origin as public lectures, has much to recommend it in seeking to understand the broadest ideas and themes, putting some of the detail to one side, and I am following that method here to some extent. However, he jettisons far too much after only the most cursory consideration, including central concepts such as the *Daimon* and the *Principles*. Genuine simplification cannot ignore essentials.
- 3 *The Mystery Religion of W. B. Yeats*, 64.
- 4 See the reviews of AE, who had shared many of Yeats's Hermetic interests, and G. R. S. Mead, who shared involvement in the Theosophical Society. AE's review, "A Vision" (*The Irish Statesman*, 13 February 1926, 714–16), is printed in full in *CH* 269–73. This review, together with Mead's in *The Quest* (18:1, October 1926, 96–98) and most others, are also available at [www.YeatsVision.com/Reviews.html](http://www.YeatsVision.com/Reviews.html) (consulted June 2009).
- 5 See *The Mystery Religion of W. B. Yeats*, Chapter 1.
- 6 At this stage he was maintaining a fictional provenance for the material of *A Vision*, so the terms are slightly inexact.
- 7 See Margaret Mills Harper, *Wisdom of Two: The Spiritual; and Literary Collaboration of George and W. B. Yeats* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), especially Chapter 3.
- 8 Each edition has a significantly different set of fictions and prefatory material, though common to both is a version of the story of Michael Robartes's discovery of Giralduis, his connection of Giralduis's work with the teaching of Kusta ben Luka and the Judwalis, and his dealings with Owen Aherne. Three framing poems are also common to both editions "The Phases of the Moon," "Leda," and "All Souls' Night."
- 9 The Arabs and Giralduis certainly date to December 1917 (see [www.YeatsVision.com/Fictions.html#Background](http://www.YeatsVision.com/Fictions.html#Background); consulted January 2010), since both are mentioned in a letter to Lady Gregory on 4 January 1918 (*L* 643–44) and discussed in the script itself on 12 January 1918 (*YVPI* 250) and possibly earlier, while the element of Robartes and Aherne is similarly early.
- 10 See Colin McDowell "To 'Beat Upon the Wall': Reading *A Vision*," which addresses the problem of flawed exposition and "the spectre of incompleteness," *YA4* (1986) 219–227.
- 11 The primary names are twenty: Empedocles, Burnet, Heraclitus, Simplicius, Duhem, Alcemon, Dr Sturm, St Thomas Aquinas, Dr Dee, Macrobius, Swedenborg, Flaubert, Berkeley, Plotinus, MacKenna, Gentile, Kant, Boehme, Hegel, Blake. However, Aristotle is mentioned to explain who Simplicius was, Pythagoras to explain who Alcemon was, and it is assumed that the reader knows the author of the *Timaeus* to be Plato. There are also references to Gentile's translator, H. Wildon Carr, and to Yeats's own works.
- 12 Yeats often prefers to account for ideas that in fact had a predominantly occult or esoteric origin with ideas from more respectable or venerated thinkers, and sometimes obscures the thought in doing so. Yeats hints at this in his description of how Muses "sometimes form in those low haunts" at the dockside "their most lasting attachments" (*AVB* 24).
- 13 *The Importance of Being Earnest* (London: Leonard Smithers & Co., 1899), 15.
- 14 These appear in two places in *A Vision B*: the introductory fictions (*AVB* 52) and in the treatment of the Great Year of the Ancients (*AVB* 263).
- 15 The fullest "table of opposites" for the *Tinctures* is probably that given by Northrop Frye in his essay "The Rising of the Moon," in *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society* (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1976), 245–74 at 256–57, with some rather debatable inclusions, but for some reason he omits the terms "masculine" and "feminine."

- 16 Cf. *Advaita* (“non-dualism”), one of the six schools of orthodox Vedanta, which maintains that the Self (Atman) and the One (Brahman) are not distinct, whereas the *Dvaita* (“dualism”) school holds that they are absolutely different. In *Vishishtadvaita* (“modified non-dualism”) Brahman alone exists but is characterized by multiplicity.
- 17 In both religious and secular usage, there is not usually a distinction between spirit and soul, but in esoteric usage “spirit” (Greek: *pneuma*, Latin: *spiritus*) is usually taken as higher, often solar and immortal, while “soul” (Greek: *psyche*, Latin: *anima*) is lower, often lunar and mortal (and each of these can often be anatomized further). Yeats uses the terms relatively indiscriminately when writing for a general audience but, within *A Vision*, *Spirit* is applied to the *primary*, immortal *Principle* of the being, while “soul” is more vaguely applied to the selfhood that survives the body, especially in “The Soul in Judgment,” and effectively means the *Principles* as a whole.
- 18 Yeats remained uncertain about the distinction between the *Daimon* and the *Ghostly Self*; and later seems to have dispensed with such concepts as *Covens*, collective *Daimons* (*AVA* 228–29, 234; *CW13* 189, 193), and *Arcons* (a Yeatsian version of “Archons”), beings begotten by contact with spirits at Phase 1 or 15 and embodying ideas or expressions (*AVA* 241–44; *CW13* 199–201). See “The *Thirteenth Cone*,” n68, 189–90.
- 19 The “still unpurified dead” are spirits in the earlier stages of their afterlives, “those in freedom” spirits in the later stages of their afterlives or beyond incarnation: “The *Spirits* before the *Marriage* [or *Beatitude*, fourth stage of the afterlife] are spoken of as the dead. After that they are spirits, using that word as it is used in common speech” (*AVB* 235); at the fifth stage, the *Purification*, “the *Spirit*... is at last free” and aims to purify its intention of complexity (*AVB* 233).
- 20 In the “Seven Propositions” “Spirit” seems to be a semi-technical usage, largely congruent with *Spirit* in *Celestial Body*. The capitalization of “spirit” in Rapallo Notebook D is very uncertain in Yeats’s handwriting, but the later typescript has “Spirit” capitalized.
- 21 NLI MS 13,581 (Rapallo Notebook D) 24 recto and 26 recto. The text here incorporates all Yeats’s changes on the page and is very similar to the typescript NLI MS 30,280 (titled “Seven Propositions”), which probably dates from the 1930s. He told Frank Pearce Sturm, to whom he sent a similar list in October 1929 (“Six Propositions”), that they were “mainly aimed at AE who in reading my Packet [for Ezra Pound] preferred to it certain Indian aphorisms, & seems to think that aphorism [is] the true method” (*FPS* 100–01). The version of NLI MS 30,280 is given by Virginia Moore, *The Unicorn: W. B. Yeats’s Search for Reality* (New York NY: Macmillan, 1954), 378–89; Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats* (1954; 2nd ed. London: Faber & Faber, 1964), 236–37; Hazard Adams, *Blake and Yeats: The Contrary Vision*, Cornell Studies in English, Vol. 40 (1955; New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 287–88. See also [www.YeatsVision.com/7Propositions.html](http://www.YeatsVision.com/7Propositions.html) (consulted Dec 2009).
- 22 Buber’s *Ich und Du* (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1922) appeared in English, as *I and Thou*, in 1937.
- 23 Cf. “The essential sentence is of course ‘things only exist in being perceived,’ and I can only call perception God’s when I add Blake’s ‘God only acts or is in existing beings or men’” (*TSMC* 80).
- 24 The earlier draft of the Propositions was titled “Astrology & the Nature of Reality” and states that “My spirit reflects the timeless space less universe my empirical nature reflects the whole universe, including itself, as displayed at some one moment. Only the movements of the stars are sufficiently certain to permit the mapping of the universe as displayed” (NLI MS 13,581, 23 verso). When Yeats sent the “Six Propositions” to Frank Pearce Sturm (see n21), he wrote that “They contain the first theoretical justification of Astrology made in modern times” (*FPS* 100).
- 25 See Rory Ryan’s essay on the constitution of the human being in Yeats’s system (22–54) and Colin McDowell’s essay on the connection between the horoscope and *Faculties* (194–216). Yeats also entertained the idea of the horoscope of conception showing temperament or destiny, while the horoscope of birth showed fate (*YVP3* 31): “So too must each individual life retain to the end the seal set upon it at birth” (*AVB* 252).
- 26 Yeats says little about the universe’s passage “through time & back into its timeless & spaceless condition,” but, as Hough comments, it seems to be very much in line with the broad view taken by Theosophy, the Golden Dawn and general occult thought.
- 27 Yeats writes that it is not the traditional view of humanity’s being “re-absorbed into God’s freedom as final reality. The ultimate reality must be all movement, all thought, all perception extinguished, two freedoms unthinkable, unimaginably absorbed in one another” (*Ex* 307).
- 28 The opposition of artist and saint is already present in the essays of *Discoveries* (1906); see *CW4* 204–9; *Ec&I* 281–88.
- 29 Since the fragmentation of individual life is an *antithetical* quality, it follows that the *antithetical* is in most senses more isolated, unhappy and tragic than the *primary*: “The antithetical is creative, painful—per-

- sonal—the Primary imitative, happy, general” (“Michael Robartes Foretells,” *YO* 222). Cf. “The *primary* is that which serves, the *antithetical* that which creates” (*AVB* 85).
- 30 Cf. “There is something within a man or enclosing him that Leibnitz called a monad, and that I prefer to call a daimon. That daimon is timeless, it has present before it his past and future, or it has no present and is that past and future, and as the dramatisations [of the *séance*] recede from his waking mind and from the dreams that reproduce his waking desires they begin to express that knowledge. But the mirror-like daimon reflects all other daimons, the dramatisation or the medium can as it were pass from daimon to daimon” (*Dublin Magazine* version of “Introduction to *The Words upon the Window-Pane*,” *VPI* 975).
- 31 First draft of “Seven Propositions,” NLI MS 13,581 (Rapallo Notebook D), 23 verso.
- 32 In *AVA* the *Daimon* is described as always being the opposite sex to its human counterpart. Since in *AVA* Yeats takes the male as the default for the human, he takes the female as the default for the *Daimon*; in *AVB* and the introduction to *The Words upon the Window-Pane* he uses the pronoun “it.”
- 33 NLI MS 13,580 (Rapallo Notebook C), penultimate page. “Movement” may be mistakenly written for “moment.”
- 34 See Neil Mann’s essay “The *Thirteenth Cone*” (159–193).
- 35 See Janis Haswell’s essay “Yeats’s *Vision* and the Feminine” (291–306).
- 36 In reference to one of the particular afterlife states Yeats also notes, “The more complete the *Dreaming Back* the more complete the *Return* and the more happy or fortunate the next incarnation” (*AVB* 227).
- 37 “*Spirit* and *Celestial Body* are mind and its object (the Divine Ideas in their unity)” (*AVB* 187) and, at the stage of afterlife called the *Beatitude* or *Marriage* (*AVB* 232; cf. *CW13* 193–94; *AVA* 235–36), *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* “are one and there is only *Spirit*; pure mind, containing within itself pure truth, that which depends only upon itself” (*AVB* 189). This is in some senses “the hymen of the soul” that Yeats had written about so allusively in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (*CW5* 9; *Myth* 332).
- 38 In *AVA*, Yeats offers an apparently complex set of options, which may all actually be versions of the same concept: “Were the *Spirit* strong enough, or were its human cycles finished, it would remain, as in the *Beatitude*, permanently united to its *Ghostly Self*, or would, after two more states, be reborn into a spiritual cycle where the movement of the gyre is opposite to that in our cycles, and incomprehensible to us, but it will almost certainly pass to human rebirth because of its terror of what seems to be the loss of its own being” (*CW13* 195; *AVA* 236).
- 39 The purification is symbolized as the dance on the flaming pavements of Byzantium (*VP* 498; *CW1* 253).
- 40 Most deletions have been omitted for clarity, but the substitution of “twelve” by “13” was reversed in subsequent drafts (*YVP4* 145). The thirteenth cycle when it first appeared in the automatic script was spaceless but in time, beyond the ordinary twelve. Later it is seen as timeless and spaceless and therefore out of series, see the discussion in the essay “The *Thirteenth Cone*” (159–193).
- 41 This is associated with living “in phase” or “out of phase” and with the lure of *False Mask* and *False Creative Mind*.
- 42 The 28 mansions of the moon have traditionally referred to the moon’s passage through the zodiac (taking an average of 27.3 days) rather than the moon’s phases (which go through their cycle in an average of 29.5 days), but the Yeatses’ division is symbolic and has no direct relation to the heavens or astrology.
- 43 These phases correspond to the “cardinal points,” North, East, South and West, and the “cardinal signs” of the zodiac, Capricorn, Aries, Cancer and Libra (the attributions of both vary according to the solar or lunar zodiacs), but are also “cardinal” in the etymological sense of being the “hinges” where the major cruces occur.
- 44 The soul may return to Phase 8 and 22, “perhaps to all phases...up to four times, my instructors say, before it can pass on. It is claimed, however, that four times is the utmost possible” (*AVB* 86; cf. *CW13* 19; *AVA* 20). At one point in the automatic script, Yeats was told that only thirteen of the phases could not be missed: “One 3 & 4 8 12 13 15 17 & 18 22 26 27 28” (*YVP2* 28), and later that “the only phases that could not be missed were 1 & 15” (*YVP3* 46). In the manuscript of the “The discoveries of Michael Robartes,” the number became nine: “Every phase—except the 1, 4th 8th 12th 13th 15, 18th 19th 27th—can be missed if the phase has been lived very fully, & some times we may repeat a phase up up [sic] to three times” (*YVP4* 107). None of these ideas is included in *A Vision*.
- 45 The time period in these cases is based upon the Great Year measured by the Precession of the Equinoxes, which through history has been calculated at various lengths but is now reckoned at 25,786 years. A twelfth of this year or month is therefore 2,149 years. Yeats is never particularly concerned with numerical precision however. See Matthew Gibson, “*A Vision* and Philosophy” (103–135) and Charles Armstrong, “Ancient Frames: Classical Philosophy in Yeats’s *A Vision*” (90–102).

- 46 These are possibly realized in special moments of “harmonisation,” linked to sexual love and the Critical Moments, coming “at each crisis under the sway of the thirteenth cone. That is to say there is harmonisation or the substitution of the sphere for the cone” (*CWI3* 140; *AVA* 172), but Yeats never deals with this topic in any depth.
- 47 The passage echoes the Dedication to *A Vision A* where he speaks of “no escape, forgetting and returning life after life like an insect in the roots of the grass” (*CWI3* lvi; *AVA* xiii) cited above. Yeats also quoted it in a journal entry from 1929, see Ellmann, *Identity of Yeats*, 239.
- 48 Draft of *AVB*, *NLI MS* 30,757. The final stop is followed by a cancelled phrase: “like a hedgerow in spring.” In the same mixed papers there is a version of the much-worked paragraph starting “Some will ask...” (*PEP* 32; cf. *AVB* 24; cf. *MYV2* 414–15): “Some will ask if I believe what I have written & I will not know how to answer, because we all mean different things by the word belief. Who will understand me if I say that I should must & do believe it because it is a Myth.” As Yeats struggled with formulation and confession, he seems to have revised towards an ever more noncommittal answer, not least in the greater vagueness of the version that appeared in *AVB* in contrast with *PEP*.

# THE IS AND THE OUGHT, THE KNOWER AND THE KNOWN: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOUR *FACULTIES* IN YEATS'S SYSTEM

by Rory Ryan

The *primary* and *antithetical Tinctures* are the principal oppositional energies that create the double cone which allows for incarnation, and they set the basic structure for the whole of Yeats's system. If the *Tinctures* set the design of the structure, then the *Faculties* function as the bricks and mortar that give style and substance to the system, providing specificity for each of its parts while binding the whole into an elegant conceptual network. The present study aims to analyze and explore the *Faculties* and their interconnections, using *A Vision A* (1925), *A Vision B* (1937) and the *Vision Papers*.<sup>1</sup>

## I.1

Yeats introduces the *Four Faculties* in *A Vision A* by means of the wonderfully evocative story, "The Dance of the Four Royal Persons" (*CW13* 10–12; *AVA* 9–11).<sup>2</sup> In this story, "the King, the Queen, the Prince and Princess of the Country of Wisdom" dance for the Caliph to reveal all wisdom. The Caliph finds their dance dull, and orders their execution. Each of the dancers implores their executioners to "smooth out the mark of my footfall on the sand" (*CW13* 10; *AVA* 10). This alerts the Caliph to the significance of the patterns caused by their footfalls, and Kusta ben Luka is summoned to explain them. The dancers are the *Four Faculties* and their dance imprints the Great Wheel on the sand. Section IV of Part 2 of Book II of *A Vision A*, "The Pairs of Opposites and the Dance of the Four Royal Persons," is an excellent place at which to begin one's understanding of the *Faculties*. Yeats presents the following diagram:

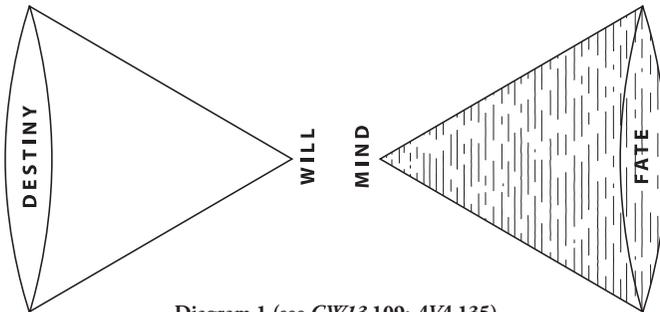


Diagram 1 (see *CW13* 109; *AVA* 135)

In the center are Will and Mind, which can reach their fullest expansion in Destiny and Fate respectively. Yeats describes the diagram as follows: "*Destiny* is here the utmost range possible to the *Will* if left in freedom, and its other name is beauty, whereas *Fate* is the utmost range of the mind when left in its freedom and its other name is truth" (*CW13* 109; *AVA* 135). Here, in essence, is the founding conceptual scheme for the *Four Faculties*:



In Diagram 3, *Will* is at Phase 13 and the individual is moving towards pure *antithetical* being (indicated by the direction of the arrow). In Diagram 4, *Will* is at Phase 27 and the individual is moving towards pure *primary* being.

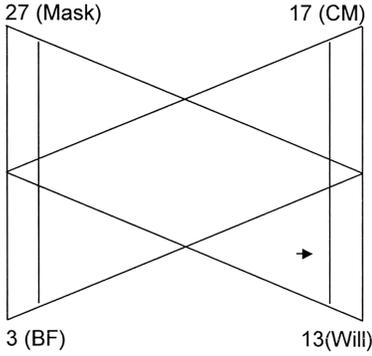


Diagram 3

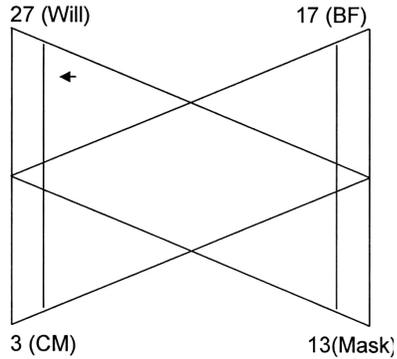


Diagram 4

The position of the *Will* at any phase automatically sets the position of the three remaining *Faculties*, and these are easily calculated. In terms of the double cones, the position of *Creative Mind* is best represented by a vertical line drawn from *Will*, as in Diagrams 3 and 4. In terms of the Great Wheel, *Mask* is always in exact opposition to *Will* (thus a relationship of 180° on the wheel) and *Body of Fate* is always in exact opposition to *Creative Mind* (thus a relationship of 180°). In Diagram 5, a person at Phase 13 is indicated; the straight line between *Will* at Phase 13 and *Mask* at Phase 27 indicates an angle of 180°. Similarly, the straight line between *Creative Mind* at Phase 17 and *Body of Fate* at Phase 3 indicates an angle of 180°.

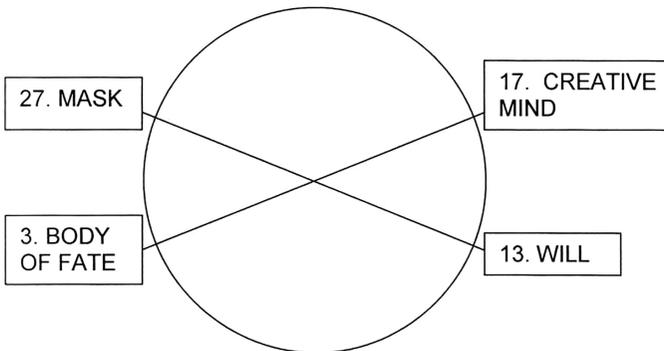


Diagram 5

The angle of relationship between *Will* and *Creative Mind* varies from 0° (at Phases 1 and 15) to 180° (at Phases 8 and 22). In Diagram 6a, the relationship of 0° between *Will* and *Creative*

*Mind* is shown in terms of the cones. In Diagrams 6b and 6c, this relationship of  $0^\circ$  is shown in terms of the Great Wheel. In Diagram 7a, the relationship of  $180^\circ$  between *Will* and *Creative Mind* is shown in terms of the cones. In Diagrams 7b and 7c, this relationship of  $180^\circ$  is shown in terms of the Great Wheel. The geometry of the *Faculties* is thus precise and regular.

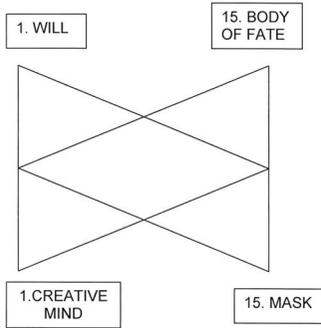


Diagram 6a

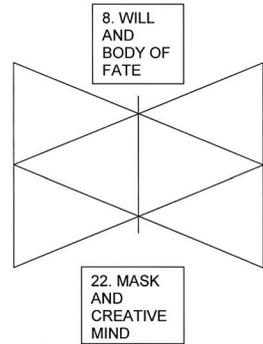


Diagram 7a

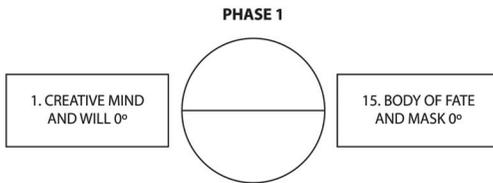


Diagram 6b

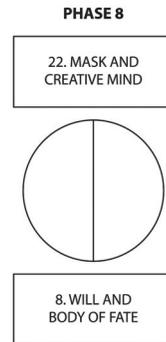


Diagram 7b

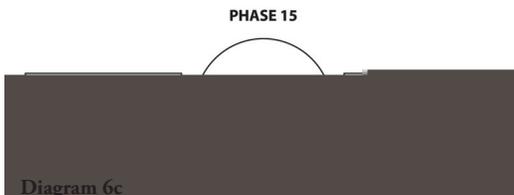


Diagram 6c

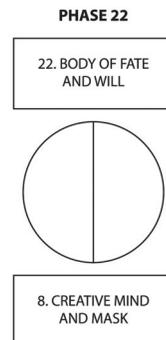


Diagram 7c

The geometric relations are described by Yeats as “Oppositions” and “Discords”:

The being becomes conscious of itself as a separate being, because of certain facts of Opposition and Discord, the emotional Opposition of *Will* and *Mask*, the intellectual opposition of *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*, Discords between *Will* and *Creative Mind*, *Creative Mind* and *Mask*, *Mask* and *Body of Fate*, *Body of Fate* and *Will*. A Discord is always the enforced understanding of the unlikeness of *Will* and *Mask* or of *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*. There is an enforced attraction between Opposites, for the *Will* has a natural desire for the *Mask* and the *Creative Mind* a natural perception of the *Body of Fate*; in one the dog bays the Moon, in the other the eagle stares on the Sun by natural right. (AVB 93-4; cf. CW13 23; AVA 25)

The two principal energies are “natural desire” (the *Will*'s relation to the *Mask*) and “natural perception” (the relation of *Creative Mind* to *Body of Fate*). These energies are the Oppositions. The Discords are the relations that exist between one set of opposites (*Will* and *Mask*) and the other (*Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*), and consist of “an enforced understanding of...unlikeness.” In “Relations,” Yeats clarifies:

Those between *Will* and *Mask*, *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate* are oppositions, or contrasts.

Those between *Will* and *Creative Mind*, *Mask* and *Body of Fate* discords. (AVB 104)

Diagram 5 (above) illustrates the perpetual opposition that pertains between the two *anti-thetical Faculties*. Similarly, the two *primary Faculties* remain at opposite sides of the wheel, throughout the twenty-eight phases. The term “opposition” is used in astrology to refer to planets that, within a chart, exist in a relationship of 180°, and Yeats's employment of the term also denotes a relationship of 180°.

## I.2

Perhaps the most important observation one can make about the four *Faculties* is that one can say very little of their essences on a general level. Each *Faculty* is so strongly determined by its phase (and the corresponding phases of the other three *Faculties*) that there is a limit to the meaningful observations one can make concerning each of the *Faculties* that is true of all twenty-eight phases. Nevertheless, these four actors in the drama of incarnation occupy different roles, whose functional outlines can be described.

As the founding *Faculty*, *Will* relates unequally to the other *Faculties*. Yeats describes this “first matter” of personality as follows:

By *Will* is understood feeling that has not become desire because there is no object of desire; a bias by which the soul is classified and its phase fixed but which as yet is without result in action; an energy as yet uninfluenced by thought, action, or emotion; the first matter of a certain personality—choice. (CW13 15; AVA 14–15)

In the absence of a context of incarnation, *Will* cannot be described as anything other than a “bias,” an inclination or propensity; not a choice but the (as yet) undirected capacity to choose: “Ego [*Will*] is free will simply” (*YVP2* 19) or “Creative Power” (CF P41; *YVP3* 361). Further:

When not affected by the other *Faculties* it has neither emotion, morality nor intellectual interest, but knows how things are done, how windows open and shut, how roads are crossed, everything that we call utility. It seeks its own continuance. (*AVB* 82–83)

When considered by itself, its only impulse is to perpetuate itself. Thus, although it is the founding *Faculty*, in the absence of the other *Faculties* it has no definable substance or direction. However, as the founding *Faculty*, *Will* contains within it that which differentiates the incarnation from all others. In the Card File, Yeats records: “The Ego [*Will*] is that particularised element which distinguishes individual from individual” and it is “The ideosyncrasy” (CF F10; *YVP3* 304). And: “Ego is Free will. The other three imposed” (*YVP3* 304). Moreover, it has “a natural desire for the *Mask*” (*AVB* 94; *CW13* 23; *AVA* 24). In the automatic script, Yeats asks the communicator to define *Will*:

6. Define Ego as apart from other 3.<sup>4</sup>  
6. free will

7. Free will only – all other elements of soul from the 3.  
7. yes the free will free only in itself the other component parts being imposed.  
(7 June 1918; *YVP1* 484)

In summary, while *Will* is the essence of corporeal being, and it is largely without form, until it is integrated with the other three *Faculties*.

The *Mask* is the object of the *Will*'s desire or the supreme idea of good, and is thus an ideal: “By *Mask* is understood the image of what we wish to become, or of that to which we give our reverence” (*CW13* 15; *AVA* 15). In simple terms, *Will* and *Mask* can be described as follows: “Ego = Creative Power | *Mask* = Personality” (CF P41; *YVP3* 361). The principal forces of incarnation are expression of will, and submission of will, which is love. These forces constitute destiny and fate: “The first or active is Destiny the second or enforced is Fate. The First is Will, the second Love” (CF F13; *YVP3* 305). Under the heading “*Mask*,” Yeats writes: “‘It is a figure of destiny’... ‘The *Mask* expresses no ambition It expresses enthusiasm apart from ambition” (CF F14; *YVP3* 305).<sup>5</sup>

*Mask* is thus active, although it does not originate ambition or desire. The expression of “enthusiasm apart from ambition” perfectly encapsulates the *Mask*: it is the object of ambition or desire, but it does not create desire.<sup>6</sup> It is summoned by desire.<sup>7</sup> By providing an object and a channel of desire, it becomes the means whereby the *Will* interacts with the world. Without a goal, the *Will* is inactive: “*Mask* as action is the relation of Ego with the world” (VNB1, p. 82; *YVP3* 174). Similarly, the *Mask* does not create emotion, but acts as a conduit for emotion: “Emotion not from but through *Mask*” (CF M8; *YVP3* 334). However, while it does not create emotion, it induces in the self an “unnatural” emotion: “*Mask* = desired emotion & is always opposite to natural emotion of Ego”

(VNB1, p. 53; *YVP3* 164). Perhaps the most important function of the *Mask* is to create a sense of unity or coherence of self. Yeats informs us that “all unity is from the *Mask*...” (*AVB* 82). It knits together the *Faculties* so that the individual experiences incarnation as a single consciousness, rather than a cluster of disparate forces: Yeats declares that “the *Mask* is described as ‘A form created by passion to unite us to ourselves’” (*CW13* 18; *AVA* 18; cf. *AVB* 82), and “*Mask* as emotion unites the Ego to himself” (VNB1, p. 82; *YVP3* 174). And Yeats asks the control Euechtha:

9. Is the mask the source of form it self.  
9. Yes

(*YVP2* 287)

The exercise of desire forges structural links between the four *Faculties*: purpose dissolves disparity by creating a common goal. However, too great an obsession with the *Mask* can result in weakness:

25. Can you define more accurately form of subjective weakness?  
25. The realisation that the ego has lived entirely in the mask & consequently has neglected self discipline & self knowledge.

(*YVP2* 214)

This very starkly indicates that if an *antithetical* person overemphasizes the *Mask*, then it produces overindulgence in objects of desire, and an accompanying lack of “self discipline.” This has an interesting moral emphasis, usually absent from *A Vision*.

A lengthy and difficult passage on the *Mask* from the automatic script on January 17, 1918, bears attention. Thomas attempts to explain aspects of the *Mask* and the other *Faculties*, as follows:

30. Is not mask that portion of anti of which we are conscious or which we especially desire? [...]

No that is what mask is used to *attain* – the mask is a set thing

2. What do you mean by a set thing?  
2. It possesses certain characteristics for each phase
3. It is a group of fixed characteristics which draw from anti corresponding qualities? a mask put on by anti to play an especial part.  
3. Yes  
In accordance with degree of adaptability of primary
4. Anti wearing mask can play no other part but the play may be twisted by primary?  
4. Yes can wear no other mask but can move or dance or speak against the mask itself

5. In other words anti can modify mask?  
 5. Can modify *detail* only
6. Is not that modification fixed by phase?  
 6. No intensity may be modified in detail never in intensity
7. In that case anti does not work against Mask but uses it.  
 7. Uses it in that case but where mask is let us say curiosity or enthusiasm it can be equally modified in all detail but used to unify that detail – Mask good – always unifies
8. Do correct statement that anti can work against mask?  
 If not give example.  
 8. No anti adopts mask & simultaneously works against it  
 Therefore more often than not you fit both good & evil masks on one fit
9. By working against do you mean using one mask against other.  
 9. *Yes*
10. Can anti reach ego except through these two masks?  
 10. Yes anti through creative genius
11. Creative genius genius subject mask object?  
 11. Creative genius object yes – Mask links *ego* & *self*

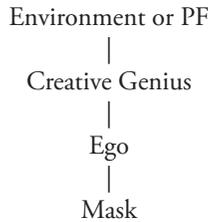
(*YVP1* 266–68)<sup>8</sup>

In answer 3, Yeats speaks of the “mask put on by anti” and Thomas reminds him that this occurs “in accordance with the degree of adaptability of primary.” If the *Will* is *antithetical*, then the *Mask* must be *primary*, as *Will* and *Mask* are always in opposition. Concerning 4 (above): “Anti adopts *Mask* & simultaneously works against it. Therefore more ‘often than not you put both good & Evil Mask on one Ego’” (VNB1, p. 55; *YVP3* 164). The *Mask* is desired, but can overwhelm the *Will*, directing the self solely towards the object of its desire. The relationship between *Will* and *Mask* can thus be all-absorbing or fraught to the extent that *Will* attempts to distance itself from the compulsion of its desires. We might “speak against” the *Mask* but we cannot escape it. While the *Mask* “possesses certain characteristics for each phase” (answer 2), it may be “modified in all detail” (answer 7) but “never in intensity” (answer 6). Thus, there is a degree of flexibility in the composition or the contents of the *Mask*, because the *Mask* is voluntary during *antithetical* phases, and thus fortifies or emboldens the *Will*: “The *antithetical Mask* comes to men of Phase 17 and Phase 18 as a form of strength...” (*AVB* 150).<sup>9</sup> The *Mask* is involuntary during *primary* phases: “The *Mask* is involuntary when the Ego [the *Will*] has become so objective that *passion* is impossible” (*YVP1* 262). However, in both *primary* and *antithetical* phases, the *Will* may not alter the intensity of the *Mask*, presumably because the essential function of the *Mask* is to provide an object of desire. Any attenuation of the intensity of desire will fundamentally weaken the relation between *Will* and *Mask*, thereby unraveling the

self. The *Mask* “always unifies” the self (answer 7) by unifying the *Faculties*. Moreover, Thomas proposes that “anti adopts mask & simultaneously works against it” (answer 8), indicating that the *antithetical Will* may oppose the *Mask* while being unable to discard it. Thus, in the complex relationship of simultaneous attraction and repulsion, the self achieves coherence or defining structure. The “*Mask links ego & self*” (answer 11). The *Mask* thus operates on the *Will* (the “*ego*”) so that the *Will* “links” with the “*self*.” “*Self*” here may refer not to the composite of the four *Faculties* in any Phase, but to an ideal or higher unity, “a form created by passion to unite us to ourselves, the self so sought is that Unity of Being...” (*AVB* 82). Moreover, the process of the construction of the self involves a two-way movement of energy:

3. Parallel relation between Mask & Ego?

3. The Ego is stirred up by creative genius into adopting the mask – Hence



(*YVP1* 262)

The first process (as indicated earlier in the essay) involves *Creative Mind* perceiving *Body of Fate* (which precedes the other *Faculties*) and thereby stirring up the *Will* into adopting a *Mask*. The process is thus: *Body of Fate—Creative Mind—Will—Mask*. The second process (as indicated above) is a reversal of the first process: “*Mask links ego & self*.” The process is thus: *Mask—Will—Creative Mind—Body of Fate*. By means of these dual processes, the four *Faculties* are knitted together, creating the self.

It is necessary to emphasize the difference between the purpose of the *Mask* in the *primary* and *antithetical* phases. The *antithetical Mask* functions both to create self, and to create a repository of desire. This is confirmed by the control *Ameritus*:

1. Is not the mask in subjective phases double – a form which we put on, a form which we desire, that which we become & that we would possess

1. Yes

(*YVP2* 468)

For *primary* incarnations, *Mask* is an impediment, a mechanism that causes closure and confinement, and sets the limits of the self. The aim of the *Will* (Ego) is to slip the *Mask*:

13[answer]. In the objective man the mask is inferred – freedom comes only when the Ego releases itself from the obligation of the mask & acts through the primary & c[reative] g[enius]...

(*YVP2* 18)

Prior to Phase 15, it is a “revelation,” as it is the means whereby the being comes to know itself, whereas after Phase 15, *Mask* is a “concealment,” as the identity begins the long and slow process of breaking itself up:

“Mask created by ego as a protection or revelation of the soul”...  
 “*Mask is that form created by passion to reveal or conceal individuality*”  
 (VNB1, p. 52; *YVP3* 163–64)

“Before Beauty [i.e., Phase 15] mask is revelation of characteristics  
 After [Beauty mask is] substitution [of characteristics][”]  
 (VNB1, p. 104; *YVP3* 181)

As the self emerges from undifferentiated submersion in transcendence at Phase 1, into incarnation, it begins to form itself by means of gradual separation from transcendent truth, and from race, tradition and nature, and its means of doing so is the *Mask*. During the long journey towards complete self-absorption at Phase 15, the Ego or *Will* increasingly declares its singularity and specificity by the exercise of choice, which is always the nomination of desire(s). As the *Will* establishes and understands its desires, so it gradually becomes itself. The first fifteen phases of the Wheel are thus an increasing revelation, a process of coming-to-be. After perfect selfhood, the *Mask* no longer continues to reveal identity. Instead, it is employed as a device of concealment. The effects of concealment are specified in the Card File:

*Mask (enforced)*  
 insincerity when mask is enforced – separates Mask & ego by making ego  
 through fear of self knowledge choose evil Mask  
 In 2 3 4 it fears approaching subjectivity consequent forcing inward of mind  
 Before 1 it fears knowledge of the self, weakening after 1 of its strength  
 (CF M6; *YVP3* 334)

The principal impulse of the self is no longer towards self-knowledge, thereby avoiding true *Mask* and adopting false *Mask*. A false *Mask* will effectively conceal true intent both from others and from ourselves. This is explained by the control Thomas:

- 9. How does insincerity in case of enforced mask separate mask & ego.
- 9. The Ego chooses the evil mask
- 10. Why does insincerity make it choose evil mask?
- 10. Because it cannot face self knowledge which is brought by Mask  
 (*YVP2* 137)

Moreover, the revelation of *Mask* is an act of courage; its concealment an act of fear: “Concealment moral fear, revelation moral courage (VNB1, p. 66; *YVP3* 168).

The *Creative Mind* is the faculty of perception and understanding, the sensorium and the interpreting mind, that is, the means and the act of “making sense”: “By *Creative*

*Mind* is meant intellect, as intellect was understood before the close of the seventeenth century—all the mind that is consciously constructive” (*CW13* 15; *AVA* 15). It has “a natural perception of the *Body of Fate*” (*AVB* 94) and delights in intellectual constructions, contemplation and conceptual organization.

In *primary* phases, the *primary Faculties* (*Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*) dominate and, thus, the *Mask* and *Will* are “enforced.” In *antithetical* phases, the *antithetical Faculties* (*Will* and *Mask*) dominate and, thus, *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate* are “enforced.”<sup>10</sup> This is further elucidated by the communicator Thomas, as follows:

4. Environment enforced mask voluntarily?  
 4. Environment enforced or willed – Mask voluntary in subjective states  
 [...]
 7. Describe process where Mask is involuntary?  
 7. The Mask is involuntary when the Ego has become so objective that *passion* is impossible – state where only emotion is possible  
 [...]
 12. Where mask is enforced is relation between CG & PF<sup>11</sup> very different?  
 12. Then creative genius expresses objective instead of expressing subjective objectively  
 Yes  
 Then PF instead of stir[r]ing creative genius stirs ego
- (*YVP1* 262–63)

During *antithetical* phases, the ego and its object of desire eclipse the process of thinking and the exterior world. During *primary* phases, thinking and the perception of the exterior world dominate the ego and its desires. When “*passion* is impossible,” *Creative Mind* perceives and expresses external reality, without the contamination of desire. During *primary* phases, *Mask* is enforced. Similarly, during *antithetical* phases, *Creative Mind* is enforced:

26. By what is CG enforced in subjective phases.  
 26. before 15 by the mask – after 15 by the Ego
- (*YVP2* 58)

*Creative Mind* both establishes the primacy of thought over desire, and works actively to minimize the effects of the *Mask*: “Genius both creator & destroyer – it destroys in the day what mask weaves at night...” (*CF M31*; *YVP3* 342).

In “General Character of Creative Mind,” Yeats presents the following information, listing the phases affected and the phase from which the influence derives:

- (1) Affecting 28, 1, 2 from 2, 1, 28. Controlled.  
 (2) " 3, 4, 5, 6 from 27, 26, 25, 24. Transformatory.  
 (3) " 7, 8, 9 from 23, 22, 21. Mathematical.  
 (4) " 10, 11, 12 from 20, 19, 18. Intellectually passionate.  
 (5) " 13 from 17. Stillness.

- (6) " 14, 15, 16 from 16, 15, 14. Emotional.  
 (7) " 17, 18, 19, 20 from 13, 12, 11, 10. Emotionally passionate.  
 (8) " 21, 22, 23 from 9, 8, 7. Rational.  
 (9) " 24 from 6. Obedient.  
 (10) " 25, 26, 27 from 3, 4, 5. Serenity.

(AVB 101; cf. CW13 31; AVA 34–35)

This list is consistent with the information presented in “The Twenty-eight Incarnations” in that the *Creative Mind* of Phase 3 is from Phase 27; the *Creative Mind* of Phase 4 is from Phase 26; the *Creative Mind* of Phase 5 is from Phase 25, and so on. What is entirely new in this presentation is the division of the phases into ten sections. Such decimal division cannot be regular (because 28 divided by 10 is 2.8), but the divisions above appear inordinately irregular.

In a footnote, Yeats declares: “This and the following Table [“General Character of Body of Fate Affecting Certain Phases,” see below] are divided into ten divisions because they were given to me in this form, and I have not sufficient confidence in my knowledge to turn them into the more convenient twelfold divisions” (AVB 101n).<sup>12</sup> There is no discussion, in the automatic script, the *Vision* Notebooks or the Card File of the tenfold division of *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*. When the latter list occurs in the automatic script, it is simply given, with no prompting from Yeats, and no explanation from Thomas (YVP2 101–2). The footnote quoted above confirms that Yeats did not properly understand these divisions or the properties ascribed to them. On occasion, the descriptor is easily identifiable in terms of the associated phases. For example, in section 4, the “General Character of Creative Mind” is “Intellectually Passionate” and this strongly accords with the *Creative Mind* of Phases 20, 19 and 18. Similarly, in section 7, the “General Character” is “Emotionally Passionate” and this echoes the *Creative Mind* of Phases 10, 11, 12. But generally, the “General Character of Creative Mind” raises more questions than it answers, and it awaits further inquiry.

The *Body of Fate* is the exterior context of the man:<sup>13</sup> the realm of brute fact, and also comprising the events that constitute the context of an individual. Yeats describes this as “the sum, not the unity, of fact, fact as it affects a particular man” (AVB 82). Further:

By *Body of Fate* is understood the physical and mental environment, the changing human body,<sup>14</sup> the stream of Phenomena as this affects a particular individual, all that is forced upon us from without, Time as it affects sensation.

(CW13 15; AVA 15)

The following brief exchange between Yeats and the communicator, Thomas, sheds light on how the *Faculties* interact to create a single self:

2. No special relation between CG & PF?<sup>15</sup>

2. Yes the relation is of environment partially forcing Creative Genius into action by stirring up passion

Of the four *Faculties*, the *Body of Fate* is the most primordial or impersonal, in that it is the vast context in which the self operates. In elucidating the functioning of the self, *Body of Fate* is therefore prior, and is presented first in the diagram. This external world is perceived by the *Creative Mind*, which is the appropriate *Faculty* of perception and the understanding of external reality. This act of perception results in “stirring up passion.” The *Will*, hitherto without direction, becomes driven by passion, and thus adopts a *Mask*. The diagram thus indicates the stages operative in the functioning of the whole self.

In “General Character of Body of Fate Affecting certain Phases,” Yeats presents the following information:

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| (1) Affecting | 28, 1, 2 from 16, 15, 14. Joy.                           |
| (2) "         | 3, 4, 5, 6 from 13, 12, 11, 10. Breathing. <sup>16</sup> |
| (3) "         | 7, 8, 9 from 9, 8, 7. Tumult.                            |
| (4) "         | 10, 11, 12 from 6, 5, 4. Tension.                        |
| (5) "         | 13 from 3. Disease.                                      |
| (6) "         | 14, 15, 16 from 2, 1, 28. The world.                     |
| (7) "         | 17, 18, 19, 20 from 27, 26, 25, 24. Sorrow.              |
| (8) "         | 21, 22, 23 from 23, 22, 21. Ambition.                    |
| (9) "         | 24 from 20. Success.                                     |
| (10) "        | 25, 26, 27 from 19, 18, 17. Absorption.                  |
- (AVB 101–2; cf. CW13 31; AVA 35)

The irregular division of phases in the ten sections (for *Creative Mind* above) is repeated identically for the sections of *Body of Fate*. In general, there is a correlation between the descriptors and the discussion of the *Body of Fate* in “The Twenty-eight Incarnations,” although the use of a single word to describe the *Body of Fate* pertaining to four consecutive phases tends to vagueness. One problem common to the “General Character” of *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate* is that these *Faculties* are ascribed to Phase 15, during which both *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate* disappear. *Body of Fate* cannot “affect” Phase 15 because, in this phase, there is no such thing.

## II

Before examining the four *Faculties* as they operate within the tetrad of each phase, and within the quarters (and their two sets of three), it is appropriate to indicate the ways in which they are determined by the *Tinctures*. Yeats says: “The *primary* and *antithetical* define the inclination of the *Will*, and through the *Will* affect the other three...” (CW13 16–17; AVA 16). *Will* has both “direction and quality” (CW13 17; AVA 17). Quality refers simply to the amount of *primary* and *antithetical Tincture* at each phase. “The Two Directions” comprises the following:

Phase 1 to 15 is towards Nature.<sup>17</sup>

Phase 15 to 1 is towards God.

(AVB 104)

In his introduction to the *Tinctures*, Yeats says that “the objective cone is called that of the *primary Tincture* because whereas subjectivity...tends to separate man from man, objectivity brings us back to the mass where we begin” (AVB 72). Briefly, the *antithetical* energy, culminating at Phase 15, is towards the subordination of the world to the self, whereas the *primary* drive is towards the annihilation of self in favor of celestial, racial or natural authority: “The *primary* is that which serves, the *antithetical* is that which creates” (AVB 85; CW13 19; AVA 19). In its most pure form, the *antithetical Tincture* draws all creation into itself and lives in a self-created universe, whereas the *primary Tincture* abandons all identity and desire, and becomes featureless: “No description except complete plasticity” (AVB 183; CW13 94; AVA 116). Whereas Phase 15 is all self, Phase 1 is all void.

Dramatizing the *Tinctures*, Yeats offers an image of *antithetical* being in terms of the *Commedia dell’Arte*:

When I wish for some general idea which will describe the Great Wheel as an individual life I go to the *Commedia dell’Arte* or improvised drama of Italy. The stage-manager, or *Daimon*, offers his actor an inherited scenario, the *Body of Fate*, and a *Mask* or rôle as unlike as possible to his natural ego or *Will*, and leaves him to improvise through his *Creative Mind* the dialogue and details of the plot. He must discover or reveal a being which only exists with extreme effort, when his muscles are as it were all taut and all his energies active. But this is *antithetical* man. (AVB 83–84)

On the previous page, Yeats defines the *Daimon* as “the ultimate self of that man” (AVB 83). During *antithetical* phases, *Will* and *Mask* are set against one another; *Body of Fate* is prescribed, and *Creative Mind* makes sense of the plot, adding dialogue and narrative structure. *Will* and *Mask* dominate *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate* respectively and to varying degrees, least successfully at Phases 9 and 21, most successfully at Phase 15. The desiring self and its compelling object of desire attempt to ignore and even obliterate the perceiving mind and the objects of its perception, with varying degrees of success, depending on the quarters.

The dramatization of *primary* being is as follows:

For *primary* man I go to the *Commedia dell’Arte* in its decline. The *Will* is weak and cannot create a rôle, and so, if it transform itself, does so after an accepted pattern, some traditional clown or pantaloon. It has perhaps no object but to move the crowd, and if it “gags” it is that there may be plenty of topical allusions. In the *primary* phases man must cease to desire *Mask* and Image by ceasing from self-expression, and substitute a motive of service for that of self-expression. Instead of the created *Mask* he has an imitative *Mask*; and when he recognizes this, his *Mask* may become the historical norm, or an image of mankind. (AVB 84)

After Phase 15, the *Mask* conceals the self, rather than reveals it.<sup>18</sup> The mind overrides the will. At the peak of the *primary Tincture*, the individual has no self-expression. At the peripheral *primary* phases (23 and 7), *Will* is permitted to choose a role, but this role is always from the public and for the public. The object of desire (the *Mask*) is taken from the norm rather than from a private compulsion. Insofar as *primary* man seeks at all, he

seeks the world as it is. In this quest, *primary* individuals are assisted by the *Body of Fate*. In a section entitled "Rule for Finding Body of Fate," Yeats offers the following information:

The *Body of Fate* of any particular phase is the effect of the whole nature of its *Body of Fate* phase upon that particular phase. As, however, the *Body of Fate* is always *primary* it is in sympathy with the *primary* phase while it opposes the *antithetical* phase; in this it is the reverse of the *Mask*, which is sympathetic to an *antithetical* phase but opposes a *primary*. (AVB 92)

*Antithetical* men have violent wills and "are in their intellect (*Creative Mind*) gentle" (AVB 84–85). The hatreds of *primary* men are "impersonal" and they are "violent in their intellect but gentle in themselves" (AVB 85). In the *antithetical* phases, the *Will* intrudes upon the world, whereas in the *primary* phases the mind asserts itself, performing analytical operations upon the world that will benefit the majority rather than the self.<sup>19</sup>

In the above discussion of the *Faculties*, mention has been made of free and enforced *Faculties*. In "Enforced and Free Faculties," the definitions are:

In *primary* phases the *Mask* and *Will* are enforced, the *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate* free.

In *antithetical* phases the *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate* are enforced and the *Mask* and *Will* free. (AVB 104)

Nevertheless, freedom is restrained or attenuated in almost all the phases, because the *Faculties*, both "free" and "enforced," form a single whole. Freedom occurs within the constraints of contextual enforcement, with the exception of Phases 1 and 15, during which the "enforced" *Faculties* are stripped entirely of their capacity to restrain or contain the "free" *Faculties*, which now operate without boundary or imposition.

During Phase 15, *Will* and *Creative Mind* both occupy Phase 15, while *Mask* and *Body of Fate* occupy Phase 1. Because the *antithetical Tinctures* dominate during *antithetical* phases, "*Creative Mind* is dissolved in the *Will* and the *Body of Fate* in the *Mask*" (AVB 135; CW13 58; AVA 69). The effects of this dissolution of the *primary Faculties* are profound. Thinking becomes an end in itself. Contemplation is always and automatically directed to the object of desire. Moreover, the world (*Body of Fate*) has collapsed into the *Mask*, resulting in "a world where every beloved image has bodily form, and every bodily form is loved" (AVB 136; CW13 59; AVA 70). The mind and the world serve only to reflect and express the self and its desires. There is nothing outside of this circle of self: "effort and attainment are indistinguishable" (AVB 135; CW13 58; AVA 69–70). Beings of Phase 15 are discarnate, because incarnation requires conflict between the *Tinctures*. The discarnate world of the spirit at Phase 15 is entirely of its own making. Whatever is imagined by the *Will* becomes the exterior world, because the *Body of Fate* has been absorbed by the *Mask*.

During Phase 1, *Will* and *Creative Mind* both occupy Phase 1, while *Mask* and *Body of Fate* occupy Phase 15.<sup>20</sup> *Will* has been absorbed into *Creative Mind*; *Mask* has been absorbed into *Body of Fate*. The activity of thinking does not emanate from individuality, it does not reflect individuality and it is not in the service of an individual. *Will* has been obliterated. There is no individual achievement, no individual success or blame: "The images of mind are no

longer irrelevant even, for there is no longer anything to which they can be relevant, and acts can no longer be immoral or stupid, for there is no one there that can be judged" (AVB 183; CW13 94; AVA 116). *Body of Fate* absorbs *Mask*, so the object of desire is obliterated in favor of fact. Desire gives way wholly to perception. There is only a knower and a known or, rather, a capacity for knowing, since there is no individual knower. In the absence of *Will*, there is no self. This phase is discarnate because all notions of selfhood have been relinquished in favor of dissolution into the material and celestial worlds. The individual mind and body have become "this plasticity, this liquefaction, or pounding up" (AVB 183; CW13 94; AVA 117).

Phases 8 and 22 are crucial phases because there is a special coincidence of the *Faculties*. During Phase 8, *Will* and *Body of Fate* are at Phase 8, while *Mask* and *Creative Mind* are at Phase 22.<sup>21</sup> During Phase 22, the reverse configuration occurs: *Will* and *Creative Mind* are at Phase 22, while *Mask* and *Creative Mind* are at Phase 8. No longer constituted by four interlocking elements, the individual now comprises two opposed pairs, which effectively split the individual. Yeats says of Phase 8: "The union of *Creative Mind* and *Mask* in opposition to *Body of Fate* and *Will*, intensifies this struggle by dividing the nature into halves which have no interchange of qualities" (AVB 118; CW13 44–45; AVA 51). This state of equal and opposite force results in a struggle for dominance. Phase 8 may be described as the battle for control of the *Mask*:

At Phase 8 is the "Beginning of Strength," its embodiment in sensuality. The imitation that held it to the enforced *Mask*, the norm of the race now a hated convention, has ceased and its own norm has not begun. *Primary* and *antiithetical* are equal and fight for mastery; and when this fight is ended through the conviction of weakness and the preparation for rage, the *Mask* becomes once more voluntary. (AVB 85; cf. CW13 19; AVA 19–20)

Having asserted a fragile control over *Creative Mind*, *Will* conceives of individual desires, and creates its *Mask* according to its own taste, rather than from convention (*Body of Fate*). The man of Phase 8 "chooses himself and not his Fate" (AVB 119; CW13 45; AVA 52). During the *primary* phases, the *Mask* has been enforced by the insistence of the *Creative Mind* that the object of desire must derive from the norm. The *Creative Mind* thus harnesses the *Mask* for its own purposes. During Phase 8, the *Will* is "forced to recognise the weakness of the *Creative Mind* when unaided by the *Mask*, and so to permit the *enforced Mask* to change into the free" (AVB 117; cf. CW13 44; AVA 50). The difficulty is to find a *Mask* that defies norms, facts and circumstances, one that is the product only of individual desire. But the man of Phase 8, balanced between individuality and race, "is suspended; he is without bias,<sup>22</sup> and until bias comes, till he has begun groping for strength within his own being, his thought and his emotion bring him to judgment but they cannot help" (AVB 118–20; CW13 45; AVA 52). This is the phase of "greatest possible weakness" (AVB 119; CW13 45; AVA 52). Only the true *Mask*, "Courage," and the true *Creative Mind*, "Versatility," can assist in resolving the "greatest possible conflict," in order to "make the greatest possible change," from the *primary* to the *antiithetical Tincture*.

At Phase 22, the outcome of the battle between "ambition and contemplation" is a quiet defeat, as the chosen *Mask* is one of "self-immolation" (AVB 157; CW13 75; AVA 91). The reason for this choice is clear: "Once balance has been reached, the aim must

be to use the *Body of Fate* to deliver the *Creative Mind* from the *Mask*, and not to use the *Creative Mind* to deliver the *Mask* from the *Body of Fate*" (AVB 158; CW13 75; AVA 92). The mind must gain ascendance over the object of desire, by focusing attention upon the world of fact and circumstance rather than the ideal or the imagined. The "*Will*, engaged in its last struggle with external fact (*Body of Fate*), must submit, until it sees itself as inseparable from nature perceived as fact..." (AVB 158; CW13 75; AVA 92). Perhaps Phase 22 is less traumatic than Phase 8 because it is a submission to norm and fact, whereas Phase 8 involves a supreme effort of will to overcome norm and fact. *Will* and *Mask* can no longer sustain themselves internally, and thus submit to externality: "the mind exhausts all knowledge within its reach and sinks exhausted to a conscious futility" (AVB 160; CW13 77; AVA 94). In the process of moving from Phase 15 to Phase 22, *Will* has shifted far from *Creative Mind* and discovers proximity to *Body of Fate*, finding joy in the direct apprehension of the physical world: "as the *Will* moves further from the *Creative Mind*, it approaches the *Body of Fate*, and with this comes an increasing delight in impersonal energy and in inanimate objects" (AVB 162–63; CW13 79; AVA 96). There is thus "no longer a *Will*, as distinct from the process of nature seen as fact" (AVB 163; CW13 79; AVA 97). *Will* and the world are one; the self identifies with its surroundings. *Mask* and *Creative Mind* (both at Phase 8) are fused: thinking and desiring become a single act, neither of them under the control of the *Will*. In their combination, the operation of the mind becomes desirable, and desire becomes an intellectual matter: "Intellect knows itself as its own object of desire" (AVB 163; CW13 79; AVA 97) and life "becomes an act of contemplation" (AVB 163; CW13 79; AVA 96).

### III

The *Tinctures* effectively divide the Wheel into two parts (Phases 8–22 and 22–8). Yeats makes other divisions, the most frequent and sustained of which is the division into four quarters: "Excluding the four phases of crisis (Phases 8, 22, 15, 1) each quarter consists of six phases, or of two sets of three" (AVB 92–93; CW13 22; AVA 23). These sets comprise Phases 2–4 and 5–7 (first quarter), Phases 9–11 and 12–14 (second quarter), Phases 16–18 and 19–21 (third quarter) and Phases 23–25 and 26–28 (fourth quarter). Each of the *Faculties* dominates a quarter of the Wheel: "The *Will* is strongest in the first quarter, *Mask* in second, *Creative Mind* in third, and *Body of Fate* in fourth" (AVB 93; cf. CW13 22; AVA 24). In the "Four Conditions of the Will," Yeats offers the following:

First quarter.	Instinctive.
Second [quarter.]	Emotional.
Third [quarter.]	Intellectual.
Fourth [quarter.]	Moral.

(AVB 102; CW13 32; AVA 36)

Taken together, the above two quotations provide structure for the Wheel in terms of the *Faculties*. To reiterate, Yeats says of *Will*: "When not affected by the other *Faculties* it has neither emotion, morality nor intellectual interest, but knows how things are done, how windows open and shut, how roads are crossed, everything that we call utility" (AVB 82–

83). Thus, in the first quarter, *Will* dominates and its powers and capacities are instinctive. In the second quarter, *Mask* dominates, and the “Condition of the *Will*” is thus passionate and emotional, having been infused with desire. In the third quarter, *Creative Mind* dominates, and the *Will* is thus predominantly intellectual, creating systems of understanding. In the fourth quarter, *Body of Fate* dominates. It must be remembered that the *Body of Fate* comprises not only the exterior world of fact and circumstance, but also the celestial realm. Thus, in the fourth quarter, *Will* is principally moral, having been increasingly drawn beyond itself, and beyond even the phenomenal world, to the ultimate reality.

The “Four Conditions of the *Will*” is followed by the “Four Conditions of the *Mask*”:

First quarter.	Intensity (affecting third quarter).
Second [quarter.]	Tolerance (affecting fourth quarter).
Third quarter.	Convention or systematization (affecting first quarter).
Fourth [quarter.]	Self-analysis (affecting second quarter).

(AVB 102–3; cf. CW13 32; AVA 36)

The condition of the *Mask* in each quarter affects the opposite quarter; the *Mask* is always in opposition to the *Will*. Thus, the first “Condition of the *Mask*” to be discussed derives from the third quarter, affecting the first quarter, and is “Convention or systematization.” In the first quarter, the *Mask* functions to awaken the incarnated spirit to independent existence. The actions of the recently incarnated spirit are instinctive, conventional (conforming to the norms of race) and automatic, and the task of the first quarter is to establish separate identity: “Instinctive automatism *preserves* the race element. The *Mask* from 1 to 8 separates ego from race. (CF A5; YVP3 230). The *Will* is not yet comfortable with the notion of subjectivity, and thus avoids it in the early phases: “In 2 3 4 it fears approaching subjectivity consequent forcing inward of mind” (CF M6; YVP3 334). In spite of fear, however, the *Will* is compelled to seek subjectivity. During *primary* phases, the *Mask* is always enforced but, in this instance, it is enforced by the *Will*: “Mask 1 to 8 enforced by ego itself” (CF M7; YVP3 334). The “Condition of the *Mask*” affecting the second quarter is “self-analysis.” In the Card File, Yeats writes: “[Mask from] Fourth. *analysis* because ‘of realization of the objective world’” (CF F2; YVP3 302). The *Mask* during this second quarter is voluntary. One might infer, from the drive to pure and complete subjectivity, that self-knowledge (or “self-analysis”) is as important as self-creation. This is confirmed in the following entry in the *Vision* Notebooks: “The *Primary* on one side is that which is purely instinctive & having will & no thought; it has tradition & experience. On the other side it is the deliberate attempt of the Nature to avoid complexity & self analysis” (VNB1, p. 42; YVP3 159). The *primary* “Nature” (that is, self or intrinsic qualities)<sup>23</sup> seeks to avoid “complexity and self analysis.” It follows that the *antithetical* self seeks such “self analysis” in order to create the perfect self-enclosed circle of selfhood. The reference to the “objective world” in the Card File may be more difficult to explain.

In the Card File, Yeats explains that, for the purely *antithetical* being to hold an idea, an external reference point is necessary: “An idea is a concrete intellectual effort made to synthesise an objective object. Therefore an idea cannot exist at 15. The spirit at 15 has to put the man in relation to the object in order that he shall obtain the idea” (CF I8; YVP3 324). Why should it be necessary for *antithetical* incarnations to have ideas at all?

Subjective phases, in the quest for self-analysis, engage also in self-judgment and, for this, they require thought, and thought is possible only by means of external referents. The following extract from the automatic script (involving Erontius as the control) provides some elucidation:

18. In subjective phases we understand others by feeling, & in objective by thought.

18. Yes

19. In subjective phases we understand our selves by thought in objective phases we understand our selves by feeling.

19. No it is more correct to say in subjective phases we judge ourselves by thought & in objective phases we judge ourselves by what we think we feel

(YVP2 32)

Curiously, while the perfectly subjective self is all-absorbed in itself, it requires a shift outside itself, to the objective world, in order to understand itself. As with navigation, the lonely seafarer employs external reference points in order to situate him/herself.

The “Condition of the Mask” affecting the third quarter is “Intensity.” The Card File specifies: “Mask from First Quarter *intensity* from ‘realization of life apart from objective world’” (CF F2; YVP3 302). The *Mask* is voluntary. The *antithetical* incarnation has now turned away from the “objective world” as a means of self-understanding, and employs the mind and its capacity for rational analysis: the “Condition of the Will” in the third quarter is “Intellectual.”

The “Condition of the Mask” affecting the fourth quarter is “Tolerance.” The *Mask* is enforced by the *Creative Mind*,<sup>24</sup> thus ensuring that the object of desire is an intellectual understanding of external reality, both corporeal and celestial. The self is regarded with some suspicion: “Before 1 it fears knowledge of the self” (CF M6; YVP3 334). Instead, the dissolving self would rather contemplate and revere an external figure: “In objectives when ego ceases to desire Mask it is changed into Christ image” (CF M9; YVP3 334).

In the automatic script, mention is made of the “Automatic Faculty.” Its operation is described as follows:

1. Whence comes the momentum that drives the automatic faculty

1. from the action of the pf [Persona of Fate = *Body of Fate*] on the creative genius [*Creative Mind*] – the greater the strength of the pf the more does the automatic faculty take possession of the cg – The cg should use the auto[matic] faculty & not be used by it. (YVP2 42)

In simple terms, when the Automatic Faculty dominates, the exterior environment dictates to the interpreting mind, and the individual becomes passive and “automatic.” In the quarters, the Automatic Faculty works in these ways:

2 to 8 instinctive (protects growth)

8 to 15 imitative (imitates mask)

15 to 22 creative

22 to 28 obedient (imitates environment) (CF A36; *YVP3* 242)

In *A Vision*, this appears as the “Four Automatonisms”:

First quarter.	Instinctive.
Second [quarter.]	Imitative.
Third [quarter.]	Creative.
Fourth [quarter.]	Obedient.

(*AVB* 102; *CW13* 32; *AVA* 36)

Yeats describes the action of Automatonism as a pause in the struggle that defines the interaction of the *Faculties*, and thus incarnation. The *Faculties* briefly “refuse that struggle” and “need Automatonism as a rest” (*AVB* 95; cf. *CW13* 24; *AVA* 26).

The four quarters can be described in other ways that shed light on the *Faculties*. A combination of the “Elemental Attributions” (*AVB* 103; *CW13* 33; *AVA* 36) and “The Four Contests of the Antithetical Within Itself”<sup>25</sup> results in the following table:

Quarters	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Elements	Earth	Water	Air	Fire
Contests	with body	with heart	with mind	with soul

The elements and contests correspond to instinct (dominated by *Will* in the first quarter), emotion (dominated by *Mask* in the second quarter), intellect (dominated by *Creative Mind* in the third quarter) and transcendence (dominated by *Body of Fate* in the fourth quarter).

#### IV

We now turn attention to the operation of the *Faculties* as they occur in individual phases. Various phases will be chosen to illustrate this operation. In “The Table of the Four Faculties,” Yeats specifies the necessary character of each *Faculty* at each of the phases. The *Faculties*, as they occur at Phase 2 (*AVB* 96; *CW13* 27; *AVA* 30) are shown below:

WILL	MASK	CREATIVE MIND	BODY OF FATE
Beginning of energy	<i>True.</i> Illusion <sup>26</sup> <i>False.</i> Delusion	<i>True.</i> Physical Ac- tivity <i>False.</i> Cunning	Enforced love of the world

This information may mislead the reader. These are not the *Faculties* pertaining to an individual incarnated at Phase 2. Such an individual will have only *Will* at Phase 2. *Mask* will be from Phase 16, *Creative Mind* from Phase 28, and *Body of Fate* from Phase 14. Thus, a person at Phase 2 will have the following *Faculties*.<sup>27</sup>

WILL	MASK	CREATIVE MIND	BODY OF FATE
Beginning of energy (Ph 2)	<i>True.</i> Player on Pan's Pipes (Ph 16) <i>False.</i> Fury (Ph 16)	<i>True.</i> Hope (Ph 28) <i>False.</i> Fury (Ph 28)	None except monotony (Ph 14)

Persons of Phase 2 will be dominated by the *primary Faculties*, namely, *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*. *The Body of Fate*, derived from Phase 14, described as “None except monotony,” allows the mind to withdraw into itself. The *Will* is “Instinctive” (see the “Conditions of the Will” above) and the first quarter is dominated by the body, so the *Creative Mind* will gravitate towards contemplating the deepest parts of the nature of the self—instinct or the knowledge of the body. Yeats says of the person of Phase 2:

...he uses the *Body of Fate* to clear the intellect of the influence of the *Mask*. He frees himself from emotion; and the *Body of Fate*, derived from Phase 14, pushes back the mind into its own supersensual impulse, until it grows obedient to all that recurs; and the *Mask*, now entirely *enforced*, is a rhythmical impulse. He gives himself up to Nature....

(*AVB* 106; cf. *CW13* 35; *AVA* 39)

The *Mask* is not chosen but “enforced,” which is precisely how it should be during a *primary* phase. The *Mask* desires concealment, and prefers “transcendent intoxication” (*AVB* 107; *CW13* 36; *AVA* 40). The object of desire is the inner nature of the self: “The bodily instincts, subjectively perceived, become the cup wreathed with ivy” (*AVB* 107; *CW13* 36; *AVA* 40). This brief introduction to Phase 2 is intended to show the operation of the *Tinctures* during a strong *primary* phase. The corresponding *antithetical* phase, Phase 16, will now briefly be discussed, to provide symmetry to the discussion.<sup>28</sup>

Phase 16 is described as “The Positive Man” (*AVB* 137; *CW13* 60; *AVA* 71). The *Faculties* are as follows:

WILL	MASK	CREATIVE MIND	BODY OF FATE
The Positive Man (Ph 16)	<i>True.</i> Illusion (Ph 2) <i>False.</i> Delusion (Ph 2)	<i>True.</i> Vehemence (Ph 14) <i>False.</i> Opinionated will (Ph 14)	Enforced Illusion (Ph 28)

Geometrically, the *Faculties* from Phase 2 have swapped places. *Will* (at 2 in the previous example) is now at 16, while *Mask* (previously at 16) is now at 2. *Creative Mind* (previously at 28) is now at 14, while *Body of Fate* (previously at 14) is now at 28. The *Will* at Phase 16 has emerged from perfect *antithetical* existence, “the still trance of Phase 15” (*AVB* 138; *CW13* 60; *AVA* 72), and “is itself a violent scattering energy.” The *Mask*, from Phase 2 (whose *Will* is described as “Beginning of Energy,” or the earliest emergence of self) is thus described as “the Child” (*AVB* 137; *CW13* 60; *AVA* 72), and the object of

desire is thus “the child’s toy” (*AVB* 137; *CW13* 60; *AVA* 72). The *primary Faculties* are at their weakest or least developed. Thus, the intellect or reasoning capacity (*Creative Mind*) is at its “most narrow” (*AVB* 137; *CW13* 60; *AVA* 72) while the exterior world or *Body of Fate* (from the phase of the Fool) is itself an illusion. The result of these *primary* deficiencies is that “sense of fact is an impossibility” (*AVB* 137; *CW13* 60; *AVA* 72). The wild, disordered energy of the self and its childlike desire are thus almost completely severed from reality. The “excitement, and this dream, are both illusions” (*AVB* 137; cf. *CW13* 60; *AVA* 72). The third quarter on the Wheel is dominated by *Creative Mind* but, because *Creative Mind* is so weakly developed at Phase 16, the operation of the intellect is minimal. At best, individuals of this phase can manage to employ the intellect “to disengage the aimless child” (the compelling *Mask*) so that the self “surrounds itself with some fairyland, some mythology of wisdom or laughter” (*AVB* 137–38; *CW13* 60; *AVA* 72). Phase 2 is the first phase after pure *primary* being, while Phase 16 is the first phase after pure *antithetical* being. Their *Faculties* are reversed: *Will* of one is *Mask* of the other; *Mask* of one is *Will* of the other; *Creative Mind* of one is *Body of Fate* of the other, and *Body of Fate* of one is *Creative Mind* of the other. This complementarity of the *Faculties* creates complex interrelationships within the Wheel.

Moreover, each phase has a second kind of complementary relationship with another phase. For example, Phase 16 is not only contrasted to Phase 2 (its opposite number in the *primary* phases) but also to Phase 14, as Phases 14 and 16 occupy symmetrical positions relative to Phase 15, the discarnate phase of pure *antithetical* being. The complementarity of Phases 16 and 14 is precisely the opposite of the complementarity of Phases 16 and 2. The *Faculties* are reversed in another way: the *Will* of Phase 16 is the *Creative Mind* of Phase 14 (and vice versa) while the *Mask* of Phase 16 is the *Body of Fate* of Phase 14 (and vice versa). Yeats describes this complementarity as follows:

Phase 16 is in contrast to Phase 14, in spite of their resemblance of extreme subjectivity, in that it has a *Body of Fate* from the phase of the Fool, a phase of absorption, and its *Mask* from what might have been called the phase of the Child, a phase of aimless energy, of physical life for its own sake; whereas Phase 14 had its *Body of Fate* from the phase of the Child and its *Mask* from that of the Fool.

(*AVB* 137; cf. *CW13* 60; *AVA* 72)

For the same reasons, complementarity must exist between Phases 2 and 28. Thus, these four phases can be shown to be intricately interwoven. The table below indicates the phase of each of the *Faculties* in these four phases:

Phase	<i>Will</i>	<i>Mask</i>	<i>Creative Mind</i>	<i>Body of Fate</i>
<b>28</b>	28	14	2	16
<b>2</b>	2	16	28	14
<b>16</b>	16	2	14	28
<b>14</b>	14	28	16	2

These four phases, composed of a combination of *Faculties* deriving from the same four phases on the Wheel, provide a great deal of internal coherence and structure to the Wheel. There are five other such groups of phases with the same correspondences:<sup>29</sup>

<b>Phase</b>	<i>Will</i>	<i>Mask</i>	<i>Creative Mind</i>	<i>Body of Fate</i>
<b>3</b>	3	17	27	13
<b>17</b>	17	3	13	27
<b>13</b>	13	27	17	3
<b>27</b>	27	13	3	17

<b>4</b>	4	18	26	12
<b>18</b>				

1	1	15	1	15
15	15	1	15	1

The interior structure of the Wheel relies thus on six sets of four phases and two sets of two phases. A close analysis of the construction and operation of each of these sets would go far towards demonstrating the extent and nature of the connections and symmetries, but is beyond the scope of this essay.

## V

We now turn attention to “True and False Mask” and “True and False Creative Mind.”<sup>30</sup> At the end of the explanation of “Rules for Discovering True and False Masks” Yeats offers the following information:

*In an antithetical phase the being seeks by the help of the Creative Mind to deliver the Mask from Body of Fate.*

*In a primary phase the being seeks by the help of the Body of Fate to deliver the Creative Mind from the Mask.*

(AVB 91; CW13 20; AVA 21)

These are the simple rules concerning *Masks*. In order to determine True and False *Masks*, Yeats explains as follows:

*When the Will is in antithetical phases the True Mask is the effect of Creative Mind of opposite phase upon that phase; and the False Mask is the effect of Body of Fate of opposite phase upon that phase.*

(AVB 90; CW13 19–20; AVA 20)

Yeats uses Phase 17 to illustrate the principle:

The True *Mask* of Phase 17, for instance, is “Simplification through intensity,” derived from Phase 3, modified by the *Creative Mind* of that phase, which is described as “Simplicity” and comes from Phase 27, which is that of the Saint.

(AVB 90; cf. CW13 19–20; AVA 20)

This explanation complicates matters. The *Mask* of Phase 17 derives from Phase 3. When Yeats says that True *Mask* is “modified by the *Creative Mind* of that phase,” he refers not to the *Creative Mind* of a person of Phase 17 (that is, *Creative Mind* at Phase 13), but to the *Creative Mind* of a person of Phase 3, which is at Phase 27, and is described as “Simplicity.” This introduces a new feature of the interaction of the *Faculties* in Yeats’s system. Until this point in *A Vision B*, our basic understanding of a phase is that each of the four pertinent *Faculties* affects each of the others, and this combination of forces (comprising oppositions and discords) defines the phase. However, in the determination of True and False *Mask*, the incarnation is affected by *Faculties* beyond the principal four. The *Faculties*

of Phase 17 are: *Will* at 17, *Mask* at 3, *Creative Mind* at 13 and *Body of Fate* at 27. The True *Mask* of Phase 17, however, is determined not by the *Creative Mind* appropriate to Phase 17 (which is at Phase 13) but to the opposite phase—namely, *Will* at Phase 3—which has *Creative Mind* at Phase 27. Yeats's explanation makes it clear that, in addition to the prescribed *Creative Mind* of Phase 17—namely, that of Phase 13—the *Creative Mind* of Phase 27 is also operative on the *Mask* of Phase 17. Similarly, the False *Mask* of Phase 17 derives from the influence of *Body of Fate* from the opposite phase, namely Phase 3, whose appropriate *Body of Fate* is at Phase 13. The table below is intended to clarify matters:

Phase	<i>Will</i>	<i>Mask</i>	<i>Creative Mind</i>	<i>Body of Fate</i>
17	17	3	13	27
3	3	17	27	13

The True *Mask* of a person at Phase 17 is determined by the *Creative Mind* at Phase 27. The False *Mask* of the same person is determined by the *Body of Fate* at Phase 13. The diagram above indicates that, in effect, identifying True and False *Masks*, is a matter of transposing *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*. Translated into conceptual terms, the True *Mask* of Phase 17 requires the operation of an intellect that is located precisely at the position of the exterior world of that phase. In short, the knower must resemble the known. Conversely, during the False *Mask* of Phase 17, the known must take on the form of the knower.<sup>31</sup>

The above discussion, and the rules offered by Yeats, pertains only to *antithetical* phases. The rules for *primary* phases can be derived by a simple substitution of terms. Whereas, in *antithetical* phases, True *Mask* involves the “*effect of Creative Mind of opposite phase upon that phase*,” in *primary* phases, True *Mask* involves the “*effect of Body of Fate of opposite phase upon that phase*” (AVB 90; cf. CW13 20; AVA 21). Employing this same principle of substitution, the False *Mask* of *primary* phases involves the “*effect of Creative Mind of opposite phase upon that phase*.” In summary, in the True *Mask* of *primary* phases, the known must take on the form of the knower, while in the False *Mask* of *primary* phases, the knower must resemble the known.

Turning to True and False *Creative Mind*, if rules of substitution (similar to those above) were to apply, we would find that the operative *Faculties* would be *Will* and *Mask* (just as, in the determination of True and False *Mask*, the operative *Faculties* are *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*). However, to complicate matters further, such a pattern does not apply. Yeats states the rule as follows:

*When the Will is in antithetical phases the True Creative Mind is derived from the Creative Mind phase, modified by the Creative Mind of that phase; while the False Creative Mind is derived from the Creative Mind phase, modified by the Body of Fate of that phase.* (AVB 91; cf. CW13 21; AVA 22)

The rule for True and False *Creative Mind* is thus entirely different to the rule for True and False *Mask*. The *Creative Mind* of Phase 17, as indicated in the above table, derives from Phase 13. The True *Creative Mind* of this phase results from the influence of the *Creative*

*Mind* of the phase from which the *Creative Mind* of Phase 17 itself derives. The *Creative Mind* of a person of Phase 17 derives from Phase 13. In turn, the *Creative Mind* of Phase 13 derives from Phase 17. This *Creative Mind* from Phase 17 “modifies” the *Creative Mind* of Phase 13 to create the True *Creative Mind* appropriate to a person of Phase 17. We observe that, in effect, the “modifier” derives from the same Phase as the *Will* of that phase, namely, Phase 17. Thus, the knower must resemble the ego in the creation of True *Creative Mind* in *antithetical* phases.

False *Creative Mind* (in *antithetical* phases) involves the influence of the *Body of Fate* from the phase of the *Creative Mind*. In Phase 17, *Creative Mind* is from Phase 13. The *Body of Fate* of a person of Phase 13 is from Phase 3. So, the *Body of Fate* from Phase 3 “modifies” the *Creative Mind* from Phase 13 in order to create False *Creative Mind* of a person of Phase 17. This modifier derives from the same phase as the *Mask* of a person at Phase 17 (namely, Phase 3) and we can thus conclude that, in effect, the knower must resemble the object of desire in the creation of False *Creative Mind*. These are the rules pertaining to *antithetical* phases.

During *primary* phases, the rule is as follows:

*When the Will is in primary phases the True Creative Mind is derived from the Creative Mind phase, modified by the Body of Fate of that phase; while the False Creative Mind is derived from the Creative Mind phase modified by the False Creative Mind of that phase. (AVB 92; CW13 21; cf. AVA 22)*

The simple rule of substitution applies here. The *Creative Mind* of a person of Phase 27 (to employ Yeats’s own example in AVB 92) derives from Phase 3. The *Body of Fate* of that Phase derives from Phase 13. This *Body of Fate* from Phase 13 “modifies” the *Creative Mind* of Phase 3 to create the True *Creative Mind* appropriate to a person of Phase 27 (and other *primary* phases). We observe that, in effect, this “modifier” derives from the same phase of the *Mask* of that phase, namely Phase 13. Thus, the knower must resemble the object of desire in the creation of True *Creative Mind* for *primary* phases.

False *Creative Mind* (in *primary* phases) involves the influence of the False *Creative Mind* from the phase of the *Creative Mind*. In Phase 27, *Creative Mind* is from Phase 3. The *Creative Mind* of a person of Phase 3 is from Phase 27. So the *Creative Mind* from Phase 27 “modifies” the *Creative Mind* of Phase 3 to create the False *Creative Mind* appropriate to a person of Phase 27 (and other *primary* phases). In effect, this “modifier” derives from the same phase as the *Will* of a person of Phase 27. Thus the knower must resemble the ego or the desiring self in order to create False *Creative Mind*. In this final rule concerning True and False *Creative Mind*, Yeats specifies that the “modifier” derives not simply from the *Creative Mind*, but from the “False *Creative Mind*” of Phase 27. One realizes that in the prior rules, no such specificity was given. One may conclude that False *Creative Mind* modifies False *Mask* or False *Creative Mind*, whereas True *Creative Mind* modifies True *Mask* or True *Creative Mind*. If this conclusion is correct, then Yeats should have made this clear in the previous rules. Thus, in the rule for discovering the True *Mask* in *antithetical* phases, the phrase “*the effect of Creative Mind of opposite phase upon that phase*” (AVB 90; CW13 19; AVA 20) should read “*the effect of True Creative Mind of opposite phase upon that phase.*” In the rule for discovering the False *Mask* in *primary* phases, the

phrase “*the effect of Creative Mind of opposite phase upon that phase*” (AVB 90; cf. CW13 20; AVA 21) should read “*the effect of False Creative Mind of opposite phase upon that phase.*” In the rule for discovering the True *Creative Mind* in *antithetical* phases, the phrase “*modified by the Creative Mind of that phase*” (AVB 91; CW13 21; AVA 22) should read “*modified by the True Creative Mind of that phase.*”

The appropriateness of these proposed clarifications is perhaps supported by the “Defects of False *Creative Mind* which Bring the False *Mask*,” presented in “Table of the Quarters” as follows:

First quarter.	Sentimentality.
Second [quarter.]	Brutality (desire for root facts of life).
Third [quarter.]	Hatred.
Fourth [quarter.]	Insensitiveness.

(AVB 103; CW13 33; AVA 36)

This tetrad is somewhat mysterious, in that it is given no explanation or supporting discussion in *A Vision*. However, a series of questions and answers in the automatic script provides some elucidation:

7. Can you give any general definition of the evil as distinguished from the creative genius.
7. Separative of the four faculties
8. Does it for instance separate PF & CG
8. It separates each from the other – mask from cg – cg from pf – pf from mask & so on
9. By acting on what human quality does it separate PF & CG.
9. Repeat slowly  
Yes [GY, later] (Separation CG. From P.F)  
Varies in every quarter – your quarter hatred – first quarter sentimentality—  
2nd quarter a form of brutality (word later) – 4th insensitiveness
10. By what quality does it separate mask & ego
10. insincerity always (Mask & Ego)
11. How does it separate Mask and C.G
11. Sterilisation (Mask & CG)
12. PF & Mask
12. emulation (PF & Mask)
13. PF & Ego?
13. That is individual (PF & Ego)

14. Ego and CG?  
 14. by accentuating pf (Ego & Cg)
15. Which is most important.  
 15. insincerity
16. How does insincerity separate Mask & Ego  
 16. That you can work out quite easily
17. How does hatred separate PF and CG  
 17. by mutilating power of cg to overcome pf & absorb it – now all these can you work out in talk
18. Can you define the brutality more clearly.  
 18. desire for root facts life as it is

(YVP2 134–35)<sup>32</sup>

The “evil genius” or False *Creative Mind* functions to separate the *Faculties* from each other, thereby disrupting their proper function. The passage above indicates that the “Defects of False *Creative Mind* which bring the False *Mask*” are specifically related to the separation of *Creative Mind* from *Body of Fate* (answer 9). This is confirmed in a footnote to the “Defects”: “In *primary* phases these defects separate *Mask* from *Body of Fate*, in *antithetical*, *Creative Mind* from *Body of Fate*” (AVB 103; CW13 33; cf. AVA 36). In *primary* phases, the separation between *Mask* and *Body of Fate* is not given its own tetrad of descriptors and is described only as “emulation” (answer 12). And there is no explanation of the process whereby other combinations of *Faculties* are separated. The quality that separates *Mask* from *Will* is “insincerity” (answer 10). A passage quoted earlier confirms this: “insincerity when mask is enforced – separates Mask & ego by making ego through fear of self knowledge choose evil Mask” (CF M6; YVP3 334). Thus, the rule of “insincerity” (or the separation between *Mask* and *Will*) is that it operates in the *primary* phases.<sup>33</sup> The quality that separates *Mask* from *Creative Mind* is “Sterilisation” (answer 11), and this is left unexplained. The topic of “defects” (and the separations they cause) is given uneven treatment in *A Vision* and bears further scrutiny.

The discussion in the pages above constitutes an attempt to explore, perhaps laboriously, the rules governing True and False *Mask*, as well as True and False *Creative Mind*. In order to understand what this entails on a practical level, it will be necessary to discuss the complexities of the *Faculties* in the context of each of the phases. Such discussion would be of the “flesh” rather than the “skeleton” of *A Vision*, and is beyond the scope of the present study.

Yeats says in *A Vision*:

Only long familiarity with the system can make the whole table of *Masks*, *Creative Minds*, etc.—see Sec. XII [“The Table of the Four Faculties”]—intelligible; it should be studied by the help of these two following rules:

*In an antithetical phase the being seeks by the help of the Creative Mind to deliver the Mask from Body of Fate.*

*In a primary phase the being seeks by the help of the Body of Fate to deliver the Creative Mind from the Mask. (AVB 91; cf. CW13 20; AVA 21)*

Here, amidst all the complex detail, is a pair of overarching principles. The goal of *antithetical* incarnation is to free the *Mask* from the restraints of materiality, and to do so, the *Creative Mind* is employed as a lever or a buffer. The mind mediates between desire and fact; if the mind can be harnessed by desire to serve its images, then the external environment lacks restraining power. The goal of *primary* incarnation is to free *Creative Mind* from its subordination to *Mask*, by offering an alternative and an adversary to the dreams of *Mask*, namely, the hard facts of the external world. Once the mind focuses on fact, dreams are relegated to obscurity, and the self submits to the authority of the natural and transcendent worlds.

The section immediately after “The Rules for Discovering True and False Masks” and “Rules for Finding the True and False Creative Mind” is Section VIII of Part II of Book I of *A Vision B*, “Rule for Finding Body of Fate”:

*The Body of Fate of any particular phase is the effect of the whole nature of its Body of Fate phase upon that particular phase. As, however, the Body of Fate is always primary it is in sympathy with the primary phase while it opposes the antithetical phase; in this it is the reverse of the Mask, which is sympathetic to an antithetical phase but opposes a primary. (AVB 92; CW13 22; AVA 23)*

The first statement suggests that when the *Body of Fate* operates on a phase, it brings with it the energies and propensities of all the *Faculties* of that phase (the “*Body of Fate* phase”). By way of illustration, during Phase 5, the *Body of Fate*, which derives from Phase 11, brings with it the influence of the *Will*, *Creative Mind* and *Mask* from Phase 13. These effects, complex and subtle, are not readily discernible in Yeats’s descriptions of the phases in Part III of Book 1 of *A Vision B*, “The Twenty-eight Incarnations.”<sup>34</sup>

## VI

To reiterate, each of the quarters is dominated by one of the *Faculties*: “The *Will* is strongest in the first quarter, *Mask* in second, *Creative Mind* in third, and *Body of Fate* in fourth” (AVB 93; cf. CW13 22; AVA 24). However, in response to the question, “Phases where Mask, CG, Etc should be predominant?” (YVP2 146), the control Thomas provides information (YVP2 551 n27) that can best be captured in the following table:

<i>Will</i>	<i>CM</i>	<i>Mask</i>	<i>Will</i>	<i>CM</i>	<i>BF</i>	<i>Mask</i>	<i>BF</i>	<i>Will</i>	<i>CM</i>	<i>BF</i>	<i>Mask</i>
2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10	11	12	13	14
16	17	18	19	20	21	23	24	25	26	27	28

The *Faculties* are allocated to pairs of phases that occupy opposed positions on the Great Wheel, and each *Faculty* dominates three pairs of phases, but there is otherwise no obvious regularity in the allocation of *Faculties* to phases, in that the allocation does not take

an obviously regular form, such as *Will/CM/Mask/BF* which is then repeated. However, if one divides the Wheel into the eight triads that comprise the quarters (2–4, 5–7, 9–11, 12–14, 16–18, 19–21, 23–25, 26–28) a pattern emerges. The first phase of each of the triads receives the following *Faculty*:

Triad	First Phase	<i>Faculty</i>	Second Phase	<i>Faculty</i>	Third Phase	<i>Faculty</i>
1	2	<i>Will</i>	3	<i>CM</i>	4	<i>Mask</i>
2	5	<i>Will</i>	6	<i>CM</i>	7	<i>BF</i>
3	9	<i>Mask</i>	10	<i>BF</i>	11	<i>Will</i>
4	12	<i>CM</i>	13	<i>BF</i>	14	<i>Mask</i>
5	16	<i>Will</i>	17	<i>CM</i>	18	<i>Mask</i>
6	19	<i>Will</i>	20	<i>CM</i>	21	<i>BF</i>
7	23	<i>Mask</i>	24	<i>BF</i>	25	<i>Will</i>
8	26	<i>CM</i>	27	<i>BF</i>	28	<i>Mask</i>

The pattern is *Will: Will: Mask: CM*. Other patterns emerge: the middle phase of the first and second triads is dominated by *Creative Mind*; the middle phase of the third and fourth triads is dominated by *Body of Fate*. The third phase in the triads receives the *Faculties* as follows: *Mask: BF: Will: Mask* in the first half of the Wheel, which is repeated in the second half of the Wheel. And if one assigns ‘A’ to *antithetical Faculties* and ‘P’ to *primary Faculties*, then the pattern of dominance in the first half of the wheel is APA APP APA APP, and this pattern is repeated in the second half of the wheel. What does such dominance mean? This is the question Yeats asks:

- 4. What does predominance of ego mean
  - 4. Intensification of opinion as the result of intensification of choice & free will
- The ego chooses his thought & opinion – he does not find himself compelled to it by his own nature. (YVP2 146)

From this brief explanation, it is clear that predominance of the *Will* entails an accentuation of the influence of the *Will* on the interaction of the *Faculties* in that phase. From this, one can reasonably extrapolate that in each phase, the “predominant” *Faculty* has an accentuated effect on the whole phase. In sets 3–6 (the *antithetical* sets) only six of the twelve phases are dominated by *antithetical Faculties*. Similarly, in sets 1–2 and 7–8 (the *primary* sets) only six of the twelve phases are dominated by *primary Faculties*. This complicates our understanding of the two halves, and the four quarters, of the wheel.

In conclusion, this essay has attempted to shed light on the meaning, structure and function of the *Faculties* in Yeats’s system. The *Tinctures* create the two fundamental and opposed energies, the broad playing field, whereas the *Faculties* create specificity. Each of the twenty-eight Phases is constituted by a unique combination of the *Faculties*, and this

combination is responsible for the unique character of each phase, both for individual incarnations and historical periods. Thus, a deep understanding of the *Faculties* should provide one, in turn, with the key, systematically and logically, to the construction of the exact character of each of the phases. The "Table of the Four Faculties," which provides the brief descriptions of the character of each of the phases, was communicated to Yeats in a single sitting, and is thus conveyed to Yeats rather than deduced from the *Faculties* in their phases and in their combination. One important and difficult task for future scholarship will be to bridge the gap between our understanding of each of the *Faculties* in each of the phases, and the descriptions of each composite phase in the "Table of the Four Faculties," thus bridging the conceptual understanding of the components, and the final, complex, distinctive, incarnated product. If successful, this will illustrate one of Yeats's most deeply held beliefs, namely, that the system is internally self-coherent, a system of meaning that is the logical outcome of the interplay of the basic building blocks. While the present study aims to show the development of the *Faculties* and their basic meaning within the Great Wheel, there is much that is at present poorly understood. Perhaps the most important point to have emerged is that a great deal more scholarly attention can be given to the *Faculties*.

### Notes

1. I wish to express grateful thanks to Neil Mann and Matthew Gibson for their extensive and careful comments on the draft of this essay.
2. In 'Version B' (*YVP4* 153) Michael Robartes suggests that the four suits of the Tarot "were derived through the Saracens from the Dance." As Robartes's story is a fiction, it is likely that the origin of the Four Royal Persons was from the Tarot Court cards.
3. I have excluded Phases 8 and 22 from either the *primary* or the *antithetical* because at these phases, the *Tinctures* are balanced, and neither *Tincture* dominates. The mechanics of these phases will be discussed below.
4. The "other 3" refer to *Mask*, *Creative Mind* (here, *Creative Genius*) and *Body of Fate* (here, *Persona of Fate*).
5. In the Card File, Yeats records: "Mask & CG = Destiny | Ego & PF = Fate" (CF F17; *YVP3* 306).
6. Desire need not have a singular object: "The stronger the desire the more numerous the mask images" (CF F22; *YVP3* 307).
7. The question that arises is, "How is desire formed?" Yeats tells us, enigmatically, that it is a product of the clash between the *primary* and *antithetical Tinctures*: "Mask: 'combination of phases & place of [sun] quite apart from individual'.... 'Formed by ego as result of conflict of sun & moon'" (VNB1, p. 52; *YVP3* 162–63).
8. Some key elements of this passage are summarized in the following entry in the Card File: "We can wear no mask but that of our phase but we can move or dance or even speak against Mask as we will. We can only modify mask in detail. It is used to unify [unify] detail. As a form of intensity it cannot be changed" (CF F20; *YVP3* 307).
9. My thanks to Neil Mann for alerting me to this quotation and others.
10. This is stated in "Enforced and Free Faculties" (*AVB* 104).
11. Ego = *Will*. CG = *Creative Genius* = *Creative Mind*. PF = *Persona of Fate* = *Body of Fate*. See note 4 above.
12. In *A Vision A* he suggests a possible reason that he evidently later considered unsatisfactory: "The relation of the Great Wheel and the Year is explained in Book II, and the makers of these tables may have had the old tenfold year in their minds" (*CW13* 31; *AVA* 34).
13. Thanks to Matthew Gibson for suggesting this formulation and "primordial"; see following page.
14. The body and all matter form part of the *Body of Fate*:
  1. Is the body part of the pf
    1. Yes
    2. Is matter part of the pf
  2. Yes (*YVP2* 354)

15. CG = Creative Genius = *Creative Mind*. PF = Persona of Fate = *Body of Fate*. See footnote 3 above.
  16. In the automatic script (*YVP2* 101–2) and the *Vision* Notebooks (VNB2, p. 34; *YVP3* 201), this is described as “Aspiration.”
  17. By “Nature,” Yeats means the essence of the individual being, and not the natural world.
  18. The control Thomas says, “Mask is that form which is created by passion to reveal or conceal individuality” (*YVP1* 262). After Phase 15, the *Mask* conceals, “for the being grows incoherent, vague and broken, as its intellect (*Creative Mind*) is more and more concerned with objects that have no relation to its unity but a relation to the unity of society or of material things known through the *Body of Fate*” (*AVB* 85). In the predominantly *primary* phases, the *Mask* comprises not the free images of its own desire, but of social, material and celestial necessity.
  19. Without wishing to complicate an already complex system, this description implies that during the *primary* phases, the *Creative Mind* acts very much like the *Will*, imposing its intellectual convictions on the world for its own good (Robespierre is cited as the example), whereas during the *antithetical* phases the *Will*, by creating its own universe, acts simultaneously as *Creative Mind*. By extrapolation, during the *antithetical* phases, the *Mask* imposes itself on the world to such a great degree that it becomes the world (or *Body of Fate*) whereas, during the *primary* phases, the *Body of Fate* demands attention, effacing the possibility of individually created objects of desire. Each of the two *Tinctures* takes on the function and identity of the other two *Tinctures*, to varying extents, either minimally or totally.
  20. See Diagram 6a.
  21. See Diagram 7a.
  22. “Bias” is a keyword for *Will*: “energy, or will or bias” (*AVB* 171; *CW13* 85; *AVA* 105).
  23. Clearly, “Nature” denotes personal nature or the self-created self. In “The Two Directions” (*AVB* 104), Yeats says: “Phase 1 to Phase 15 is towards Nature. Phase 15 to Phase 1 is towards God.”
  24. “Mask 22 to 1 enforced by CG” (CF M7; *YVP3* 334)
  25. In these contests, Yeats leaves one in no doubt as to who should win: “In the first quarter body should win, in second heart etc.” (*AVB* 102; *CW13* 32; *AVA* 35).
  26. Yeats distinguishes between True and False *Mask*, and True and False *Creative Mind*. These terms will be discussed below.
  27. The potential confusion arises from the fact that Yeats does not sufficiently highlight the distinction between, for example, the *Creative Mind* of a person at Phase 2 (which will be at Phase 28) and *Creative Mind* of, or deriving from, Phase 2.
  28. These phases, 2 and 16, both occur one phase after the perfection of the *primary* and *antithetical Tinctures* (at Phases 1 and 15) and thus represent the start of the gradual decline from power. These phases are thus in the descendent, although still almost completely full of a single *Tincture*.
  29. The following set of tables is elegantly represented by Neil Mann in a single diagram ([www.YeatsVision.com/Faculties.html/#Fold](http://www.YeatsVision.com/Faculties.html/#Fold), second diagram, and also [/Wheel.html](http://www.YeatsVision.com/Wheel.html)).
  30. These constitute sections VI and VII of Part II of Book I of *A Vision B* (*AVB* 90–92) and sections V and VI of Part I of Book I, “What the Caliph Partly Learned,” of *A Vision A* (*CW13* 19–22; *AVA* 20–23).
  31. Yeats’s explanation is internally self-consistent, in that it presents no contradictions or confusions, but why the determination of True and False *Masks* should involve *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate* (respectively) of the opposing phase is not explained. Further study is necessary.
  32. This discussion is summarized in the Card File as follows:
    - CF F12
    - Faculties*
    - Evil Genius separates CG from PF
    - In First Quarter by *sentimentality*
    - [In] Second [Quarter by] *a form of brutality* (desire for root facts of life as it is)
    - [In] Third [Quarter by] *hatred*
    - [In] Fourth [Quarter by] *insensitiveness*.
    - It separates Mask & Ego (this is the “most important”) by *insincerity* always
    - It separates Mask & CG by *sterilization*
    - It separates Mask & PF by *emulation*
    - Evil Mask is *fear*
- CF C12x  
insincerity separates enforced Mask & Ego because “it cannot face self knowledge brought by mask”

Before 1 the enforced Mask brings to the ego "knowledge of its weakness & after 1 of its strength"

Insincerity in third quarter is "self deception & exultation" (*YVP3* 304–5)

33. However, the passage from the Card File, quoted in the note above, indicates that "Insincerity in third quarter is 'self deception & exultation'" (CF C12x; *YVP3* 305). This implies that insincerity is possible in the *antithetical* phases, which appears to contradict the statement, quoted above, that "insincerity when Mask is enforced" (that is, during *primary* phases only (CF M6; *YVP3* 334).
34. Cf. *A Vision A*'s very similar "The Twenty-eight Embodiments."

## “THE SPIRITUAL INTELLECT’S GREAT WORK”: A DISCUSSION OF THE *PRINCIPLES* AND *A VISION*’S ACCOUNT OF DEATH

by Graham A. Dampier

The internal structure of the system elucidated in *A Vision* consists of an intricately woven series of theoretic concepts, tenets and terms. For this reason, when dealing specifically with the system’s account of death, as set out in Book III of *A Vision B* entitled “The Soul in Judgment,” one is compelled to begin the study elsewhere. The same applies to the *Four Principles*, since they oversee the soul’s progress through the six discarnate states. The most appropriate point of departure for a study of *A Vision*’s account of death and the role of the *Principles* in the states between lives would be the system’s description of life, and the activity of the *Faculties*.

According to the system’s portrayal of life and death, the soul is subject to a purification or clarification process in the discarnate states. This idea is expressed in the poem “The Fool by the Roadside” as published in *A Vision A*: “When my days that have / From cradle run to grave / From grave to cradle run instead” (*CW13* 181; *AVA* 219).<sup>1</sup> These lines appear to invert the traditional Western conception of the opposition between life and death. From the material perspective (subject to multiplicity, individuated consciousness and constrained perception) life ends with the death of the body, whereas from the transcendent point of view bodily existence is a limit imposed upon a perfected soul. Life can thus be regarded, according to the system of *A Vision*, as the contamination, imprisonment and confusion of a spirit that is, in its natural state, pure, free and fully illuminated. Material life is a kind of spiritual death, a rending of pure perfected transcendent consciousness. This is a fundamental postulate that regulates the opposition between life and death, materiality and spirituality, and the *Faculties* and the *Principles*. “It is because of the identification of light with nature,” Yeats explains, “that my instructors make the *antithetical* or lunar cone of the *Faculties* light [cradle to grave] and leave the solar dark [grave to cradle]. In the cone of the *Principles*, which operate after death, the solar cone is light [grave to cradle] and the other dark [cradle to grave], but their light is thought not nature” (*AVB* 190).

Yeats explains that the “wheel or cone of the *Faculties* [i.e., the lunar cone] may be considered to complete its movement between birth [cradle] and death [grave], that of the *Principles* to include the period between lives as well” (*AVB* 188). In the material cone of the *Faculties* life is conceived, in accordance with traditional postulates, as running from dawn (birth) to dusk (death), while in the transcendent cone of the *Principles* the entry of a being into materiality is represented as the burial of a pure spirit in the “fury and the mire of human veins” (*VP* 497; *CW1* 252). The reason, of course, is that the wheel of the *Principles* encompasses life and the period between lives. The *Faculties* are involved in material being, while the *Principles* are transcendent. Whereas the *Faculties* are operative only in life, the *Principles* are present during incarnation, albeit dormant and concealed, while active in the discarnate states. To be more precise, two of the *Principles* predominate in life, while the remaining two conduct the activity of the discarnate states: “In the period between lives, the *Spirit* and the *Celestial Body* prevail, whereas *Husk* and *Passionate Body* prevail during life. Once again, solar day, lunar night” (*AVB* 188).<sup>2</sup>

For reasons of length, I will discuss life not in material terms (considered to run from cradle to grave, which is represented by the movement of the *Faculties* between the *Tinctures*), but from the transcendent perspective instead, so as to illustrate that death entails a systematic purification of the soul. In order to achieve this objective, it is necessary to explore the extension of the *Principles* into materiality, as this will reveal the details of the transition from transcendental consciousness to the material conditions of experience.

In this essay, I will treat the system elucidated in *A Vision* as a discourse that is dynamic, fluid and continually in the process of development.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, all the various incarnations of the system—from the exposition conducted in the automatic script and the Sleep and Dream Notebooks, to Yeats's codification of it in the various preparatory notebooks, Card File entries, *A Vision A*, and *A Vision B*, as well as the various essays and diary entries that serve in some way to develop its ideas and internal consistency—as equally important to the task of providing a study of the system's account of death as a process of purification. With this approach in mind I will not consider any stage of the system's elucidation as being more definitive than others; instead, I will treat it as an unfolding collection of ideas, tenets and concepts.

The automatic script, the first edition, and then the second edition of *A Vision* represent three stages in the system's exposition. The automatic script, as the first stage, serves as the basis upon which both editions of *A Vision* are elucidated. The second edition departs significantly from the automatic script and *A Vision A*. I am of the opinion that Yeats's exposition of the discarnate states in *A Vision A* retains more of the initial exposition developed in the automatic script. This is not to say that the second edition is incorrect, or that it departs so significantly from the original exposition as to be unreliable; in fact, it retains much of what was developed in the automatic script even if it refashions the original concepts and stages to some extent. Furthermore, the immense complexity and detail of the automatic script, to my mind, remains under-utilized in studies of the system, and has much to offer in terms of clarifying the system's account of death. On the other hand, the second edition is far more developed in terms of its treatment of the *Principles*, and accounts for the metaphysical basis of the system in a way that is more lucid and more useful for defining them. My strategy is to use all three stages of the system's development to account for the *Spirit's* purification in death. In the end, all three sources of exposition have their individual merits, and are equally important to understanding the system more fully.

This view is particularly useful when one considers that by Yeats's own admission "The Soul in Judgment," Book III of *A Vision B*, in its final form is an incomplete elucidation of the system's account of death, which includes the various processes involved in the *Celestial Body's* clarification of the discarnate *Spirit*. In the introduction to *A Vision B* Yeats explains that "The Soul in Judgment" was elucidated "when my wife's growing fatigue made communication difficult" (*AVB* 23).<sup>4</sup> He cites this and "defects of my own" as the reasons for why "The Soul in Judgment" is "the most unfinished of my five books" (*AVB* 23). This suggests that Yeats's final attempt at elucidating the discarnate states of death is not complete. One might say that a definitive exposition of the system's account of death does not exist. It is my opinion that various studies of the period between lives are required before we can come close to completing our knowledge of the complex processes involved in the *Spirit's* passage from one incarnation to the next.

Since the over-arching aim is to contribute to existing knowledge on the system of *A*

*Vision*, I endeavor to provide an elucidation of the interaction of the *Principles* in death, which will result in a study that employs ideas not fully developed in either version of *A Vision*, but which are elucidated in the automatic script and the Sleep and Dream Notebooks. The motivation for this is not to arrive at the final, most authoritative exposition of the system’s treatment of death. Instead, the ideas and concepts are employed so as to provide a reading of the role of the *Principles* in death that accords with the system’s theoretical framework. This means that I will refer to all texts to argue that death is a systematic process by which an individual *Spirit* is purified of its material life by the *Celestial Body*.<sup>5</sup>

### I. The Extension of the *Principles* into Materiality

In Book I of *A Vision B*, “The Great Wheel,” Yeats presents an account of material existence in which he explains that all of life is constituted by contrary poles, viz. the *primary* and *antithetical Tinctures*. The intersection of the *Tinctures* is the founding moment of material existence, and a fundamental requirement of life. When they meet the *primary* and *antithetical Tinctures* give rise to the *Faculties*, which move constantly between the poles.<sup>6</sup> Yeats’s opening statements on the *Principles* reveal that the *Faculties* are material derivatives of *Celestial Body*, *Spirit*, *Passionate Body* and *Husk*: “the *Principles* are the innate ground of the *Faculties*” (AVB 187). Given that the *Tinctures* and *Faculties* are essentially products of the extension of the *Principles* into materiality, the contact of spirit with matter, and that life is governed by the movement of *Will*, *Creative Mind*, *Mask* and *Body of Fate* between the poles, it is necessary to discuss briefly the process of incarnation and the founding of the *Faculties*.

The extension of the *Principles* into materiality is a complex process that begins with the highest order of existence, which Yeats has termed the “ultimate reality.” According to Yeats, this reality cannot be defined, conceived or described; it is simply, as an imperative, beyond the realm of human knowledge. It is the inaccessible and unsurpassable horizon of human endeavor. Yeats explains that the “system is founded upon the belief that the ultimate reality, symbolised as the Sphere, falls in human consciousness, as Nicholas of Cusa was the first to demonstrate, into a series of antinomies” (AVB 187). The ultimate reality represents all distinction, division and dualism reconciled, negated and transcended. However, since the *Principles* facilitate the fragmentation of the sphere into a multiplicity of individuated beings, they must represent the first instances of division, distinction and separation.

The *Principles* represent the first steps outside the phaseless sphere and are preliminary distinctions from which the proliferation of material antinomies proceeds. They are founding elements of individuated consciousness, distinction and multiplicity. According to Colin McDowell, “We could not begin to describe the *Four Principles* unless we made distinctions between them, and hence it may be said that these distinctions hold the seeds of discord [as well as the material antinomies and the strife between the *Tinctures*].”<sup>7</sup>

Yeats employs the diagram below to illustrate the distinctions between the “ultimate reality,” and the *Celestial Body*, *Spirit*, *Passionate Body* and *Husk*. Yeats explains that he has, “with some hesitation,” associated the *Celestial Body* with Plotinus’s “First Authentic Existant,” *Spirit* with the “Second Authentic Existant,” and *Passionate Body* with the “Third Authentic Existant” (AVB 194).<sup>8</sup> *Husk* we are told is produced when the Third Authentic Existant splits in two, which causes it to reflect “first as sensation and its object (our *Husk* and *Passionate Body*), then as discursive reason” (AVB 194). The reason for

Yeats's hesitation is that the *Principles* are distinct theoretical conceptions that exhibit a low degree of formal relation to concepts found outside of *A Vision*'s fold. Yeats considered Plotinus's division of reality into three hypostases as the closest approximation to the system's account of the intersection of the *Tinctures*, the founding of the *Faculties* and the creation of material existence. It serves, then, as a good point of reference in Western thought with which to orientate a reading of the *Principles*. The attempt to correlate the *Principles* with Plotinus's ontological system succeeds in providing the recognizable ground needed to conceptualize the extension of the *Celestial Body*, *Spirit*, *Passionate Body* and *Husk* into materiality:

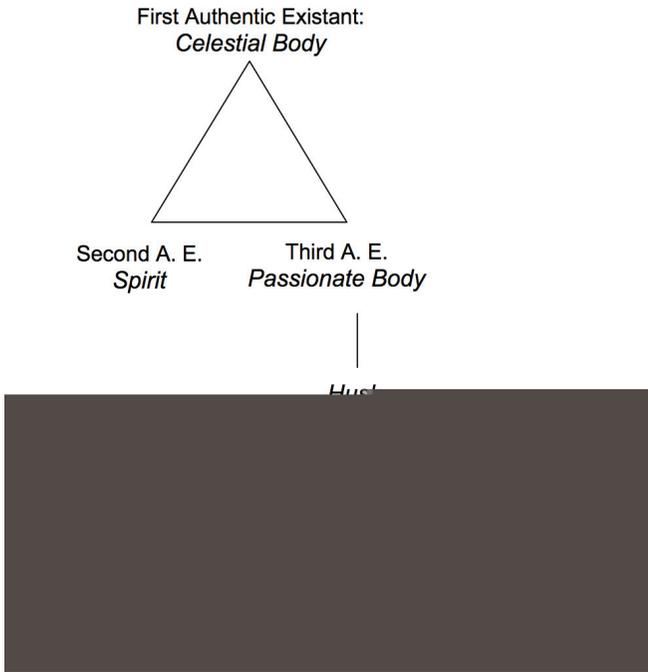


Figure 1: The material extension of the *Principles* and the founding the *Faculties* (see AVB 194).

In the automatic writing session of 12 June 1918, Thomas, the communicator, begins with the statement that the “celestial body is that portion of the divine influx [viz. the “ultimate reality”] which is separable and divisible” (*YVP1* 498). Yeats responded to this definition by asking whether the *Celestial Body* is “Seperable from the soul & devisible in it self” (*YVP1* 499). It appears that Yeats interpreted this statement as implying that the *Celestial Body* can be separated from individual beings and that divisibility is possible within this *Principle*. The answer given by Thomas suggests that the *Celestial Body* is able to separate and divide *Spirits* from the “ultimate reality”: “Seperable & devisible from the entire into the particular & then incarnate” (*YVP1* 499). This implies that the *Celestial Body* creates the possibility of distinction from the “entire,” which refers to the unified singularity of the “divine influx,” to the particular, which is the individuated *Spirit*. This action

allows the *Spirit* to be separated away from the sphere, which is the inaugurating step in the process of incarnation. The *Celestial Body* initiates the extension of the *Principles* into materiality by creating the possibility for spirits to be separated from the “divine influx.” It is the first step outside “the Sphere” (*AVB* 187), the initiatory distinction between the undivided state of being found in the “ultimate reality” and the proliferation of material antinomies. Furthermore, Yeats’s definition of the *Celestial Body* as a “portion of Eternal Life [a metonym for the ultimate reality] which can be separated away” enforces a distinction between the highest order of existence and what can be described as the founding *Principle* (*CW13* 130; *AVA* 160). The “ultimate reality” is by definition beyond life and remains detached from the multiplicity of material being. The *Celestial Body* is divisible within itself, which means that it exists as a portion of the “ultimate reality” that can be divided and fragmented into multiple entities.

The *Spirit* is defined by Yeats as “almost abstract mind” in the first edition (*CW13* 130; *AVA* 160). It is an emanation of Plotinus’s Intellectual Principle, or Second Authentic Existant, which is said to hold the First, the *Celestial Body* in “its moveless circle” (*AVB* 194). Throughout its separation from the sphere the *Spirit* contemplates and apprehends the *Celestial Body*. According to Yeats, the “*Spirit’s* object is of like nature to itself” (*AVB* 198). The *Celestial Body* and *Spirit* “are mind and its object (the Divine Ideas in their unity)” (*AVB* 187). The *Spirit* is the active *Principle* in this relation as it must seek its final unity with the *Celestial Body* both in life and death. The latter, on the other hand, serves only to facilitate those conditions in which the *Spirit* can separate from the “ultimate reality” and enter into embodied being. Since the founding *Principle* is confined to a moveless circle, it is largely inactive. The *Celestial Body* provides the original split from undivided being, and allows for the *Spirit’s* active experience of both life and the discarnate states. “The celestial body,” according to Yeats’s instructors, “is the founder & fashioner of the spirit” (*YVPI* 499).

In life the *Celestial Body* and *Spirit* are separated by the strife between the *Tinctures* and the antinomies of material existence. Their distinction is enforced upon the moment of birth and is perpetuated, nay exacerbated, during life. These *Principles* only begin to converge during death. In fact, the process of death serves to unite them. Rosemary Puglia Ritvo contends that “Concord is found when *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* are at rest and in perfect unity; then ‘pure thought’ becomes reality.”<sup>9</sup> The ideal outcome of the six discarnate states of the soul is the union of mind and its object, *Spirit* and the *Celestial Body*. Matthew Gibson explains that in “Yeats’s system, when the *Spirit* contemplates the *Celestial Body* without hindrance they are together ‘pure thought’ (*Ex* 316) or ‘pure mind, containing within itself pure truth’ (*AVB* 189).”<sup>10</sup> He goes on to argue that before the soul reincarnates “the *Spirit* must experience the six discarnate states described in the third book of *A Vision*, ‘The Soul in Judgment,’ and ‘find’ the *Celestial Body* (*AVB* 223–25). In other words they must become ‘pure mind.’”<sup>11</sup>

Since the *Spirit* is the active *Principle* in this relation (it confines the *Celestial Body* to its moveless circle), it is not certain whether the founding *Principle* has any knowledge of material existence that is independent of its association with the former. In other words, it appears that the *Celestial Body* is only conscious during material incarnation due to its link with the *Spirit*. On 1 February 1918 Yeats asks the instructor of the day: “During life has the CB a separate conscious existence” (*YVPI* 322). He is told that, “During life it

has none except through the spirit" (*YVPI* 322). This ability to know and perceive within materiality appears to be realized upon the material birth of the *Spirit*.<sup>12</sup> The *Celestial Body* is only conscious of materiality due to its connection with the *Spirit*, which could be its motivation for prying the *Spirit* out of the "ultimate reality" in the first place. It caused the separation of the individual *Spirit* from the "ultimate reality," and enforced its incarnation into the limitations of bodily existence, so as to know for itself what the material experience entails.

The implication of this for the *Spirit* is that it "is throughout incarnation subsidiary to CB – it cannot act alone" (*YVPI* 326). This means that in life the *Spirit* is subject to the *Celestial Body*, as it exists in a subordinate relation to its "fashioner." In addition, Yeats was told that, "CB is source of spiritual influx but only to degree of incitement by spirit although CB is the source of strength of spirit" (*YVPI* 325). During life the *Spirit* derives strength from the *Celestial Body*, while being subject to its authority.

Yeats explains in *A Vision A* that the *Spirit* "has neither substance nor life unless united to the *Passionate Body* or *Celestial Body*" (*CW13* 130; *AVA* 160). It derives its life from the *Celestial Body*, since without it the *Spirit* would not exist in the first place, which means that it gathers its substance from the *Passionate Body*. As "almost abstract mind" the *Spirit* derives knowledge, i.e., intellectual data, from the *Passionate Body* (*CW13* 130; *AVA* 160). When united to the *Celestial Body*, the *Spirit*, or mind, is indistinguishable from its object. When the *Spirit* and its object are one, when the distinction between mind and what it apprehends is transcended and negated "there is only *Spirit*; pure mind, containing within itself pure truth, that which depends only upon itself" (*AVB* 189). But what results in the contrary situation where the *Spirit* is united to the *Passionate Body*? How does it gain intellectual substance from it?

According to Yeats, "the discarnate *Daimons* or *Ghostly Selves*" constitute the *Passionate Body* (*AVB* 194). The main function of the *Passionate Body* is to link "one being to another" and to rescue the *Celestial Body* from its inert isolation (*CW13* 143; *AVA* 176). Yeats explains that, "the *Passionate Body* exists [so] that it may 'save the *Celestial Body* from solitude'" (*AVB* 189). The automatic script of 2 April 1918 describes the chief function of the *Passionate Body*, which supports the statements above: "The pb exists solely to form a link between one ego and another which would be lacking without it" (*YVPI* 413). It appears that, in linking one being to another, the *Passionate Body* allows the *Celestial Body* to apprehend the distinction and multiplicity of material existence, which it experiences through the *Spirit*. This suggests that without the *Passionate Body* one incarnate *Spirit* would not be able to encounter another, for separate beings are linked to each other in life by the former *Principle*. In this way the *Passionate Body* saves the *Celestial Body* from a solitary existence. The *Spirit* affords the founding *Principle* the ability to gain knowledge of physical existence, while the *Passionate Body* allows it to know other beings within materiality.

The *Celestial Body*, taken as a whole, is defined by the unity of all *Daimons* that take part in material existence, while the *Passionate Body* is "the sum" of these *Daimons* (*AVB* 189). If the *Passionate Body* saves the *Celestial Body* from solitude by providing links between individual incarnate beings, then it appears, inversely, that the *Celestial Body's* isolation is defined by the indistinguishable unity of those *Daimons* encountered in the *Passionate Body*. The absence of links between *Daimons* in the *Celestial Body* suggests

that difference, individuation and separation cannot be experienced within the founding *Principle* itself. Only the potential of distinction occurring exists. The *Spirit* is created so that the *Celestial Body* can perceive material multiplicity within the *Passionate Body*. Yeats writes that the *Celestial Body* is often symbolized as “a prisoner in a tower rescued by the *Spirit*” (AVB 189). It would probably be more accurate to suggest that together the *Spirit* and *Passionate Body* save the *Celestial Body* from its static, inert state of being. The *Spirit* exists as an active participant that allows the *Celestial Body* to experience the various entities united within it as a congeries of separate and distinct individual beings that interact within the *Passionate Body*. Yeats writes that the *Spirit* knows:

all other *Daimons* [which refers to all beings taking part in material existence] as the Divine Ideas in their unity. They are one in the *Celestial Body*. The *Celestial Body* is identified with necessity; when we perceive the *Daimons* as *Passionate Body*, they are subject to time and space, cause and effect; when they are known to the *Spirit*, they are known as intellectual necessity, because what the *Spirit* knows becomes a part of itself. The *Spirit* cannot know the *Daimons* in their unity until it has first perceived them as the objects of sense, the *Passionate Body* exists that it may “save the *Celestial Body* from solitude.” (AVB 189)

Generally, then, the *Celestial Body* is governed by “Concord,” which according to Yeats “fabricates all things [including those *Daimons* that are encountered by the *Spirit* in the *Passionate Body*] into ‘an homogeneous sphere,’” while the *Passionate Body* is defined by “Discord,” which “separates the elements [that constitute the homogeneous sphere] and so makes the world we inhabit [a world defined by a plethora of distinct beings]” (AVB 67). The homogeneous sphere, however, is not the same as the phaseless sphere that is used to represent the “ultimate reality,” for there is a definite difference between the founding *Principle* and “Eternal life,” or as Yeats explains, “even the sphere formed by Concord is not the changeless eternity, for Concord or Love but offers us the image of that which is changeless” (AVB 67–68). The *Celestial Body* is subject to “Concord” and craves material “Discord,” while the phaseless sphere is “neither one nor many, concord nor discord” (AVB 193). It is beyond these distinctions, whereas the *Celestial Body* is instrumental in instituting them.

At this point it would appear appropriate to associate the *Celestial Body* with the *primary Tincture* and the *Passionate Body* with the *antithetical Tincture*, since it appears that material perception is defined by the apprehension of the latter by the former. In fact, according to various elucidations in the automatic script, there is a close connection between the *antithetical Tincture* and the *Passionate Body*. On 2 April 1918, Yeats asks, “Is Anti in any way different from different from PB” (YVPI 413). He is told, “The PB is formed *out* of anti as life continues – built up by anti and out of anti till it becomes complete – the anti neither diminishes nor fades – *as pb grows they are inseperable during life but pb has separate life after death*” (YVPI 413; cf. YVP3 155; emphasis added). The *Passionate Body* and the *antithetical Tincture* are basically the same during life. This is confirmed in the automatic script of 1 February 1918, “*pb is anti – through anti the spirit brings the celestial body into action*” (YVPI 322; emphasis added).

In the automatic script of 17 March 1918 Aymor explains that the *Passionate Body*

can be regarded as the site where physical existence transpires: “the pb is the actual sphere of the world” (YVPI 388). It is defined as the “objects of sense” (AVB 188) and is the totality of all that can be encountered in life: “The *Passionate Body* is the sum of those *Daimons*,” which are encountered in life by the *Celestial Body* through the *Spirit*, (AVB 189). The *Passionate Body* not only rescues the *Celestial Body* from solitude, but serves as the object of the latter *Principle*'s attention during material existence. The *Celestial Body* is drawn to the plethora of possibilities that are knowable in material existence, and is given the opportunity to experience all that bodily existence offers because of the *Passionate Body*'s natural tendency to present objects of sense to perceiving consciousness.

Since the *Passionate Body* is formed out of the *antithetical Tincture* throughout life, the implication is that our desires and passions are derived from this *Principle*. In *A Vision* Yeats writes that the *antithetical Tincture* is “our inner world of desire and imagination,” it is “emotional and aesthetic” (AVB 73). In the automatic script Yeats is told that the *Passionate Body* “is the mass of concrete image desire passion emotion – all that is thought felt or acted” (YVPI 414). It contains all images seen within material existence, as well as all the desires, passions and emotions felt. It is all that can be experienced. Incarnation is lived within the *Passionate Body*.

To reiterate: the *Celestial Body*, as the founding *Principle*, inaugurates the process of incarnation, whereas the *Passionate Body* is the world into which the individual *Spirit* incarnates. Thus it seems that the *Celestial Body* initiates the material extension of the *Principles* in order to experience life within the *Passionate Body*. This experience is realized through the *Spirit*. Thus, the statement that the *Passionate Body* “is anti” and that it is through the “anti” “that the spirit brings the celestial body into action” further suggests that the *Celestial Body* requires the *Passionate Body* to experience multiplicity and distinction (YVPI 322). On the other hand, the *Celestial Body* requires the *Spirit* to form a link between it and the *Passionate Body*. The *Spirit* is the *Celestial Body*'s capacity to perceive the *Passionate Body*.

While the *Celestial Body*'s apprehension of materiality is determined by the *Passionate Body*, the nature of the *Spirit*'s apprehension of other beings within the *Passionate Body* is defined by the *Husk*. According to Yeats, the Third Authentic Existant splits in two so as to create a distinction between *Husk* (sense) and *Passionate Body* (objects of sense). As the ability to sense within materiality the *Husk*'s constitution includes: “impulse, images; hearing, seeing, etc., images that we associate with ourselves—the ear, the eye, etc.” (AVB 188). The *Passionate Body* is the sum of all that is sensed, while the *Husk* is the capacity to sense. In addition, the *Husk* is “symbolically the human body” (AVB 188). The *Husk* allows the individual *Spirit* to assume bodily form and to experience the objects of sense contained within materiality. If the *Spirit* is the ability to perceive within the material realm and the *Passionate Body* is all that can be perceived, then the *Spirit* needs a body through which to experience sensory perception. The *Husk* provides a link between the *Spirit* and *Passionate Body*: “Behind the *Husk* (sense) is the [incarnate] *Daimon*'s hunger to make apparent to itself certain *Daimons*, and the organs of sense are that hunger made visible” (AVB 189).

The function of the *Husk* is to enable the *Spirit* to sense within the material world. It allows the *Spirit* to take on bodily form by affording it the ability to perceive through the senses of the body. The *Husk* is essential to the *Celestial Body*'s experience of multiplicity,

distinction and difference. Yeats explains that the “[incarnate] *Daimon* seeks through the *Husk* that in the *Passionate Body* which it needs” (AVB 189). Without the *Husk* it would only be able to apprehend other incarnate *Daimons* indirectly, which would result in an incomplete experience of materiality. In fact, it may not even be able to present itself to other *Daimons* without the *Husk*. The *Husk* provides a direct experience of incarnation, by facilitating the *Spirit’s* entry into materiality. While the *Spirit* requires the *Passionate Body* to provide it with links to other incarnate beings or *Daimons*, the *Husk* exists so that it may allow for a sensual experience of these beings.

Finally, without the *Husk* the *Spirit* would not be able to perceive through the five senses of the body. It would not possess the ability to receive or send sensory information. The *Spirit* would be blind, deaf and dumb. The senses are of course a basic requisite of material experience. The *Spirit* would know that other *Daimons* exist but would not have the ability to produce knowledge of all those it perceives. After all, the *Spirit* knows other *Daimons* by “intellectual necessity” (AVB 189). It needs to perceive these *Daimons* as “objects of sense,” which indicates that the *Husk* gives the *Spirit* access to the *Passionate Body* (AVB 189). Without the *Husk* the possibility of knowing other incarnate beings by “intellectual necessity” would not exist. This knowledge would not be possible. Therefore, if the *Celestial Body* is able to perceive the *Passionate Body* through the *Spirit*, then it is through the *Husk* that the *Spirit* has a direct sensuous encounter with the world’s “objects of sense.” This *Principle* completes the process of incarnation and therefore the *Celestial Body’s* apprehension of the *Passionate Body*. What must be determined, at this stage, is how the *Tinctures* are created.

According to Figure 1, the *primary Tincture* is created when the *Spirit*, attached to the *Husk*, assumes bodily existence, while the *antithetical Tincture* is a reflection of the *Passionate Body*, which as we know is indistinguishable from the subjective pole during incarnation (AVB 194). The *antithetical Tincture* is defined as the “result of contact of matter with CB” (YVP3 248). This suggests that when the *Celestial Body* makes contact with the material world the result is the formation of the *antithetical Tincture*. On 12 June 1918 Yeats asks the instructor Thomas: “Is anti result of contact of CB with matter” (YVPI 500). It can be argued that the *antithetical Tincture* is created when the *Celestial Body* is afforded the mediated opportunity to perceive the distinctions that exist within the *Passionate Body*, for the latter *Principle* is the “actual sphere of the world” (YVPI 388). In other words, when the *Celestial Body* makes contact with the *Passionate Body* through the *Spirit*, the *antithetical Tincture* is instituted.

Furthermore, the statement that the “PB is formed *out of anti* as life continues – built up by anti and out of anti till it becomes complete” suggests that as an incarnate being ages the *Passionate Body* grows in turn (YVPI 413). This means that the initial contact between the *Celestial* and *Passionate Bodies* is weak. The *Celestial Body’s* experience of the *Passionate Body* upon the material birth of the *Spirit* is at the stage of infancy, and as the incarnate being ages this experience grows. The longer the being is incarnate the more the *Celestial Body* comes to know of the *Passionate Body*. The more extended the period of contact is between the *Celestial Body* and *Passionate Body* in life, the more complete the former’s experience of the latter will be.

On the other hand, the *primary Tincture* is the result of *Spirit’s* contact “with matter” (YVP3 248). When the *Spirit* incarnates the objective *Tincture* is formed. This presup-

poses the *Spirit's* union with its *Husk*. Bearing in mind that the *Spirit* senses through the *Husk*, it is reasonable to assume that as soon as the former *Principle* incarnates it begins to sense within the material world. Furthermore, if the *antithetical Tincture* is the result of the *Celestial Body's* contact with the *Passionate Body*, then the *primary Tincture* must be the result of the *Spirit's* union with its *Husk* upon incarnation. The *Spirit's* ability to sense within the material realm is initially diminutive, for the *Husk* "begins very small & grows with life" (YVP3 11). This means that as the incarnate being ages and grows the *Husk* develops in turn. In other words, the *Spirit's* ability to encounter "objects of sense" within the material world is strengthened with age.

Upon their creation the *Tinctures* give rise to the *Four Faculties*, which, according to Yeats, are derived from the *Principles*. Gibson explains that "the *Husk* [sense] and *Passionate Body* [object of sense] are reflected as *Will* and *Mask* in the living man," which suggests that *Celestial Body* and *Spirit* are reflected as *Body of Fate* and *Creative Mind* respectively, since during the lived experience the *Spirit* (mind) encounters the *Celestial Body* (its object) as a series of sensual objects.<sup>13</sup>

According to Yeats, upon their reflection into materiality the *Principles* undergo a process of transference in which an inversion takes place that creates the *Faculties*. This inversion perpetuates the symbolic, conceptual and geometric opposition between life and death, "Discord" and "Concord," lunar and solar circuits, and the *Faculties* and the *Principles*. The following table provides a synthesis of the correlations between the *Principles* and the *Faculties*:<sup>14</sup>

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Faculty</i>	<b>Temporal inversion</b>
<i>Celestial Body</i>	<i>Body of Fate</i>	Timeless–Present
<i>Spirit</i>	<i>Creative Mind</i>	Future–Past
<i>Passionate Body</i>	<i>Mask</i>	Present–Timeless
<i>Husk</i>	<i>Will</i>	Past–Future

## II. The Geometry of the *Principles*

Since the *Principles* straddle the division between life and death, any representation of their activity includes not only the discarnate states of the soul, but the experience of incarnation as well. The activity of the *Principles* in life coincides with the movement of the *Faculties* between the *Tinctures*. The latter are said to complete their movement "between birth and death" (AVB 188). The wheel of the *Faculties* only runs from cradle to grave, while the wheel of the *Principles* is continuous; it encompasses the conditions that govern bodily existence as well as the discarnate states. The liberation of the *Celestial Body* and *Spirit* from material constraints occurs at death. From a certain perspective the end of life can be viewed as a kind of birth, for in death the aim is for the *Spirit* to cling to the "*Celestial Body* until they are one and there is only *Spirit*" (AVB 188–89). The *Spirit's* only function in life is to convert sensual experience, which it attains through the *Husk*, into intellectual knowledge: "The *Spirit* cannot know the *Daimons* in their unity [which occurs in the *Celestial Body*] until it has first perceived them as the objects of sense [within the

*Passionate Body*]” (AVB 189). This means that in order for the *Celestial Body* and *Spirit* to become one in death, the result of which is the “Divine Ideas in their unity” (AVB 187), the latter must first create intellectual knowledge of those beings linked together by the *Passionate Body*, for “what the *Spirit* knows becomes a part of itself” (AVB 189).

Since the system’s geometry is notoriously difficult to master and often confusing, it is best to approach a discussion of it at a general level before working one’s way to more specific configurations and illustrations. I begin with the basic distinction between the lunar cycle of the *Faculties* and the solar cycle of the *Principles*.

The *Will, Creative Mind, Mask and Body of Fate* move through the twenty-eight lunar phases of “The Great Wheel.” They move between the full and the dark moons. The *Principles*, as inverted correlates to the *Faculties*, move within a different symbolic scheme. By following the maxim of “solar day, lunar night,” Yeats constructs a distinct geometrical system for the *Celestial Body, Spirit, Passionate Body* and *Husk*. He proceeds to convert a lunar cycle into a solar circuit in order to maintain the oppositions between life and death, the *Faculties* and the *Principles*, and “Discord” and “Concord.” “I am told,” he writes, “to give Phases 1, 8, 15, 22 a month apiece, the other phases the third of a month, and begin the year like the early Roman year in the lunar month corresponding to March” (AVB 196). The result is that the phases of crisis—1, 8, 15 and 22—are associated with the months March (Phase 15), June (Phase 22), September (Phase 1) and December (Phase 8). This correlation of phases and months of the year can be tabulated as follows:

Lunar Phases	Months of the Year
1	September
2, 3, 4	October
5, 6, 7	November
8	December
9, 10, 11	January
12, 13, 14	February
15	March
16, 17, 18	April
19, 20, 21	May
22	June
23, 24, 25	July
26, 27, 28	August

These associations serve to produce a symbolically inverted geometric scheme that shadows the lunar symbolism of “The Great Wheel” (viz. the wheel of the *Faculties*) at every turn. A solar circuit is created in the process. “A solar period,” according to Yeats, “is a day from sunrise to sunrise, or a year from March to March, a month from full moon to full moon. On the other hand a lunar period is a day from sunset to sunset, a year from September to September, a month from moonless night to moonless night” (AVB 197).<sup>15</sup>

It is important to note that the correlation of lunar phases with solar months produces a circuit of symbolically equal duration to that of "The Great Wheel," which is inaccurate if one wants to illustrate the activity of the *Principles* both in life and death. The wheel of the *Principles* should, by virtue of its continuity between lives, be longer than that of the *Faculties*. Since it contains the six discarnate states within its ambit, this cycle should, logically, be longer than a cycle that only represents the material movement of the *Faculties* between the *Tinctures*. Yeats explains that in order to solve this problem his instructors developed a symbolic scheme that cannot be confused with that of the *Faculties*: "That the small wheels and vortexes that run from birth to birth may be part of the symbolism of the wheel of the twenty-eight incarnations without confusing it in the mind's eye, my instructors have preferred to give to the *Principles* of these small wheels cones that cannot be confused with that of the *Faculties*" (AVB 197). The result is a system of representation that depicts the movement of the *Celestial Body*, *Spirit*, *Passionate Body* and *Husk* as it occurs in life and death, that is, between one birth and another, rather different from the symbolism awarded to the *Faculties*, which illustrates their movement through the twenty-eight phases of "The Great Wheel." The conversion of lunar phases into solar months provides the first distinction between the wheel of the *Faculties* and the circuit of the *Principles*, by producing a contrary symbolic scheme. The second, and more telling, distinction comes in the form of two figures: the diamond and the hourglass. The purpose of these figures is not only to distinguish the movement of the *Principles* from that of the *Faculties*, but to represent the life and death cycle of an individual being as well.

At this point, a more specific configuration comes under discussion, which means that the rules change somewhat. The distinction of lunar and solar cycles is now applied to the *Principles*, in order to indicate opposing functions of the *Husk* and *Passionate Body*, and the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body*. The former prevail in life and are represented with lunar phases, while the latter predominate in death and are represented with solar months or the signs of the zodiac. This means that the following diagram is only concerned with the movement of the *Principles*, which includes incarnation and the discarnate states:

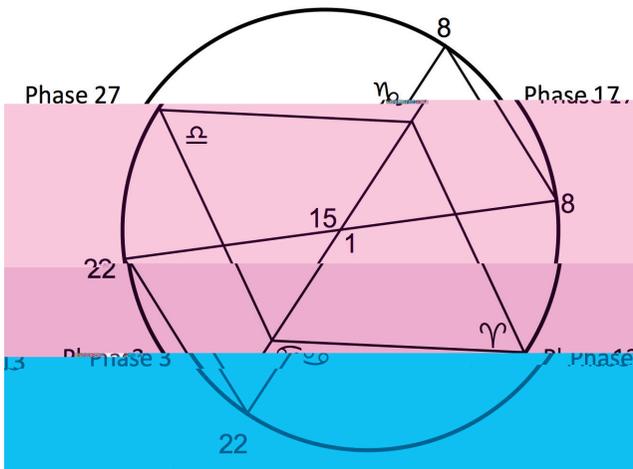


Figure 2: Wheel of the *Principles* (see AVB 199).

Yeats explains that within “these figures move the *Principles*; *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* in the figure shaped like an ace of diamonds, *Husk* and *Passionate Body* in that shaped like an hour-glass” (AVB 198).<sup>16</sup> This diagram represents the domination of the *Husk* and *Passionate Body* in life, as well as the activity of the *Spirit* in death. Yeats writes that the “dominant thought is to show *Husk* starting on its journey from the centre of the wheel, the incarnate *Daimon*, and *Spirit* from the circumference as though it received its impulse from beyond the *Daimon*” (AVB 197–98). The *Husk* begins its activity at Phase 1, which is located at the central point of the wheel, where the apices of two cones meet to produce the figure shaped like an hourglass. Due to the inversion of cradle and grave in the wheel of the *Principles*, the *Spirit* does not begin its journey at the first sign, Aries, even though a solar period is said to begin at this point. Death is represented as a cradle in the solar wheel of the *Principles*, in which Aries (the symbol ♈ in the diamond, aligned with Phase 13 on the circle in the example given in Figure 2) can be shown to represent sunrise and spring. The moment of birth is represented as a kind of dying (sunset) in the wheel of the *Principles*, and corresponds to the position marked by Libra on the diamond (the symbol ♎ aligned with the position marked by Phase 27 on the circle in Figure 2).

In fact, Yeats writes that the death of the body “comes when the *Spirit* gyre is at Aries [and] is symbolised as spring or dawn; and birth which comes when the *Spirit* gyre is at Libra, as autumn or sunset. Incarnate life is night or winter, discarnate life is day or summer” (AVB 201). This means if *Husk* begins its activity at Phase 1 that *Spirit* sets out from Libra: “When *Husk* is at Phase 15, *Spirit* sets out from Aries. It reaches Cancer when *Husk* is at Phase 22 and Libra when *Husk* is at Phase 1. When *Spirit* is at edge of wheel *Husk* is at centre” (AVB 199). The following table represents the synchronized movement of *Husk* and *Spirit*:

<i>Husk</i>	<i>Spirit</i>
1	Libra
2, 3, 4	Scorpio
5, 6, 7	Sagittarius
8	Capricorn
9, 10, 11	Aquarius
12, 13, 14	Pisces
15	Aries
16, 17, 18	Taurus
19, 20, 21	Gemini
22	Cancer
23, 24, 25	Leo
26, 27, 28	Virgo

The hourglass is divided into the twenty-eight phases of the lunar cycle, while the diamond is divided into the signs of the zodiac, “though,” according to Yeats, “[the diamond]

can be divided as readily according to the points of the compass" (AVB 198). The main reason for the different methods of division is to distinguish the activity of the *Celestial Body* and *Spirit* from that of *Husk* and *Passionate Body*. Since the latter two *Principles* prevail during life, the hourglass is used to represent the lived experience from a transcendent perspective. According to Yeats, "*Husk* and *Passionate Body* remain always opposite, *Passionate Body* at Phase 15 when *Husk* is at Phase 1 and so on" (AVB 199). This means that *Husk* sets out from Phase 1 at the moment of birth, while *Passionate Body* proceeds from Phase 15. As *Husk* approaches Phase 8, *Passionate Body* reaches Phase 22. *Husk* then returns to the centre of the hourglass and reaches Phase 15 when *Passionate Body* approaches Phase 1. The reason for the opposition between *Husk* and *Passionate Body*, between what are defined as sense and the objects of sense, is that the *Husk* is said to face "an object alien to itself" (AVB 198). The hourglass is thus a computation of the "Discord" that exists between the *Passionate Body* and the *Husk*, between the sensed and that which senses.

In fact, the hourglass in some way refers to the strife between the *Tinctures* and the movement of the *Faculties* through the twenty-eight phases of "The Great Wheel" as well. The movement of *Husk* from Phase 1, through Phase 8, to Phase 15 coincides with the movement of the *Faculties* between the *Tinctures* during an individual incarnation. The twenty-eight phases of the lunar cycle can be represented in the hourglass by the movement of *Husk* from the center of the figure to the circumference of the circuit, and back to the center again. This coincides with the converse movement of the *Passionate Body* from Phase 15, through Phase 22, to Phase 1. When the *Faculties* complete their movement between the *Tinctures*, the *Husk* and *Passionate Body* complete half of their entire circuit. Yeats writes that the "*Four Faculties* have a movement also within the cones of the *Principles*. Their double vortex is superimposed upon half of the cone of *Husk* and *Passionate Body*" (AVB 201). This is illustrated as follows:

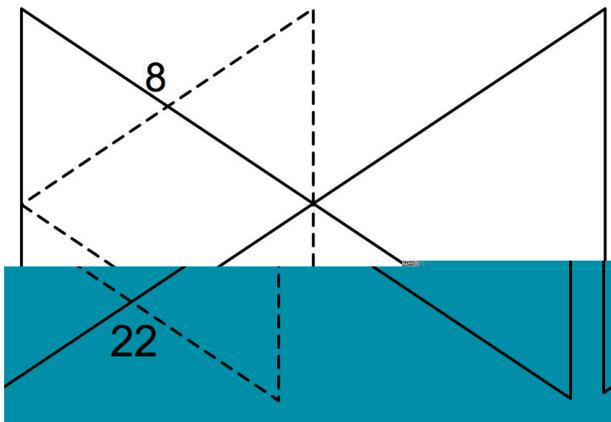


Figure 3: The movement of the *Faculties* superimposed upon the hourglass (see AVB 201).

This diagram illustrates that the complete movement of the *Faculties* through the twenty-eight phases of The Great Wheel coincides with the movement of the *Husk* from Phase 1 to Phase 15 in the hourglass. It is the experience of material strife represented as a double vortex from the transcendent perspective of the *Principles*.

The diamond, on the other hand, actually “represents a sphere, at its gyre’s greatest expansion *Spirit* contains the whole wheel” (AVB 199). The diamond represents the *Spirit’s* apprehension of the *Celestial Body*, which is of like nature to itself. The various points marked on the diamond refer to the necessary steps that exist between the union of mind and its object. Even though the diamond “contains the whole wheel,” for “convenience we make the diamond narrow, like the diamond of a playing-card, its widest expansion must be considered to touch the circumference of the wheel” (AVB 199). In fact, Yeats explains that the *Spirit’s* “gyre touches that circumference throughout” (AVB 199). The reason for this is that the *Spirit* is the only *Principle* that moves within the figure shaped like a diamond. Since the “*Spirit’s* object is of like nature to itself,” there is never an opposition between it and the *Celestial Body* in this figure (AVB 198). “In the cones of the *Spirit* and the *Celestial Body*,” Yeats explains, “there is only one gyre, that of *Spirit*, *Celestial Body* being represented by the whole diamond” (AVB 198). The *Celestial Body* allows for the experience of “Concord.” It is the site where the union of all the *Daimons* that roam the *Passionate Body* during life takes place, and it “fabricates all things into ‘an homogeneous sphere’” (AVB 67).

“The union of *Spirit* and *Celestial Body*,” according to Yeats, “has a long approach and is complete when the gyre reaches its widest expansion” (AVB 198). The distinction and separation of the *Spirit* (mind) and that which it contemplates occurs at the point marked by Libra on the diamond. This point coincides with the moment of incarnation, and represents the inauguration of the *Spirit’s* apprehension of those *Daimons* in the *Passionate Body* that it requires knowledge of. It experiences these *Daimons* as objects of sense throughout its movement from Libra, through Capricorn, to Aries, at which point it begins to synthesize its experience of life, which equates to its apprehension of the *Passionate Body*. Since the *Spirit* knows all *Daimons* by “intellectual necessity,” the *Celestial Body* is experienced as a fragmented unity within the *Passionate Body*. In order for the *Spirit* to know all *Daimons* it encounters within the *Passionate Body* as a unified singular entity, it must first experience them as objects of sense, for what the *Spirit* knows is assimilated into itself. And since the *Spirit* faces an object of like nature to itself, the knowledge it gains of other *Daimons* in life serves as the material that is synthesized in death into a singular, pure truth. This results in the end with the union of *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* (viz. mind and its object) and the realization of “Concord.” The union of mind and its object represents the synthesis of the disparate elements, which constitute material existence, into a harmonized sphere.

Furthermore, in order to illustrate the activity of the *Principles* between lives geometrically, the diamond and hourglass are represented within a larger lunar circuit. A fundamental feature of the system is that human life can be represented by the application of “The Great Wheel” to multiple levels of human existence: it is “every completed movement of thought or life, twenty-eight incarnations, a single incarnation, a single judgment or act of thought” (AVB 81). In the case of the activity of the *Principles* between lives, a lunar circuit is used to describe the twenty-eight incarnations that a single individual is set to complete in one cycle of time and space. For this reason the diamond and hourglass are able to contain the movement of the *Faculties* through the phases of “The Great Wheel” that is used to represent the duration of a single incarnation, while being enclosed by the *Faculties* of a much larger cycle in turn. The diamond and hourglass, which are used

to describe the activity of the *Faculties* in life and the discarnate states between lives, are formed out of the *Four Faculties* of the greater lunar wheel. According to Yeats, "These cones are drawn across the centre of the wheel from *Faculty* to *Faculty*, two with bases joined between *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*, and two with apexes joined between *Will* and *Mask*" (AVB 198).

The phases numbered on the circumference of the circuit depicted in Figure 2 refer to the position of the *Faculties* for that particular incarnation. It appears that the incarnation being represented is Phase 17 (AVB 200), and despite some initial confusion, Yeats's description of the movement of *Husk* suggests that *Mask* should really be situated at Phase 3, while *Will* should be placed at Phase 17. The correct formulation of *Husk's* movement is thus as follows: "The gyre of the *Husk* starts at the centre (its Phase 1), reaches its Phase 8, where the circumference can be marked [*Will*], and returns to its centre for Phase 15, passes from its centre to its Phase 22, where the circumference can be marked [*Mask*], and finishes at the centre" (AVB 198). The movement of *Husk* from Phase 1 to Phase 15 represents the completion of half an incarnate phase, or as Yeats writes: "While *Will* (*Will* on circumference [marked by Phase 17 in Figure 2]) is passing through half a phase, *Husk* is passing from Phase 1 to Phase 15, the *Faculties* [which represent the conditions of this particular phase] complete their full movement, Phase 1 to Phase 28, and when their movement represents an incarnation disappear at its completion [for the *Faculties* are confined to the lived experience alone]" (AVB 201). The completion of one phase of the greater lunar circuit, used to represent the movement of the *Faculties* through the twenty-eight incarnations, coincides with the completed activity of the *Principles*. The entire movement of *Will* through one incarnation can be equated to the movement of *Husk* through all the phases of the hourglass, as well as the movement of the *Spirit* through the signs represented on the diamond.

Every phase of a lunar cycle, used to represent the twenty-eight incarnations an individual *Spirit* is set to embody, can be considered to include not only the experience of life but the process of death as well. The function of the *Principles* is not only to facilitate the being's bodily incarnation, or its apprehension of the antinomies of material existence, but to allow it to progress from one incarnate phase to the next: "The *Principles* thereupon [the moment of death] take their place defining the state between death and birth" (AVB 201).

### III. The Discarnate States of the Soul

Having explored the process of incarnation and the conditions of material existence, it is possible to present an elucidation of the system's account of death, according to which the *Spirit* is subject to a series of processes, where it is systematically purified of its recent material experience. The purpose of this clarification, as it is more appropriately referred to, is to facilitate the *Spirit's* passage from one incarnation to the next. Ideally, the *Spirit* must be purged of its foregoing material experience before it incarnates again. In order for this to happen, it must be clarified by the *Celestial Body*, which is the driving force of the *Spirit's* discarnate experience.

"The period between death and birth," according to Yeats, "is divided into states analogous to the six solar months between Aries and Libra" (AVB 223), which he clarifies "cor-

respond roughly to Phase 22, Phases 23, 24, 25, Phases 26, 27, 28, etc., upon the wheel of the *Faculties*” (AVB 223n). The moment of death coincides with the point marked by Aries on the diamond of Figure 2. At this very point the balance between the *Principles* shifts. From the transcendent perspective, during life consciousness was located in the *Husk*, which, together with the *Passionate Body*, prevailed over the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body*. “At death,” Yeats writes, “consciousness passes from *Husk* to *Spirit*; *Husk* and *Passionate Body* are said to *disappear*” (AVB 188). *Husk* and *Passionate Body* cannot contribute anything new to the *Spirit’s* intellectual record of life. They can only hamper its progress through the discarnate states by persisting in the earlier stages of the process.

While Yeats’s discussion of death seeks to provide clear-cut distinctions between the discarnate states, there is in truth no direct, one-to-one correlation between the states and the solar months of the wheel of the *Principles*. The motive for this effort derives from Yeats’s elucidation of “The Completed Symbol,” which is arguably *A Vision B’s* most remarkable achievement, since it provides a degree of cohesion that was lacking from his first attempt to elucidate the system. The idea that the discarnate states of the soul correspond to the six solar months between Aries and Libra suggests that the states are of a uniform length, which as we will see is not the case. Certain states are simply longer than others. However, by seeking to correlate the states with the solar divisions between Aries and Libra, Yeats inserts the period between lives into the system’s most essential geometrical symbol. By doing this he provides a completed geometric representation of the system’s treatment of both life and death.

Be that as it may, the *Spirit’s* experience of death could just as well have been characterized according to the various processes involved in its passage from one life to the next, which include: the vision at the moment of death, the burial of the dead body, the separation of the *Principles*, the dreaming of the *Passionate Body*, the *Spirit’s Dreaming Back*, the *Teachings*, the *Return*, the *Phantasmagoria*, the *Shiftings*, the *Vision of the Clarified Body*, the *Beatitude*, and the return to the pre-life stages of the *Purification* and *Foreknowledge*.<sup>17</sup> It is, indeed, possible to explore all the processes individually and to situate each within the relevant discarnate state. The following table presents the name of each discarnate state, the *Principles* that are active in each, and the sign of the zodiac that each state corresponds to:<sup>18</sup>

State No.	Name of the State	<i>Principles</i> active:	Corresponding to:
1	<i>The Vision of the Blood Kindred</i>	All four, with the vision synthesizing the <i>Husk</i> , which should disappear at the end, after consciousness passes into the <i>Spirit</i> .	Aries

State No.	Name of the State	<i>Principles active:</i>	Corresponding to:
2	<i>Meditation, Dreaming Back, Teachings, and Return</i>	While the <i>Husk</i> can persist into this stage, the <i>Celestial Body</i> , <i>Spirit</i> and <i>Passionate Body</i> predominate. The aim is to liberate the <i>Spirit</i> from the <i>Passionate Body</i> .	Taurus
3	<i>Shiftings</i>	<i>Celestial Body</i> and <i>Spirit</i> , with the latter being purified of good and evil, viz. the <i>primary</i> and <i>anti-theoretical Tinctures</i> .	Gemini
4	<i>Beatitude</i>	<i>Spirit</i> is absorbed into the sphere momentarily as the <i>Celestial Body</i> falls away.	Cancer
5	<i>Purification</i>	<i>Celestial Body</i> and clarified <i>Spirit</i> . The latter is given the opportunity to resolve past experiences through the help of the living.	Leo
6	<i>Foreknowledge</i>	<i>Celestial Body</i> and <i>Spirit</i> , with new <i>Passionate Body</i> and <i>Husk</i> formed out of the <i>Anima Mundi</i> . <sup>19</sup>	Virgo

This table maintains Yeats's association of various processes with the discarnate states, and does not serve to restructure his template for the period between lives. It is important to note, however, that certain aspects of the discarnate states could just as well have been classified differently. The *Meditation* in particular appears to be out of place in the second discarnate state and could have been placed within the domain of Aries.<sup>20</sup> By including it along with the *Dreaming Back*, the *Teachings* and the *Return*, the second discarnate state tends to resemble a hotchpotch of different processes.<sup>21</sup> Be that as it may, the reason for its inclusion in the second discarnate state could be (since it entails the *Spirit's* meditation upon the dissolution of the *Passionate Body*, which the *Celestial Body* serves to bolster), that it involves the interaction of the three *Principles* that are principally active in this discarnate state.<sup>22</sup>

I. THE VISION OF THE BLOOD KINDRED

According to Yeats, *The Vision of the Blood Kindred* is a “vision of all those bound to us through *Husk* and *Passionate Body*” (AVB 223). This vision represents the synthesis of the *Spirit’s* apprehension of all those beings it has encountered in the *Passionate Body* through the *Husk*. The purpose of this vision is to cause the disappearance of the ability to sense within materiality, which results in the disappearance of the objects of sense as well: “Apparitions seen at the moment of death are part of the vision, a synthesis, before *disappearance*, of all the impulses and images which constitute the *Husk*” (AVB 223). The vision seen at the moment of death serves not only to synthesize all that constitutes the *Husk*, but allows consciousness to pass from the body, which is defined by the ability to sense materially, to the *Spirit*, which has localized awareness during the discarnate states. Yeats writes, “At death the man passes into what seems to him afterwards a state of darkness and sleep; there is a sinking in upon fate analogous to that of the individual cones at Phase 22” (CW13 183; AVA 222). The “darkness and sleep” that is experienced immediately after death can be described as a momentary lapse in awareness.<sup>23</sup>

The death of the body entails the cessation of the ability to apprehend material reality through the organs of sense. This loss of sense is disorientating, because it is unfamiliar to the recently dead *Spirit*. It appears, as localized awareness is transferred from the *Husk* to the *Spirit*, that there is an interval of unconsciousness, for the loss of sense causes the *Spirit* to be “blind and deaf and dumb” (YVP3 22). As consciousness is centered fully within the *Spirit*, it sees a bewildering vision where it meets all its previous blood relatives. At this point, the “newly dead” *Spirit* “is surrounded by his kindred, present in their simulacrae [*sic*], or in their *Spirits* when they are between lives, the more recent dead the more visible. Because of their presence it is called the *Vision of the Blood Kindred*” (CW13 183; AVA 222). This is elucidated in the automatic script as follows:

3. What is the state of the spirit immediately after separation from body. For instance does it see the old objects still.
3. It remains with the body for some days – then it sees as though in the body
4. Is it quite alone?
4. Yes it hears & sees but is alone & isolated
5. Yet in many death bed visions people see those they have loved as if coming for them?
5. Yes but during the watching over the body they are alone – they are received at the moment of death & then left alone
6. Why are they left alone?
6. *To meditate* [emphasis added]
7. Who receives them?
7. Friends kindred spirits guides
8. Is there a period of unconsciousness?
8. There is a period of unconsciousness *at the moment of death*

(YVP1 312)

The first discarnate state of the soul commences, then, upon the moment of death. The instructor, Dionertes, suggests an additional reason for the deathbed vision: "The purpose of this vision which I cannot myself understand at this time is to [be] *seen* by those others rather than myself to see. They bring me back & I return *into* the dead body" (*YVP3* 22). The reason for the vision is thus to make the recently dead *Spirit* visible to other disembodied beings, which means the vision that the *Spirit* is led to does not assist it through the process of death. The *Spirit* is taken away from the dead body by its "Friends kindred spirits guides" and is given a brief vision of its future life, which is set to commence at the "end of all cycles":

9. What takes place during unconsciousness?
9. The soul is rapt away by the guides & angels to a momentary vision of future life – then as consciousness returns it returns to its own life
10. You mean its future life in next world
10. Its ultimate life
11. at end of all the cycles
11. Yes

(*YVP1* 312–13)

This "ultimate life" is the life the *Spirit* is meant to return to at the end of its separation from the "ultimate reality." This life represents the *Spirit's* final and permanent union with the "divine influx": a life lived beyond the antimonies of material existence, one that cannot be defined by either "Concord" or "Discord," and which cannot be known or conceived by beings that have separated from the phaseless sphere. After a momentary glimpse of its union with the "ultimate reality," the *Spirit* returns to the dead body to "meditate" (answer 6). The first state of the soul in death ends as the *Spirit* returns to the dead body.

## 2. THE MEDITATION, DREAMING BACK AND RETURN

The second discarnate state consists of various stages in itself, of which the *Meditation* is the first, and which could just as readily have been placed in the first state. In addition to being referred to as the *Meditation*, this discarnate state, which was made to correspond to Taurus, is also referred to as the *Dreaming Back* (*AVB* 225) and the *Return* in the second edition (*AVB* 226). The reason for the various names given to this state is that various processes constitute this stage of the clarification process.<sup>24</sup> It appears that Yeats grouped these processes into the second discarnate state, because they all involve the interaction of three *Principles*: *Celestial Body*, *Spirit* and *Passionate Body*. During this state "the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* [are said to] *appear*" (*AVB* 223). The strength of these two *Principles* grows significantly after the first discarnate state has ended. The *Celestial Body* is a source of strength for the *Spirit*, in so far as it provides the latter with the impulse to resolve its apprehension of materiality, while the *Spirit* is charged with reconciling its experience of life, and, in the process, with dissolving its links to the *Passionate Body*. All three processes (the *Meditation*, *Dreaming Back*, and the *Return*) have this as their major objective: the

*Spirit’s* liberation from the *Passionate Body*, which appears to be the reason why they are made to constitute the second discarnate state.

Upon its return to the body the *Spirit* is tasked with the objective of meditating “on the dissolution of the passionate body” (*YVP1* 313). In *A Vision B* Yeats explains that the second state of death has “for its object the *Spirit’s* separation from the *Passionate Body*, considered as nature, and from *Husk* considered as pleasure and pain” (*AVB* 226). The *Spirit’s* endeavor during this meditation is to sever its attachments to the material objects of sense and the ability to sense within a body, which should ideally have vanished during the first state. It must, essentially, accept that bodily existence is no longer a possibility and that its material life has ended. The *Spirit’s* meditation ends once the body has been buried, or rather, once the funeral rites have been conducted, for Yeats is informed that the “ceremonial of burial climaxes the meditation” (*YVP1* 315). The burial ceremony is necessary to the *Spirit’s* meditation upon the dissolution of the *Passionate Body*. The *Spirit* is able to separate itself from the *Passionate Body* as a result of the *Celestial Body*, which acts upon the *Passionate Body* by prayer. This prayer is not conducted by the “newly dead” *Spirit*, but by the living.

The instructor Dionertes explains that it is through the prayers and thoughts of the living that the recently dead *Spirit* is able to recognize that it is dead (*YVP3* 22). This prayer activates the *Celestial Body*, which provides the *Spirit* with the strength it needs to sever its connections with the *Passionate Body*. The more intense the thoughts and prayers of the living the more complete the *Spirit’s* meditation upon the dissolution of the *Passionate Body* will be. The *Spirit’s* realization that it is dead strengthens its attraction to the *Celestial Body*. Through focusing the attention of the living upon the recently dead *Spirit*, the burial ritual serves to increase the links between the founding *Principle* and the *Spirit*. According to Yeats, during the *Meditation* the *Spirit* has its “first vision and understanding of the *Celestial Body*, but that it may do so, it requires the help of the incarnate” (*AVB* 223). The burial ceremony is, then, crucial to the purification of the “newly dead” *Spirit*, since it enables it to realize that it is dead.<sup>25</sup>

However, if the thoughts of the living are not focused on the blood-begotten *Spirit*, the possibility exists that the *Passionate Body* will not disappear after the burial ceremony. In this event, the link between the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* is not sufficient enough to begin the process of clarification, because the *Passionate Body* continues to lure the *Spirit* into believing that it is still alive and that it can still sense within the material realm, which in a sense resurrects the *Husk*. This emphasizes the *Spirit’s* need to sever its links to the *Husk* and *Passionate Body*.<sup>26</sup>

The *Passionate Body* can persist in death for centuries, which effectively delays the *Spirit’s* incarnation into a new phase (the possibility even exists for the *Spirit* to reincarnate back into its previous phase before the *Passionate Body* has been dissolved). The result of the *Passionate Body’s* persistence in death is that the *Spirit* is still attached to “nature,” since the *Passionate Body* is “considered as nature” (*AVB* 226). The inability to dissolve the *Passionate Body* causes the *Spirit* to think that it is still embodied within materiality. This means that the *Spirit* is still attached to its former life on earth. If, in addition, the *Spirit* is unable to sever its link to the *Husk*, it continues to feel sensuous satisfaction or discomfort. Or as Yeats explains: “If the *Husk* so persist, the *Spirit* still continues to feel pleasure and pain, remains a fading distortion of living man, perhaps a dangerous succuba

or incubus, living through the senses and nerves of others" (AVB 224). The *Spirit* must recognize that it is no longer incarnate. If the *Spirit* fails to do this, the *Passionate Body* and *Husk* persist in death and it does not carry out its natural obligations, which are to be clarified by the *Celestial Body*. Yeats explains that the *Spirit* is attracted to the *Passionate Body* if the burial ceremony is not intense enough: "[*Spirit*] is attracted by PB & does not therefore realise that the Ego [*Will*] is dead & separated. It continues life on earth, but having no individual activities it imitates the dream of the P.B." (YVP3 153).

The burial ceremony is crucial to the *Spirit's* gradual purification in death, since it allows this *Principle* to recognize that it is dead, to sever its lingering connections with the *Passionate Body*, and consequently, to turn with greater force to the *Celestial Body*.

In the following passage Yeats defines the main function of the *Spirit* in life and death, which in the process provides an indication of its discarnate obligations, while explaining the ramifications that result from its persisting attachment to the *Passionate Body* after the burial of the physical body:

[The *Spirit*] has no separate activities. *Its function should be to be clarified by the C.B. During the after life passion after death it should go with the celestial body.* It does not because it is attracted by the passionate body & does not therefore realise that the Ego is dead & separated. It therefore continues its life on earth, but having no individual activity it imitates the dream of the P.B. *Only when it realises the death of the Ego does it begin to carry out its natural obligations.* (YVP3 154–55; emphasis added)

Since the *Spirit* has no separate activities in death apart from being "clarified" by the *Celestial Body*, or imitating the dream of the *Passionate Body*, it can either continue to believe that it is alive in the world, or it can allow the *Celestial Body* to purify it from its foregoing incarnation. When the *Spirit* imitates the dream of the *Passionate Body* it does not recognize that it is dead and it cannot enter into the *Dreaming Back* process.<sup>27</sup> Since the *Celestial Body's* clarification of the *Spirit* occurs during the *Dreaming Back*, *Return* and *Teaching*, the natural obligation of the *Spirit* is to recognize that it is dead and so enter into the purification process.

The *Celestial Body* and *Passionate Body* are separate during both the *Dreaming Back* process and the *Spirit's* imitation of the *Passionate Body's* dream. The function of the *Passionate Body* is to go to the "scenes of its passion" (YVP3 153). It does this regardless of whether the *Spirit* acknowledges that it is dead. The function of the *Celestial Body*, on the other hand, is to purify the *Spirit* of the *Passionate Body*, which is a record of the events of the *Spirit's* previous incarnation. The *Celestial Body* makes use of the *Passionate Body's* record to conduct the *Dreaming Back* process and the *Teachings*. Yeats discovers on 31 January 1918 after the *Principles* have been separated that they "lose all consciousness of each other" (YVPI 315). Then the instructor Aymor informs Yeats of the functions of the *Celestial Body* and the *Passionate Body* after their separation: "the passionate relives & dreams – the spiritual relives & renews" (YVPI 315). This indicates that the purpose of the *Passionate Body* in death is to relive the events of the foregoing incarnation, which occurs in the form of sensuous dreams. The *Passionate Body* goes to "the scenes of its passions" (YVPI 314). If the *Spirit* fails to realize that it is dead, it returns to the *Passionate Body* and continues to live

its life on earth through imitating the *Passionate Body*’s repetition of its previous life’s events. When the *Spirit* allows itself to be clarified by the *Celestial Body* it “relives” these events as well, but in the process it is “renewed” or purified of the *Passionate Body*.

“In the *Dreaming Back*,” according to Yeats, “the *Spirit* is compelled to live over and over again the events that had most moved it; there can be nothing new, but the old events stand forth in a light which is dim or bright according to the intensity of the passion that accompanied them” (*AVB* 226). During this process the *Spirit* relives the most passionate events of its life in the order of their intensity. It begins with the most intense experience, and dreams back upon the events of its life with decreasing pleasure and pain. A notebook entry explains that in the *Dreaming Back*, “There is classification only of ‘emotion,’ the height ‘varying according to depth & extent of passion’ | Classification is not according to time” (*YVP3* 172).

However, the *Dreaming Back* process is more significant than the *Spirit*’s mere repetition of its previous incarnation’s events in the order of their intensity. The aim of the *Dreaming Back* process is to obliterate those emotions that most affected the *Spirit* in life. The *Dreaming Back* frees the *Spirit* from its attachments to materiality, which effectively severs its links to the *Passionate Body*.<sup>28</sup> This is achieved by the “destruction of emotion & sense” (*YVP3* 283). Emotions and sensations experienced in life are negated in what is referred to as the *Teaching* or *Teachings*, for “in every teaching a form of emotion is destroyed” (*YVP3* 283).<sup>29</sup> Two processes are then involved in the *Dreaming Back*. In the first the *Spirit* relives the events of its previous incarnation in the order of their intensity. In the second process, called the *Teaching*, the emotions that most affected the *Spirit* in life are reconciled and obliterated.

After a sleep of 1922, Yeats dictated that during the *Teachings* the *Spirit* “is not conscious of being taught, and the teaching follows a period of dreaming back & is followed by that subjective state which one has described as ‘being in Hell or Heaven,’ though it may be merely a state of seemingly earthly happiness” (*YVP3* 106). This indicates that the *Teaching* process succeeds a period of *Dreaming Back*. The *Dreaming Back* process is, thus, not continuous, since the *Spirit* dreams back upon an event and then enters into the *Teaching*. There is an oscillation between the *Dreaming Back* and the *Teaching*. The *Spirit* relives an intensely emotional event of life, and is then freed from this event during an interval of *Teaching*.

The word “teaching” suggests that the *Spirit* is given insight into the event it has just relived by a third party. Yeats explains: “The Teachings is to some extent a condition of judgement upon what has taken place. The spirit cannot alone achieve this judgement, because it is biassed, that is why *there is a teacher*. The Teacher belongs to the Thirteenth Cone” (*YVP3* 106; emphasis added). This clearly indicates that a *Spirit* of the *Thirteenth Cone* conducts the *Teaching*. Since the *Spirit* is still subjective to a certain extent, it cannot free itself from the event that it has just dreamed through. For this reason a *Teaching Spirit* judges the event and the “emotion induced” by an action in life (*YVP3* 283). The *Celestial Body*, thus, purifies the *Spirit* during the *Dreaming Back* through a *Teaching Spirit* of the *Thirteenth Cone*.

Furthermore, Yeats explains: “During the Teachings there is not only judgement but a kind of completion. If a man has lived a life of self-control for instance, he will explore what his life would have been if his life had been uncontrolled” (*YVP3* 107). A contrary relation exists, then, between the “Teacher” and the *Spirit*, since at the end of one interval of *Teaching* the *Spirit* experiences “a kind of completion” (*YVP3* 107).<sup>30</sup> The “Teacher” is not only able to pass judgment upon the *Spirit*’s actions in life, but is able to provide the

*Spirit* with knowledge of what its life would have been like in opposition, as well. If the *Spirit* lived a “life of self-control” then the “Teacher” will provide it with knowledge of what its life would have been like if it was “uncontrolled” (*YVP3* 107).<sup>31</sup>

Since the *Celestial Body* clarifies the *Spirit* during this discarnate state, it is evident that the *Celestial Body* governs the *Teaching* and the *Dreaming Back*. The clarification is represented geometrically as a single cone, which the *Spirit* ascends and descends in a spiraling motion. In the automatic script a “funnel” is used to represent the *Dreaming Back* and the *Teaching*. An entry on the “funnel” in *Vision Notebook 1* indicates that when the *Spirit* is circling in the funnel it is subject to the *Teaching*, while pauses in this activity represent its dreaming back upon the events of its foregoing incarnation:

“During the circling the Spirit must be with CB Then comes the pause for dreaming back. The spirit may then be attracted to PB so break of this pause for dreaming back cannot occur until Spirit returns to funnell”

“Teaching only possible during gaps between intense dreaming of PB.”

“CB dreams back through the periods in life of Spiritual development. When it has dreamt back through a complete period the period of teaching begins.” (*YVP3* 173)

The *Spirit* must be with the *Celestial Body* as it is circling within the “funnel,” since the latter appears not only to be the source of strength of the former, but undertakes to liberate it from its emotional attachments to life. Once the *Teaching* period is complete there is a pause in the liberation of the *Spirit* from the *Passionate Body*. At this point it begins to dream back upon the next emotion or event. As it dreams back upon this event, the *Spirit* goes to the *Passionate Body*, which provides it with a record of the lived experience. The *Teaching*, and the *Celestial Body's* efforts to clarify the *Spirit*, can only resume once the *Spirit* has returned to the “funnel,” for the *Teaching* is “only possible during gaps between intense dreaming of PB” (*YVP3* 173). The circling of the *Spirit* during the *Teaching* can be represented as follows, according to an entry in *Vision Notebook 1*:

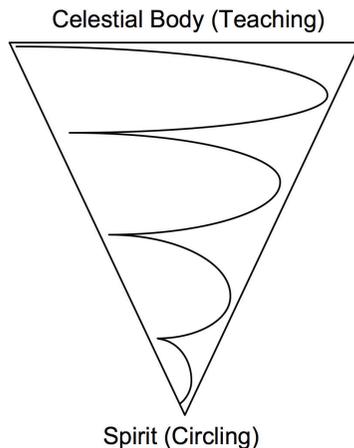


Figure 4: The Funnel of the *Teaching* and *Dreaming Back* (derived from *YVP3* 173).

The *Dreaming Back* ends when the *Spirit* has successfully resolved all its emotional and sensuous attachments to materiality. The process concludes with the *Spirit’s* final liberation from “nature,” that is, sense and the objects of sense, and with the unequivocal realization that it has entered into the agonizing process of death.

Upon completion, the *Return* succeeds the *Dreaming Back* process. The nature of the *Return* is different to the reliving of material experiences and events in the order of their intensity, as is evident in the *Dreaming Back*. In the *Return* the *Spirit* “must live through past events in the order of their occurrence” (AVB 226). The reason for this is that the *Spirit* is compelled to “trace every passionate event to its cause until all are related and understood, turned into knowledge, made a part of itself” (AVB 226).

Furthermore, the goal of the *Return* is to provide the *Spirit* with “the perfection of life lived” (YVP3 295). This is realized through “the withdrawal [of the *Spirit*] from emotional good & emotional evil from personalised good & evil. It [is] a withdrawal from the particular to the typical” (YVP3 295). Whereas the *Teaching* is “personal & emotional,” the *Return* is by nature “impersonal” (YVP1 494). During the *Dreaming Back*, the *Spirit* was forced to relive intense emotional experiences so that these emotions could be destroyed. However, in the *Return* there is “no emotion” (YVP3 200). The *Spirit* is forced, instead, to “withdraw” from personal ideas of “good & evil” (YVP3 200). The end result of this process is that the *Spirit* becomes less particular, individual and distinct; it becomes more archetypal. In other words, during the *Return* the *Spirit* withdraws from the particular to the entire, in the process perfecting its knowledge of the life lived (YVP3 200).<sup>32</sup>

When one considers that the task of the *Celestial Body*, during the extension of the *Principles* into materiality, is to distinguish *Spirits* from the “ultimate reality” (referred to as the “entire”) and subsequently to allow for the separation of individual *Spirits*, which then proceed to incarnate, it appears that at the end of the second discarnate state this effort is reversed, for there is here a return to a form of archetypal existence.<sup>33</sup> Yeats writes in a *Vision Notebook* entry that the “*Return is the destruction of the individuality of the ego—Dreaming back destroys the link with nature, Return link with Ego by making it impersonal*” (YVP3 200; emphasis added). This clearly indicates that the objective of the *Return* is to obliterate the “individuality of the ego” by rendering it “impersonal” (YVP3 200). This is ultimately achieved through the *Spirit’s* “reliving of life in a moral sphere” at the behest, again, of the *Celestial Body* (YVP3 383).

The automatic script of 10 June 1918 contains an exchange between Yeats and the instructor Thomas who elucidated the *Return*. Thomas explains: “The return is simply the reliving of life in the moral sphere” (YVP1 490). Subsequently, Yeats determines that this life lived is a “replica” of the foregoing incarnation (YVP1 490). The events of the life lived are repeated in the sequence of their occurrence, while being apprehended from a moral perspective. In the *Return* life is lived “as it should have been” (YVP1 491). The life lived is an ideal alternative to the *Spirit’s* foregoing incarnation, since it yields perfected knowledge of good and evil. In fact, the goal of the *Return* is to provide the *Spirit* with complete comprehension of good and evil so that it may grow less individual and more typical. The result is the *Spirit’s* liberation from individuality.

During the *Return* the *Spirit* lives an ideal life, in which it comes to complete its knowledge of good and evil. The *Return* is essentially the objectification of personal, biased

conceptions of good and evil. A person who attained knowledge of evil in life relives this life in the moral sphere to attain knowledge of good, for "In so far as knowledge of evil is attained one becomes good" (*YVPI* 492). This knowledge of evil is not based on ignorance; instead a person who had knowledge of evil in life attained this knowledge through "a conquest of good" (*YVPI* 492). Thomas, the instructor, explains that it is not a "sin to be evil knowing no good" (*YVPI* 492). During the *Return*, an evil person who has conquered good in life "has an evil soul in a beautiful world" (*YVPI* 492). The reason for this is to complete this person's knowledge of good in light of evil. Living life as an "evil soul in a beautiful world" creates a balance between knowledge of good and evil (*YVPI* 492). However, if a person was evil without conquering good, during the *Return* he "has the same life as a good man" (*YVPI* 492). This creates equilibrium between knowledge of good and evil: in the process the experience of life is perfected.

On the other hand, a person who gained knowledge of good in life achieves this through "a conquest of evil," for it is not a "virtue to be good knowing no evil" (*YVPI* 492). A good person who has conquered evil will live a "Good life" with "good surroundings" (*YVPI* 492). However, a good person who was ignorant of evil lives in a world where the surroundings are evil. The aim of the *Return* is complete comprehension of good and evil. The *Spirit* cannot enter into the third state of the soul in death if it has not relived its life in the moral sphere. The necessity of the *Return* is that it eradicates emotional and personal reactions to good and evil, which results in perfected comprehension of these concepts. Once emotional and personal notions of good and evil have been eradicated, the *Spirit* is liberated from individuality.

The second state of the soul in death is complete once the soul has successfully returned to the equilibrium of good and evil. At this point, the *Passionate Body* and the *Husk* have disappeared, but the *Spirit* still exists within a state of being defined by duality. After having achieved completed knowledge of good and evil, the *Spirit* enters into the third state of the soul in death called the *Shiftings*, which corresponds to Gemini on the solar wheel.

While the *Spirit* may have complete comprehension of good and evil, it has not been purified of these contraries as yet. The purpose of the *Return* is to free the *Spirit* from emotional and personal good and evil. This means that good and evil remain as generalized concepts. The purpose of the *Shiftings* is to liberate the *Spirit* from impersonal good and evil, which is essentially its liberation from the *primary* and *antithetical Tinctures*. Yeats writes:

At the end of the second state, *the events of the past life are a whole and can be dismissed*; the emotional and moral life, however, is but a whole according to the code accepted during life. The *Spirit* is still unsatisfied, until after the third state, which corresponds to Gemini, called the *Shiftings*, where the *Spirit* is purified of good and evil. (*AVB* 231; emphasis added)

### 3. THE *SHIFTINGS*

According to Yeats, the main endeavor of the *Shiftings* is to liberate the *Spirit* of archetypal good and evil. The content of each concept has been stripped of its application to localized

consciousness. Good and evil have been reduced to general distinctions that serve only to perpetuate the dualisms between subject and object, life and death, and the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body*. The task of the *Shiftings* is to eradicate what is the fundamental distinction of separable existence. During this state the *Spirit* comes to transcend the *primary* and *antithetical Tinctures*, which is a prerequisite for the realization of “Concord.” The distinction between subject and object, the knower and the known, and between *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* is collapsed and destroyed during the *Shiftings*. On 6 December 1917 Yeats was given a diagram of the *Shiftings* to elucidate the process of uniting the *Spirit* and the *Celestial Body*: this diagram was codified in the Card File entry D48 entitled *Diagram Shiftings* (YVP3 296). The illustration below is adapted from this and the automatic script of 6 December 1917:

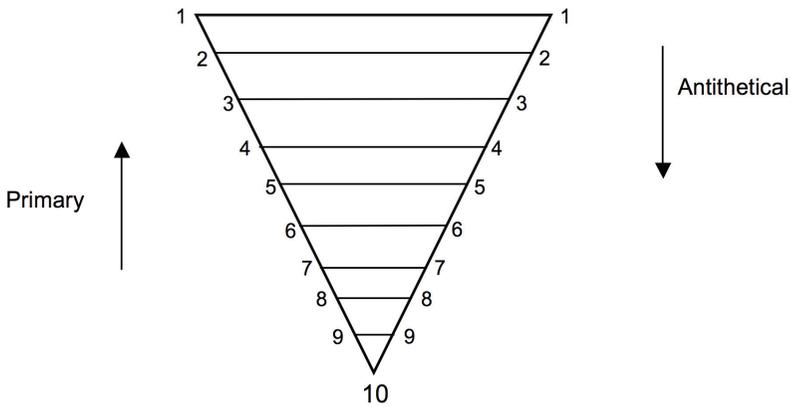


Figure 5: The activity of the *Spirit* in the *Shiftings* (adapted from YVP3 296 and YVP1 147–152).<sup>34</sup>

This diagram illustrates the process by which the *Spirit* is freed from the *primary* and *antithetical Tinctures*, referred to alternatively as “good” and “evil” (AVB 231). The process of freeing the *Spirit* from the *Tinctures* is summarized in the Card File entry A18, *After Life*, as follows:

What in shiftings do “two movements mean” to free the soul from anti & primary of last incarnation but to put into it the essence of good & evil contained in ego so that the soul may reincarnate at next stage.” “*Shiftings always begin at the axes*” “axes in both anti & primary bound together by energy” – no power in shifting but “slow circling” “movement up good down ward evil or subjective” (reverse of the third is usual in anti cone). (YVP3 235–36)

The movement upward, from 10 to 1, represents the *Spirit’s* gradual liberation from the *primary Tincture*, whereas the movement downward, from 1 to 10, represents its gradual liberation from the *antithetical Tincture*. The purpose of these movements is to “free soul from anti & primary of last incarnation” (YVP3 235). Yeats explains that the two movements are essentially the perfection of “knowledge of self in relation to the ideal,” and “knowledge of self in relation to God” (YVP3 233). He writes that the activity in the *Shiftings* does not “perfect soul but ‘frees it from imperfection...’” (YVP3 234). This sug-

gests that, during the *Shiftings*, the *Spirit* is purified of the *Tinctures*, which are barriers to the perfection of the soul.

Furthermore, the Card File entry A13 reveals that the "Soul is freed from space by 'annihilation of the earthly anti & primary of the earthly ego'" (YVP3 233). This implies that once the *Spirit* is liberated from the *antithetical Tincture* it exists beyond space, but is still within time. The annihilation of the *primary Tincture* results in the disintegration of individuality. Yeats explains that the *Shiftings* is "'a state of immense activity – the soul is intellectualised as far as possible in a self conscious but unified identity – it lives an active intense life as the life of the ego on earth' 'The ego is a disintegrated identity because it is composed of discordant elements' 'soul has one element only'" (YVP3 236). The "passive" purpose of the *Shiftings* is to liberate the *Spirit* from the "discordant elements" of nature (YVP3 236). At the end of the *Shiftings* the *Spirit* and the *Celestial Body* unite in a "self conscious but unified identity" (YVP3 236). This signals the obliteration of the division between the *Spirit* and the *Celestial Body*. At this point the soul "is [still] a disintegrated identity"; it is composed of conflicting elements (YVP3 236). The possibility of perceiving "Discord" is impossible once the *Spirit* and its object unite, for the "soul has one element only" (YVP3 236). Pure "Concord" is realized at the end of the *Shiftings*, since the "Soul is one element after shiftings" (YVP3 233). After the *Spirit* is free of the *Tinctures* it unites with the *Celestial Body*.

The *Dreaming Back* process liberates the soul from the *Passionate Body*, while the *Return* destroys the individuality of the *Will* by "impersonalising it" (YVP1 495). The purpose of the *Shiftings*, on the other hand, is to accentuate the "individuality of the soul," which it achieves by liberating the soul "from the divisible nature" (YVP1 495). The use of the word "accentuating" is potentially contradictory. If the aim of the *Return* is to destroy the individuality of the ego, then the "accentuating of the individuality of the soul" during the *Shiftings*, seemingly counteracts the endeavor of the *Return* (YVP1 495). However, the accentuation of the soul is not geared toward yielding an entity that is more particular. Instead, this process refers to the *Spirit's* union with the *Celestial Body*, which yields a complete soul. This means that the accentuation of the soul in the *Shiftings* does not create further separation between the *Spirit* and its *Ghostly Self*. Similarly, the objective of the *Shiftings* is not to cause further distinction between one *Spirit* and another. Instead, the purpose of the *Shiftings* is to liberate the *Spirit* from "divisible nature" (YVP1 495). In fact, at the end of the *Shiftings* individuality is completely dissolved. The reason for this is so that the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* may reunite, in order to constitute a pure *Spirit*, a completed soul, containing pure truth. The accentuation of the individuality of the soul refers to the unification of the *Spirit* and its object. Thomas explains that the objective of the *Shiftings* is: "to remake the soul into one" (YVP1 496).

Furthermore, the definition of the *Shiftings* is to "take from one place to another – sift means to pass through a sieve" (YVP1 503). This process essentially entails removing imperfection from that which is being sifted. To reiterate: the *Spirit* is, firstly, purified from the *Tinctures* during this state of the soul in death. In this process there are two movements to which the *Spirit* is subject. One movement is "passive" and liberates the *Spirit* of the *primary Tincture*. The other movement is active, which frees the *Spirit* from the *antithetical Tincture*, and space. The *Shiftings* "is repeated several times till complete" (YVP3 233). Once the *Spirit* has completed the passive and active movements of the *Shiftings*, it unites

for a moment with the *Celestial Body* and has a *Vision of the Clarified Body*. At this point the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* are one, but still constitute a “funnel.” The *Spirit* has been completely clarified by the *Celestial Body*. This means that the *Spirit* has successfully been purified of its last incarnation. In order to enter into the next state of the soul in death the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* must separate. At this point the *Spirit* “is taken from CB – CB remains at wide end [of the funnel]” (YVP1 503).

#### 4. THE *BEATITUDE* AND THE CONCLUSION OF THE CLARIFICATION PROCESS

The fourth state of the soul begins when the *Spirit* is taken to the *Ghostly Self*, which produces a “complete soul” (YVP1 497). The *Spirit* transfers its experience of life to the *Ghostly Self*. Yeats explains that upon the union of the *Spirit* and the *Ghostly Self*, “all thoughts or images drawn from the *Faculties* during the *Shiftings* or the *Dreaming Back*, or that have remained in the *Faculties*, must be passed into the *Ghostly Self* and so be forgotten by the *Spirit*” (CW13 195; AVA 236–37).

Yeats writes: “After the *Shiftings* the *Spirit* is for a short time ‘out of space and time,’ and every other abstraction, and is said not to move in a gyre but in a sphere, being as it were present everywhere at once. *Beatitude* is the result of the expiations of living man and disembodied soul, and the final harmony so established” (CW13 193; AVA 235). During the fourth state of the soul, corresponding to Cancer, the *Spirit* is perfect and completely pure. It has now realized the perception of pure “Concord.” The divisions and distinctions of material existence have been obliterated, for the *Spirit* is beyond space and time, the *Tinctures*, the competing states of subjectivity and objectivity, and “every other abstraction” (CW13 193; AVA 235). The *Spirit* has been wiped clean. Every moment of its last incarnation, and all previous incarnations, has been forgotten. It is as though the *Spirit* never separated from the “ultimate reality.” The *Spirit* is described as existing not in a gyre but a sphere. However, if it is set to reincarnate it is probably more accurate to assert that the *Spirit* is within the *Thirteenth Cone*, but perceives as though it is within the “ultimate reality.” The *Spirit* is a complete soul and only perceives this perfected state. Harmony has been established momentarily.

There is not much information on the *Beatitude*, since it is incomprehensible to beings that are subject to the strife between the *Tinctures*. On the 12 June 1918 Yeats discovered that the *Beatitude* is shortest of all the states in death, while the *Dreaming Back* is the longest state (YVP1 500). Then he discovered that when the *Spirit* is united to its *Ghostly Self* it is beyond time (YVP1 501). This is the only state in which the *Spirit* is beyond time and space. In every other state the *Spirit* is either subject only to time, or to both time and space. In the Card File entry A42, *After Death*, Yeats explains that, “After the *shiftings* there is a short period of beatitude & exultation & then the before life state begins” (YVP3 245).

In *A Vision A* Yeats explains that the *Spirit* will reincarnate if it has not completed its “human cycles” (CW13 195; AVA 236). However, if the twelve cycles of time and space have been completed the *Spirit* will remain permanently “united to its *Ghostly Self*,” and thus within the “ultimate reality” (CW13 195; AVA 236). Yeats writes that if the *Spirit* is “strong enough, or were its human cycles finished, it would remain, as in the *Beatitude*, permanently united to its *Ghostly Self*, or would, after two more states, be reborn into

a spiritual cycle where the movement of the gyre is opposite to that in our cycles, and incomprehensible to us, but it will almost certainly pass into human rebirth because of its terror of what seems to be the loss of its own being" (*CWI3* 195; *AVA* 236). This illustrates that the *Beatitude* is a brief taste of the "ultimate reality." The soul exists momentarily in a state of perception that is singular and harmonious. In *A Vision B* Yeats explains that during the *Beatitude* the soul is in "complete equilibrium after the conflict of the *Shiftings*; good and evil vanish into the whole" (*AVB* 232). The optimal way of describing the state of the soul in the *Beatitude* is as being perfected, harmonious, ordered and homogeneous. Yeats writes:

Nor can I consider the *Beatitude* as any state beyond man's comprehension, but as the presence before the soul in some settled order, which has arisen out of the soul's past, of all those events or works of men which have expressed some quality of wisdom or of beauty or of power within the compass of that soul, and as more completely human and actual than any life lived in a particular body. (*CWI3* 194; *AVA* 235)

#### IV. Conclusion

Yeats depicts the process of clarifying the *Spirit* and its subsequent exultation in the poem *The Man and the Echo*. A dying man muses over the consequences that his life's work had on people and society. In what is almost a deathbed vision, the speaker declares that "all seems evil until I / Sleepless would lie down and die" (*VP* 632–33, ll. 17–18; *CWI* 354). After his echo repeats "Lie down and die" the main speaker of the poem continues:

*Man*

That were to shirk  
 The spiritual intellect's great work,  
 And shirk it in vain. There is no release  
 In a bodkin or disease,  
 Nor can there be work so great  
 As that which cleans man's dirty slate.  
 While man can still his body keep  
 Wine or love drug him to sleep,  
 Waking he thanks the Lord that he  
 Has body and its stupidity,  
 But body gone he sleeps no more,  
 And till his intellect grows sure  
 That all's arranged in one clear view,  
 Pursues the thoughts that I pursue,  
 Then stands in judgment on his soul,  
 And, all work done, dismisses all  
 Out of intellect and sight  
 And sinks at last into the night. (*VP* 632–33, ll. 20–37; *CWI* 354)

The speaker, “Man,” refers to the “spiritual intellect’s great work,” which is an allusion to the *Celestial Body’s* clarification of the *Spirit* (l. 21). In lines 24 and 25 the speaker states that there is no work as “great” as “that which clean man’s dirty slate.” This refers to the purification process of the first three states of the soul in death. At the end of the *Shiftings*, the third state, the *Spirit* is completely purified of “divisible nature,” which is a requirement of material incarnation (*YVP3* 200). The clarification of the *Spirit* can only occur in the states of the soul in death. Only in death can the *Spirit* attain perfection, purity and harmony.

However, whilst in the body the *Spirit* is tainted and constrained by the antinomies of existence, it is bound to the “body and its stupidity.” During bodily existence the realization of pure “Concord” is impossible. In *A Vision B* Yeats writes that the *Spirit’s* separation from the body can be “described as awakened from its sleep in the dead body” (*AVB* 224). In the extract of “The Man and the Echo” above, the body is associated with ignorance, which implies that the range of human intellect is limited, for once the body is gone the man “sleeps no more” (l. 30). Once awakened, spiritual intellect “grows sure,” until “all’s arranged in one clear view” (l. 32). This is a reference to the realization of pure “Concord” upon the *Spirit’s* union with the *Celestial Body* and, subsequently, the *Ghostly Self*. Essentially, the first three disincarnate states of the soul in death can be described as the perfection of the *Spirit’s* knowledge of emotional and sensuous nature, personal notions of good and evil, and knowledge of the self “in relation to the ideal,” and “in relation to God” (*YVP3* 233). In the process of perfecting its knowledge of the foregoing material experience, the *Spirit* is clarified; its slate is cleaned and all is synthesized into “one clear view” of life. The *Spirit* transfers its perfected knowledge of life to its *Ghostly Self* upon their union. Once its “clear view” of life is passed on to the *Ghostly Self*, the *Spirit* dismisses all that it knows of life. In the poem, as the soul “stands in judgment,” which refers to the *Spirit’s* union with the *Ghostly Self*, all work is done and the *Spirit* “dismisses all” (l. 35). At this point, the *Spirit* is beyond “intellect and sight,” as it “sinks at last into the night” (ll. 36–37).

The following stanza of the poem describes the *Spirit’s* entrance into the states before its new incarnation. The speaker is addressing his echo:

*Man*

O Rocky Voice,

Shall we in that great night rejoice?

What do we know but that we face

One another in this place?

But hush, for I have lost the theme,

Its joy or night seem but a dream;

Up there some hawk or owl has struck,

Dropping out of sky or rock,

A stricken rabbit is crying out,

And its cry distracts my thought. (*VP* 633, ll. 39–48; *CWI* 354)

This stanza illustrates that the *Spirit’s* reunion with the *Ghostly Self* lasts for a short period of time before the pre-life states of the soul commence. Here the speaker is addressing his *Ghostly Self* within the fourth disincarnate state. The speaker is not able to prolong

his experience of the “night,” which represents the *Beatitude*. Material forms distract the speaker shortly after entering into this transcendent state. These distractions signal the end of the speaker’s union with his echo, which represents the *Spirit’s* momentary experience of pure “Concord.”

This essay presented a discussion of the period between lives that considers the system of *A Vision* to be composed of an intricately woven series of concepts, tenets and terms that are still in the process of development. The system and studies pertaining to its theoretical framework constitute an unfolding discourse that has not as yet approached the final stages of its completion. This discussion of the discarnate states does not lay claim to finality, or to a definitive account of the system’s theory of death. It was rather orientated by the thesis that death consists of a number of processes that are all geared toward purifying the transcendent *Spirit* of its material experience. Accordingly, the *Principles* and their inter-relations were elucidated so as to describe the spiritual intellect’s clarification of the individual *Spirit*.

### Notes

1. These lines were later revised and read as follows: “When all works that have / From cradle run to grave / From grave to cradle run instead” (*VP* 449; *CW1* 223). The initial intention is clear enough: to suggest that Yeats’s thinking about death was altered by the system’s portrayal of it as a process in which the soul is purified of its material experience.
2. This quotation suggests that oppositions exist between the *Principles* that can be represented according to the light-dark, solar-lunar duality. It will be seen that when representing the movement of the *Principles* within a cone it is possible to represent the activity of *Husk* and *Passionate Body* by using the phases of the lunar cycle, while the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* are represented as moving within a solar cycle. The reason is to maintain the maxim of “solar day, lunar night,” where day represents the release of the *Spirit* from the body and night its burial in the mire of human veins.
3. This view considers all critical material that attempts to increase our knowledge of the system, by studying its tenets, concepts, internal structure, its geometry and its philosophical implications, as constituting the same body of knowledge, the same discourse, as it were. Accordingly, I consider this very publication as falling within the ambit of the discourse surrounding “the system,” since it contributes to its development.
4. This is misleading, since the period between lives was elucidated sporadically throughout the four years of its development in the automatic script and the Sleep and Dream Notebooks.
5. While my argument coincides in various ways with, most notably, Colin McDowell’s “The Six Discarnate States of *A Vision* (1937),” (*YAACTS4* [1986] 87–98), and Barbara Croft’s discussion of the discarnate states in her “*Stylistic Arrangements of Experience*: A Study of William Butler Yeats’s *A Vision*” (London & Toronto: Bucknell University Press, 1987), my approach to the system’s account of death is markedly different. With the publication of the automatic script, the Sleep and Dream Notebooks, and the various Notebooks on *A Vision*, it is acceptable to treat the ideas that constitute the system as forming part of a discourse. In a sense, it is now possible to suggest different ways of representing and interpreting the ideas elucidated during communication sessions between Yeats, his wife, George, and their instructors. For this reason I consider the system of *A Vision* as still undergoing elucidation and development. By signalling that every book of *A Vision* is to some extent incomplete, Yeats allows for further development of its ideas, tenets and concepts (*AVB* 23).
6. “Within these cones move what are called the *Four Faculties: Will and Mask, Creative Mind and Body of Fate*” (*AVB* 73).
7. Colin McDowell, “‘The Completed Symbol’: *Daimonic* Existence and the Great Wheel in *A Vision* (1937),” *YA6* (1988) 195.
8. Yeats’s use of the phrase “Authentic Existant” (his consistent misspelling of Stephen MacKenna’s “Existent”) is not entirely accurate and requires clarification that is beyond the scope of this chapter. For more information on this matter see Matthew Gibson’s discussion in “‘Timeless and Spaceless’” in this volume, 105–6.

9. Rosemary Puglia Ritvo, “A Vision B: the Plotinian Metaphysical Basis,” *Review of English Studies* 26, no. 101 (1975): 36.
10. Matthew Gibson, “‘What Empty Eyeballs Knew’: Zen Buddhism in ‘The Statues’ and the *Principles of A Vision*,” *YAI* (1994) 145.
11. *Ibid.*, 145.
12. This is confirmed in the automatic script of 12 June 1918 (*YVP* 500).
13. Matthew Gibson, “‘What Empty Eyeballs Knew,’” *YAI* 145.
14. The temporal associations serve to represent the inverted relations of the *Principles* and the *Faculties*. The scope of this study does not allow for a detailed discussion of what is a very important feature of the relation between these theoretical conceptions of the system. Future studies of the extension of the *Principles* into materiality will benefit from a detailed discussion of the temporal nature of the respective *Principles* and *Faculties*.
15. Embedded in his extract is the suggestion that the solar and lunar circuits can be applied to various levels of human existence, from the 26,000 years of the solar “Great Year” to the embodiment of a single incarnation.
16. The phases marked on the circumference of the figure refer to the position of the *Faculties* for the incarnation being depicted. These are discussed later on in this section.
17. In what follows I have retained the terms used in the automatic script to name the various processes of the discarnate states, while retaining Yeats’s later scheme to elucidate the *Spirit*’s experience of each process and discarnate state. The reason for this is that I consider the original names to be useful for this exposition, and because it allows me to avoid musing over Yeats’s alterations to the concepts developed in the automatic script.
18. Due to the stance I have taken, which holds that the process of death is a clarification of the *Spirit* by the *Celestial Body*, the so-called pre-life states—*The Purification* and *The Foreknowledge*—are omitted from this discussion. These discarnate states essentially belong to a new lunar cycle (as applied to a single incarnation) and should be considered as states that facilitate the incarnation of the *Spirit* into a new phase. The complexity of the pre-life states should really be dealt with in a separate full-length study of the process of incarnation, and not in what is essentially a discussion of the process by which the *Spirit* is purified of its previous life on earth.
19. Due to the lack of space it is not possible to illustrate that the *Passionate Body* and *Husk* are formed out of the *Anima Mundi*. It suffices to say that these *Principles* serve to lock the *Spirit* into the material realm through luring it into accepting its future life on earth.
20. In “The Six Discarnate States of *A Vision* (1937),” McDowell argues that the *Meditation* properly belongs to the first state and that the true name of the second state is *The Return*. He argues strongly for including the *Meditation* along with *The Vision of the Blood Kindred* in the first state. He writes: “There are several reasons for suggesting that the *Meditation* belongs to the first after-death state. One is that it is inelegant to have more names than is necessary for the second state. Yeats unambiguously gives two names for the whole state, the *Dreaming Back* and the *Return*, and both names are drawn from the state’s stages. To add another name for the state as a whole may make sense in that it would save confusion over whether one was referring to the state or to one of its stages. However, if that were so, Yeats would not then explicitly say that the second had a ‘true name’ which was the *Return*” (*YA*ACTS4 89). I retain the various names given to it, since my focus is not on the naming of the states but on the processes embedded within them. One can, on the other hand, follow McDowell’s attempt to clarify the name of the second discarnate state; he provides a strong argument for placing the *Meditation* in the first state and for properly considering the name of the second state as the *Return*.
21. I prefer to retain the term *The Teachings*, since it occupies such an important place in the automatic script’s elucidation of the purification of the *Spirit*. McDowell, by contrast, prefers to use the terminology of *A Vision B*, and thus uses the *Phantasmagoria* in place of *The Teachings* (see note 27).
22. This is given further attention during my discussion of the second discarnate state.
23. Dionertes, an instructor, describes the moments after the event of death as follows: “I am dead, for many minutes I am blind and deaf and dumb – This is because the sudden loss of my physical senses has bewildered my soul – Then I am aware of brilliant light and I see all kin all those of blood relationship in past lives – They will take me for that moment’s vision which I spoke of to you – It is a vision of all past & future & of the highest Gods” (*YVP*3 22).
24. According to Yeats’s instructors this is the longest and most arduous of the discarnate states.
25. Once the *Spirit* is buried, and its attachments to the *Passionate Body* and the *Husk* have been dissolved, the

*Four Principles* separate. Yeats explains in a footnote to "The Soul in Judgment":

An automatic script describes this *Meditation* as lasting until burial and as strengthened by the burial service and by the thoughts of friends and mourners. I left this statement out of the text because it did not so much seem a necessary deduction from the symbol as an unverifiable statement of experience. *The meaning is doubtless that the ceremonial obliteration of the body symbolises the Spirit's separation from the Husk* [emphasis added]. Another automatic script describes the *Spirit* as rising from the head at death, *Celestial Body* from the feet, the *Passionate Body* from the genitals, while the *Husk* remains prone in the body (the *Husk* itself seen objectively) and shares its form. The *Spirit* is described as awakened from its sleep in the dead body. (AVB 223–24n)

Yeats did not deem it necessary to discuss the separation of the *Four Principles* in *A Vision B*. The reason could be that for reasons of space he decided to deal with this in a brief and concise footnote. It is also likely that he did not deem this phenomenon important to the six discarnate states. However, in *A Vision A* he explains that the separation of the *Principles* is instigated by the *Daimon*, a representative of the *Celestial Body*: "The separation of the *Principles* from the body is caused by the *Daimon's* gathering into the *Passionate Body* memory of the past life—perhaps but a single image or thought—which is always taken from the unconscious memories of the living, from the *Record* of all those things which have been seen but have not been noticed or accepted by the intellect, and the *Record* is always truthful" (CW13 184; AVA 222). This describes the main role of the *Daimon* (defined in this study as a personal emissary sent by the *Celestial Body* to the *Spirit*) in the discarnate states. The *Daimon* collects records of the foregoing incarnation into the *Passionate Body*, which "is now inseparable from the *Body of Fate* and inaugurates what is called the *Dreaming Back*" (CW13 130; AVA 161). The *Passionate Body* begins to dream back upon the events of life. It elicits these events from the *Body of Fate*, which is now part of its record of life. The *Dreaming Back* process begins after the *Principles* separate. Yeats explains: "When physical body is buried, the passionate body goes then to the scenes of its passion" (YVP3 153).

26. Yeats discovered this during an exchange with the instructor on 31 January 1918:
  16. Does the passionate body long survive the physical?
  16. Perhaps for centuries.
  17. Why this meditation upon its disolution.
  17. Because it should dissolve soon after death
  18. Does it normally do so.
  18. No normally only after some [?fury]
  19. Does first stage after death last until its disolution?
  19. No sometimes the soul reincarnates before it has dissolved
  20. Is the soul earth bound while passionate body remains?
  20. No
  21. What quality or defect of ego gives long life to passionate body?
  21. In the subjective phases it has a long life – at 8 & 22 practically – from 11 to 23 & 25 it has long life – longest in phases 12 13 17 18 22 8 (YVP1 313).
27. Aymor explains on 16 March 1918 that the dream of the *Passionate Body* and the *Dreaming Back* are two separate processes: "the two processes are separate & quite different in nature" (YVP1 384). This difference is signified as follows: "Dreaming back & pb dream" (YVP1 384). Aymor explains that the *Dreaming Back* is "a moral issue," whereas, the dream of the *Passionate Body* is a "sensuous image only" (YVP1 385).
28. In the Card File entry D18, titled *Dreaming back*, Yeats codified the automatic script of 2 April 1918: "How in DB is soul freed from nature?"  
 "By destruction of emotion & sense"  
 "Is not emotion very intense in DB cone" "Yes" "in every teaching a form of emotion is destroyed" by intensification of emotion felt "emotion induced by action in life destroyed" "ego feels the emotion as intensely as is possible it could be felt & is then immune" (YVP3 283; all emphasis added).
29. In *A Vision B* this process is given a different name, it is called the *Phantasmagoria* "which [according to Yeats] exists to exhaust, not nature, not pain and pleasure, but emotion, and is the work of *Teaching Spirits* [of the *Thirteenth Cone*]" (AVB 230). The *Phantasmagoria* and the *Teaching* refer to the same endeavor, that of destroying emotion and thereby the *Spirit's* connection to the *Passionate Body*.
30. Yeats explains that "if the life was evil, then the *Phantasmagoria* is evil, the criminal completes his crime" (AVB 230).
31. The instructor Thomas explains on 10 June 1918 that the *Teaching* is "the reversal of action – good action

becomes evil action & so on” (*YVP1* 494). The result of this is the complete knowledge of emotion, for the *Teaching* is “personal & emotional” (*YVP1* 494).

32. According to Yeats, the *Celestial Body* is yet again the driving force behind the *Return*: “In the *Return*, upon the other hand, the *Spirit* must live through past events in the order of their occurrence, because it is compelled by the *Celestial Body* to trace every passionate event to its cause until all are related and understood, turned into knowledge, made a part of itself” (*AVB* 226; emphasis added).
33. The *Celestial Body*’s role is to make *Spirits* “Separable & divisible from the entire into the particular & then incarnate” (*YVP1* 499).
34. The automatic script of 6 December 1917 explains that “10 is axis” (*YVP1* 147). This means that the tenth stage is the axis. The 10 stages represent the perfection of “good & evil” (*YVP1* 148).

## ANCIENT FRAMES: CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY IN YEATS'S *A VISION*

by Charles I. Armstrong

In both its 1925 and 1937 versions, W. B. Yeats's *A Vision* is a text that self-consciously frames its own argument. In the latter edition, the prefatory material collected in "A Packet for Ezra Pound" repeatedly dwells on the issue of geometrical abstraction, and how the text's doctrines may present an overly austere challenge to the reader. Even before any explicit mention, the opening sentence's evocation of the Rapallo landscape anticipates the spatial frameworks of the main doctrine:

Mountains that shelter the bay from all but the south wind, bare brown branches of low vines and of tall trees blurring their outline as though with a soft mist; houses mirrored in an almost motionless sea: a verandahed gable a couple of miles away bringing to mind some Chinese painting. (*AVB* 3)

The relationship between the gyres and cones at the heart of *A Vision* and the architecture of Yeats's thought may be construed in two different ways, both suggested by this quotation: will the former provide sheltering solidity for the latter, like the mountains surrounding Rapallo, or will the forbidding abstraction of the gyres and related paraphernalia instead envelop and obscure the text's main contents "as though with a soft mist"? Later in "A Packet for Ezra Pound," Yeats goes on to write of the intricate articulations of Pound's cantos, expressing a hope for clarity that also is relevant for his own work: "I may, now that I have recovered leisure, find that the mathematical structure, when taken up into imagination, is more than mathematical, that seemingly irrelevant details fit together into a single theme" (*AVB* 5). But the later pages of the introduction are full of reservations about the "arbitrary, harsh, difficult symbolism" that lies at the text's heart (*AVB* 23). Yeats wistfully evokes the possibility of leaving behind the rigors of that symbolism once it is mastered: "We can (those hard symbolic bones under the skin) substitute for a treatise on logic the *Divine Comedy*, or some little song about a rose, or be content to live our thought" (*AVB* 24). The skeleton of these "bones under the skin" is indeed sufficiently bare, for Yeats's sources—the mysterious instructors that allegedly communicated the system via his wife's mediumship—to complain: "if my mind returned too soon to their unmixed abstraction they would say, 'We are starved'" (*AVB* 12).

Are the geometrical and symbolical articulations of *A Vision* an essential framework that upholds the whole—like a spine, say—or is it an external generalization, an abstraction, that can be left behind like the "coat / Covered with embroideries / Out of old mythologies" in his poem "A Coat" (*VP* 320; *CWI* 127)? Functioning very much like metaphors—indeed, they are embraced as metaphors in Yeats's poetry—are these framing devices merely external ornamentation, or do they possess valuable heuristic or mimetic force? Yeats was not sure, but he was in any case uneasy. This sense of structural vacillation also affects his deployment of classical philosophy as a source in order to elucidate the system. Yeats's use of numerous thinkers of the Platonic tradition can both be explained as

innate to the very workings of *A Vision*, and as a superficial philosophical coating added to the firm outlines of a canvas provided by his supernatural instructors. This essay will pursue the related facets of the difficult issue of framing: it will be more engaged in scrutinizing the multiplicity of structural effects that occur in Yeats's use of Plato, Plotinus, and other ancient philosophers, than in providing anything close to an exhaustive summary of actual doctrinal overlaps and discrepancies involved. Jonathan Culler has distinguished between frames and contexts in a way that is relevant here:

the notion of context frequently oversimplifies rather than enriches discussion, since the opposition between an act and its context seems to presume that the context is given and determines the meaning of the act. We know, of course, that things are not so simple: context is not fundamentally different from what it contextualizes; context is not given but produced; what belongs to a context is determined by interpretive strategies; contexts are just as much in need of elucidation as events; and the meaning of a context is determined by events. Yet when we use the term *context* we slip back into the simple model it proposes. Since the phenomena criticism deals with are signs, forms with socially-constituted meanings, one might try to think not of context but of the framing of signs: how are signs constituted (framed) by various discursive practices, institutional arrangements, systems of value, semiotic mechanisms?<sup>1</sup>

The framing questions guiding this essay are: What role does philosophy have in the system presented by *A Vision*? What kind of thought does Yeats want from his classical philosophers, and how does he relate them to the system already largely established by the mystical instructors that communicated with him via his wife's mediumship? How does Yeats relate to the framing question of genre, for instance in terms of classical precedents such as Platonic dialogues and the pre-Socratics' fragments? And, finally, how does *A Vision's* engagement with Plato, Plotinus, and other ancient philosophers relate to more encompassing ideological frames? Received opinion on the role of classical philosophy in *A Vision* emphasizes that this is an influence especially relevant to the second, 1937 version of Yeats's work. The relative paucity of philosophical references in the earlier version reflects Yeats's respectful subservience to the advice of his instructors, who did not want him to mix up the systems and concepts of others with their own: "they asked me not to read philosophy until their exposition was complete, and this increased my difficulties. Apart from two or three of the principal Platonic Dialogues I knew no philosophy" (*AVB* 12). Yeats typically accepts a distinction between true instructors and so-called "frustrators" who deliberately gave misleading or erroneous knowledge, but in this respect even the former seem to frustrate him. In retrospect, the lifting of the embargo against philosophy is presented as a liberating experience, the effects of which were felt simultaneously with the 1925 publication of the first version: "When the proof sheets came I felt myself relieved from my promise not to read philosophy" (*AVB* 19). Even if Yeats exaggerates a little here—after all, both the first edition and the automatic script clearly indicate some philosophical reading took place prior to 1925—there certainly is a large difference in emphasis between the 1925 and 1937 editions of *A Vision*.<sup>2</sup> When Yeats looks back at that first version, it is with deep misgivings:

The first version of this book, *A Vision*, except the section on the twenty-eight phases, and that called 'Dove or Swan' which I repeat without change, fills me with shame. I had misinterpreted the geometry, and in my ignorance of philosophy failed to understand distinctions upon which the coherence of the whole depended. (*AVB* 19)

Philosophy, then, is largely a supplementary addition coming after 1925, yet still provides more than mere extraneous scaffolding to Yeats's system. For "the coherence of the whole" only comes about, only becomes understandable, through philosophical treatment. Interestingly, something of the same doubleness is present even earlier in the gestation of *A Vision*. On a surface level, philosophy might seem to be banished from the proceedings that generated the automatic script, as Yeats obeyed the instructors' embargo. On the other hand, a notebook entry of 11 January 1921 arguably identifies Plato as a presiding genius for the foundation of the crucial dichotomy between primary and antithetical phases. Yeats states that:

in a recent sleap [*sic*] communicator said that all communications such as ours were begun by the transference of an image later from another mind. The image is selected by the daimon from telepathic impacts & one is chosen not necessarily a recent one. For instance the script about black & white horses may have been from Horton who wrote it to me years before. (*YVP3* 65)<sup>3</sup>

The mention of the horses appears the first day of preserved automatic script (5 November 1917) as the instructor Thomas of Dorlowicz's reference to "one white one black both winged both necessary to you" (*YVPI* 56). According to Yeats's explanation, this again refers even further back, to a scrap of paper presented to him by his friend W. T. Horton, and an automatic script stemming from Edith Lyttelton in 1914, both of which ultimately refer back to Plato's *Phaedrus* and Socrates' allegorical account of the soul in terms of "the composite nature of a pair of winged horses and a charioteer."<sup>4</sup>

Despite having a seemingly crucial role for Yeats's system, Plato largely drops out of sight in the automatic script—his dichotomy establishes what might be termed the vital germ or seed for the system, but its contents are subsequently modified and husbanded by seemingly external frameworks. Barring an off-hand reference, in the dedication to the first edition, to Horton's living "through that strange adventure, perhaps the strangest of all adventures—Platonic love" (*CW13* liii; *AVA* x), and a few other passing mentions, Yeats conceals the original importance of Plato's understanding of love to the proceedings of the automatic script. In particular it was crucially linked, at the beginning of the automatic script, to his balancing interpretation of his relations to the most important women of his life. Nevertheless, Plato and the entire mainstream of Western philosophy are for the most part conspicuously absent during the automatic sessions—and they are so for a reason. In the script of 1 January 1918, Fish expressed skepticism concerning "Wisdom of thought," claiming, in a rather Nietzschean vein, that "a metaphysician is a nihilist not a creator" (*YVPI* 184). On this premise, both Kant and Hegel were said to possess no true wisdom. Yet only days later, on January 14, another instructor made a distinction between different philosophies. Responding to Yeats's question, "When you are giving

me a profound philosophy why do you warn me against philosophy," Thomas responded: "I warn you against the philosophy that is bred in stagnation—it is a bitter philosophy a philosophy which destroys—I give you one which leads—I give you one which is from outside—a light which you follow not one which will burn you" (*YVPI* 252). Here an important, but far from water-tight, distinction is established. At one level it might simply be taken as setting down a clear opposition between the rationalism of academic philosophy and the mysteries of esoteric thought, yet the very existence of "philosophy" as a common term here indicates both continuity and room for overlap. The 1937 version of *A Vision* explores this common ground with some diligence, and classical philosophy will play an especially important role as a kind of thought that is, presumably, "from outside"—even as it is accepted within the institutional framework of mainstream philosophy.

The framing distinction between inside and outside is germane, if one is to articulate how philosophy intersects with the thought of *A Vision*. As in the automatic script, large parts of Western philosophy are effectively sidelined also in the published versions of Yeats's work. Especially in the second version, classical philosophy looms large but does so to the detriment of most of the philosophical heritage—with minor exceptions in figures such as Berkeley, Croce and Whitehead—coming after Plotinus. Effectively, this means that, for instance, the important critical philosophy of Kant, as well as modern aesthetics, is simply shunted aside. Insofar as Yeats's philosophical recidivism acknowledges these developments, it is only to dismiss them, instead emphasizing a cosmological tradition, speculating on concrete essences behind universal world processes, that was effectively brought to an end as a central philosophical concern with Kant and his more linguistically-oriented successors. For Yeats, however, the benefits probably outweighed any possible drawbacks—for not only do the pre-Socratics, for instance, give him access to a kind of thinking which does not clearly distinguish reason from irrationality, or science from magic, but their thought also permits him to aspire to prophetic powers: "What if there is an arithmetic or geometry that can exactly measure the slope of a balance, the dip of a scale, and so date the coming of that something?" (*AVB* 29). Yeats's chosen classical philosophers were also eminently qualified to deliver, and develop, the "metaphors for poetry" (*AVB* 8) that were supposed to issue out of the system. Never far separated from ontic determinations and mythical narratives, thinkers such as Plato and Empedocles could provide a far more full-flavored diet than the seemingly murderous abstraction of modern philosophy. This is touched upon in the automatic script, where Yeats uses the relative level of concretion of the "figurative" symbolism of Platonic myth as a point of reference for understanding the status of the images and diagrams passed on to him by his instructors (*YVPI* 126, 141).

If Yeats's privileging of classical philosophy excludes most later philosophical developments, it is also highly selective within the confines of ancient thought. Within the Greek tradition Yeats's cosmological bias means that important political and ethical issues, for instance, are marginalized. A major figure such as Aristotle is largely ignored, as Yeats squarely focuses on Plato and his pre-Socratic forerunners. Even within Plato's writings, the Socratic *elenchus*—a form of logical refutation of a position through proving an opposite point—is only one of many important dimensions eschewed or overlooked. A broader focus would have been possible: certainly, the run-through of the twenty-eight incarnations is, for instance, rich enough to open up for interesting echoes of Greek and

Roman thought on practical philosophy (particularly with regard to the issue of the good life) and epistemology. Yet after "Plato and Aristotle," Yeats claims in the historical summary of the "Dove or Swan" section of *A Vision*, the mind was "exhausted" (AVB 272; cf. CW13 153; AVA 184). As a result, Roman thought tends to be ignored and the Stoics can be ingenuously disparaged as "the first benefactors of our modern individuality, sincerity of the trivial face, the mask torn away" (AVB 272; cf. CW13 153; AVA 184).

Yeats wanted to use classical philosophy for other purposes: he especially wanted to use it to buttress his own recourse to framing diagrams. The schematic use of gyres and other geometrical symbols constitutes one of the key deployments of ancient thought in *A Vision*. In the 1925 version, Book II is opened with the poem "Desert Geometry or the Gift of Harun Al-Raschid," which evokes Parmenides as a possible, but actually erroneous, source:

The signs and shapes;  
All those abstractions that you fancied were  
From the great Treatise of Parmenides;  
All, all those gyres and cubes and midnight things  
Are but a new expression of her body.... (CW13 102; AVA 126)

In the 1937 version, the important two first parts of Book I, "The Great Wheel," are significantly marked by ancient thought. The opening paragraph features a lengthy quotation of Empedocles on the interplay of Discord and Concord in a single vortex, and goes on to claim (in an imprecise rendering of the forty-fourth fragment, as presented by Burnet) that it was "this Discord or War that Heraclitus called 'God of all and Father of all, some it has made gods and some men, some bond and some free'" (AVB 67). With this opening, Yeats strikes two keynotes of considerable importance for his system as a whole: he will create a geometrical system in order to grasp the underlying patterns of existence, but he will also stress aspects of tension and strife in the process.

Heraclitus and Empedocles are, however, only used as examples—as it does not take long for Yeats to point out that linking together one vortex for Concord (which Yeats later identifies with the objectivity of the *primary Tincture*) with another for Discord (equated with *antithetical Tincture*) gives "the fundamental symbol of my instructors" (AVB 68). One gains a sense that classical philosophy is here cast in a secondary, supporting role, somehow buttressing Yeats's system—a sense not contradicted by the subsequent quick references to Yeats's favorite quotation from Heraclitus ("Dying each other's life, living each other's death") and the observation that the "first gyres clearly described by philosophy are those described in the *Timaueus*" (AVB 68).

Hazard Adams has perspicaciously noted the peculiar effect this creates:

There is something oblique about these predecessors as authorities invoked to give status to Yeats's endeavor. Not one of them presents a figure quite like Yeats's principal symbol. Empedocles' concord and discord are not quite the same as Yeats's primary and antithetical (though it will take a little while for this to become clear). Neither is Yeats presenting what verges on a physical theory, as in *Timaueus*. Same and other have some relation to primary and antithetical, but it is oblique.<sup>5</sup>

The same discrepancy between old and new is evident if one inspects the comparable passage in the first edition (cf. *CWI* 106–7; *AVA* 182–88). Adams's explanation for this effect, namely that Yeats wants to contrast his own "tradition of iconic creativity" with one of "dogmatic authority," is less than entirely convincing. The identified problem can however open up a fruitful questioning: it is not quite clear what function Yeats wishes to give his cited, ancient sources. The common opinion, suggested by Yeats's own prefatory comments to *A Vision*, has been that the thinkers of the Platonic tradition are there to bring clarification: Yeats is using the lucidity of those minds to make his own system more transparent. Not incommensurable with this reading is the idea, sometimes suggested in passing by Yeats himself, that his own instructors actually were inspired by these predecessors. Thus the introduction presents Empedocles as influence rather than example: "Although the more I read [after the first edition] the better did I understand what I had been taught, I found neither the geometrical symbolism nor anything that could have inspired it except the vortex of Empedocles" (*AVB* 20). But, insofar as the ancient models are subtly different from those provided by Yeats's instructors, there is a risk of merely further muddying the waters. Hence the interpretative need for other, supporting explanations, such as the one provided by Adams in passing here: the ancient thinkers may also have a legitimizing function. Reaching out to a wider, less exclusively esoteric audience in the second edition of *A Vision*, Yeats thus brought increased respectability to his own system and its "unfashionable gyre" ("The Gyres," *VP* 565; *CWI* 299) through classical references and allusions. Claiming that much of his own system was "as old as philosophy" (*AVB* 71) would ensure that it avoided any accusation of idiosyncrasy—as well as the incomprehension that dogged William Blake's potentially comparable system. It also ensured that Yeats's system was less vulnerable to being interpreted as being in any way a mere reformulation of Blake's.<sup>6</sup>

Alternatively, Yeats can be seen as effectively testing his theory in light of the wisdom of tradition, using the thought of Empedocles and other classical thinkers as the philosophical equivalent of an Arnoldian touchstone. Rather than simply finding fault with the insufficiency of his precursors, Yeats may in fact be engaged in a process of adjusting his own invention in the light of tradition. This is, after all, an author who stated: "Talk to me of originality and I will turn on you with rage" (*CW* 5 213; *E&I* 522, "Introduction"). Indeed, Yeats may be doing several different things at once. Matthew DeForrest, in a close inspection of Yeats's use of some of the sources for *A Vision*, encapsulates this well when stating that Yeats's "purpose" in using Plotinus is "twofold": it is both an attempt to "validate his system" and to "illustrate" the instructors' material "through an examination of comparable material."<sup>7</sup> Yeats may on occasion be deflating tradition, but he might just as well be submitting to it as an arbiter in what amounts to a complex double bind. Several rhetorical functions may in fact be at work in any given passage, so complex are the shifts of tone and so surprising the juxtapositions one finds in *A Vision*.

If such questions of rhetorical function have previously been relatively neglected, the key doctrinal overlaps between Yeats and the parts of the tradition that he finds relevant to his interests have nevertheless been mapped in some detail. There is a general consensus that a Platonic worldview, with a dualism between spirit and matter, and an important mediating role played by the intermediary beings called *Daimons*, is crucial to *A Vision*. Despite its own intentions, James Olney's overly systematic run-through of Yeats's links

to Plato and the pre-Socratic quartet of Pythagoras, Parmenides, Heraclitus, and Empedocles makes it obvious that Yeats's interest was not evenly divided: although he respected Pythagoras's geometrical impulse (see for instance the mention of his perfect sphere in *CWI* 107; *AVA* 188) and made colorful use of Parmenides, as mentioned earlier, in "The Gift of Harun Al-Raschid," neither of these thinkers really made much of an impact on Yeats's thought in *A Vision*. The relevance of Empedocles' overall conception is, however, hard to dispute: "the system that Yeats's Instructors revealed to him...was, at least in its basic configuration and its largest outline, an Empedoclean system of continually alternating half-cycles set in a time without beginning and without end."<sup>8</sup>

Other commentators have avoided Olney's general dismissiveness towards the Neo-Platonist tradition. Rosemary Puglia Ritvo's close reading of the overlap between the 1937 *Vision* and Plotinus's thought makes it clear that Yeats's praise for Stephen MacKenna's "incomparable translation" (*AVB* 20) amounted to far more than window-dressing. She especially demonstrates the detailed concordance that exists between Yeats's four *Principles* (*Husk*, *Passionate Body*, *Spirit*, and *Celestial Body*) and Plotinus's metaphysical hypostases,<sup>9</sup> but also for instance points out the crucial agreement between the two with regard to "the notion of Person at the highest levels of existence."<sup>10</sup> While opposing Harold Bloom's gnostic reading of Yeats's thought, Brian Arkins basically affirms Ritvo's central thesis: "Yeats subscribes to Plotinus's hierarchical world-view, founded on, but by no means identical with, the dualism of Plato."<sup>11</sup> However, Arkins goes further in highlighting Yeats's small, but important differences from Plotinus—differences which become very important indeed in a poem such as "News for the Delphic Oracle" (*VP* 611–12; *CWI* 345–46). Where Ritvo asserts in passing that Yeats's *Daimon* is more closely drawn to the sensory world than Plotinus's guiding spirits, Arkins points towards a more general tendency in Yeats to contradict Plotinus's privileging of the spiritual over the material world. In general, Plotinus's stress on unity is counteracted by Yeats's insistence upon the dynamic and conflictual aspects of the pre-Socratics, even using Heraclitus as a stick with which to beat Marxism: "It is the old saying of Heraclitus, 'War is God of all, and Father of all, some it has made Gods and some men, some bond and some free,' and the converse of Marxian Socialism" (*AVB* 82n).

Matthew Gibson's recent article on Yeats and classical philosophy shows that Yeats misreads Plotinus, collapsing the individual into the universal, but also points out that this is a creative misreading that is understandable given Yeats's aims.<sup>12</sup> Gibson also provides valuable archeological work on Yeats's use of the ancient idea of the Great Year. He demonstrates how a close reading of Pierre Duhem's modern account of ancient thinkers, such as Proclus and Simplicius, in *Le système du monde* informed Yeats's historical scheme, whereby the Great Year was understood to span 26,000 years, involving lesser units of two millennia. This unearthing of the formative importance of a secondary source is in line with Gibson's tendency to stress the mediated nature of Yeats's Platonism, mentioning not only contemporary sources such as Pater and MacGregor Mathers, but also the Cambridge Platonists and Plutarch. This can be taken further, however, as the main focus for Gibson, Arkins, Ritvo and Olney—the existence of similarities and differences between Yeatsian and classical thought—only gains significance from several more encompassing frameworks. These commentators have frequently pointed out that, even while there is general concordance in his prose, Yeats's poetry is less than simply affirmative of the

Platonic tradition. Arguably, though, such a neat division presupposes that one reads *A Vision* as a straightforward positing of doctrine, devoid of any of the irony and ambivalence found in Yeats's literary work. Even the central chapters would seem to be informed with a gentle sense of irony, as Yeats—more than once misspelling John Burnet's name, misquoting various sources—

Thus, when Thomas Parkinson puts "A Packet for Ezra Pound" down as a collection of "numerous droll and evasive preambles," he is missing an important point.<sup>16</sup> Whether or not we believe Yeats when he claims, at the end of the "Introduction to 'A Vision,'" that the whole system provides no more than "stylistic arrangements of experience comparable to the cubes in the drawing of Wyndham Lewis and to the ovoids in the sculpture of Brancusi" (*AVB* 25), this expression of suspended disbelief has an illustrious predecessor. If *A Vision* gives him merely a flexible frame through which to perceive the world, it functions rather like mythology did for Socrates. In a passage from the *Phaedrus*, which Yeats himself quoted at the end of an introduction early in his career, Socrates defends his own use of mythology, claiming that he has "not time for such enquiries" as those made by skeptics who want to explain away the myths (*CW6* 8–9; *FF TIP* xvi–xviii).<sup>17</sup> He has use for those latter myths, without worrying about their lack of verifiable truth-value. Something comparable also occurs in Yeats's 1937 discussion of the Great Year. Coming across a number of different interpretations of the Great Year, Yeats returns to the conception presented in the *Timaeus*: "Plato may have brought such an ideal year into the story, its periods all of exactly the same length, to remind us that he dealt in myth" (*AVB* 212–13). Yeats's section on "The Completed Symbol" constantly worries about the discrepancy between symbol and reality, and it is Plato's obviously playful stance that leads the Irishman to a point of crisis: "Will some mathematician some day question and understand, as I cannot, and confirm all, or have I also dealt in myth?" (*AVB* 213).

The open-ended form of the Platonic dialogue plays a significant role in Yeats's later poetic output, finding a modern analogue in the dialogue between Owen Aherne and Michael Robartes that appears at the beginning of *A Vision*. Margaret Mills Harper has emphasized what she calls the "dialogic method" of the automatic script that preceded the writing of *A Vision*, but it is possible to see the tentative and exploratory nature of this genre as infecting the final product of the latter work, too.<sup>18</sup> Initially, of course, the ideas on which it built were meant to be presented (as Yeats stated in a letter to John Quinn) in "a dialogue in the manner of Landor" (29 November 1917 cit. *YVP* 4 2). There may have been more than a trace of anxiety of influence to explain Landor's dislike of Plato—but in any case Yeats was, in his own fashion, following both of their examples in toying with the genre.

In a reading of how frames operate in Kant's aesthetics, Jacques Derrida claims that "what has produced and manipulated the frame puts everything to work in order to efface the frame effect."<sup>19</sup> The self-conscious bravado with which Yeats framed his use of the ancient philosophers makes sure we never lose sight of the fact that his access to them was far from immediate. He may at times have believed he was engaged in an *anamnesis* of timeless truths, of a kind sketched by Pater: "Pythagoreanism too, like all the graver utterances of primitive Greek philosophy, is an instinct of the human mind itself, and therefore also a constant tradition in its history, which *will* recur."<sup>20</sup> Yet Yeats's understanding was embedded in concrete historical contexts, and even his intentions in, say, quoting a pre-Socratic fragment were to some degree following established conventions. As a member of the Golden Dawn and a long-time student of Theosophy, for instance, Yeats had the precedent of other recent esoteric literature at the back of his mind while writing *A Vision*. In Madame Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, for instance, we read:

It was not Zeno alone, the founder of the Stoics, who taught that the Universe evolves, when its primary substance is transformed from the state of fire into that of air, then into water, etc. Heraclitus of Ephesus maintained that the one principle that underlies all phenomena in Nature is fire. The intelligence that moves the Universe is fire, and fires [*sic*] is intelligence. And while Anaximenes said the same of air, and Thales of Miletus (600 years B.C.) of water, the Esoteric Doctrine reconciles all those philosophers by showing that though each was right the system of none was complete.<sup>21</sup>

Yeats's former spiritual teacher also quotes figures such as Plato and Pythagoras quite copiously. Another important esoteric forerunner, MacGregor Mathers's *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, similarly appropriates Pythagoras to his cabalistic purposes.<sup>22</sup> While one should not underestimate important differences in both purpose and detail—Madame Blavatsky does not, for instance, refer to Plotinus at all, having no Stephen MacKenna to inspire her—there is something of a generic precedent for Yeats's work here. Graham Hough's insistence on how Yeats's thought takes place within an occult heritage is still valid, and *A Vision* must be read as a text that at least partially places itself within an existing literary tradition of that particular heritage.<sup>23</sup>

As a result of that ancestry, Yeats's use of classical philosophy places itself in the very outer margins of British Hellenism—an ideological framework of considerable importance and scope in the context of the imperial ideology of Victorianism and its aftermath. At one stage in “The Soul in Judgment” (Book III of the 1937 *A Vision*) Yeats denounces as illusory “the pure benevolence our exhausted Platonism and Christianity attribute to an angelical being” (*AVB* 230); this is characteristic of an important distance between his own appropriation of ancient thought and that of many others. While figures such as Benjamin Jowett and George Grote expended much energy on reconciling Plato with modern Christianity and morality, for instance finding parallels between the Athenian *polis* and modern British politics, Yeats could approach the Greeks from a rather different perspective.<sup>24</sup> Historically, his stress on Heraclitean flux and strife, as well as Empedoclean circularity, rather than the ideal state of Plato, is indicative of the post-war disillusionment with Victorian ideals that looms so large in a poem such as “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen” (*VP* 428–433; *CWI* 210–14). In this respect, Nietzsche—who listed Heraclitus and Empedocles as two of his own most important inspirations—is a significant forerunner.<sup>25</sup> Yeats also situated himself at some remove from the homosexual aestheticism that played such a large role for writers such as Pater, Symonds, and Forster,<sup>26</sup> although that movement's cult of beauty—also important for aestheticism during the latter stages of the Victorian era—is closely related to the beautiful bodies and “immovable trance” (*CWI* 3 59; *AVA* 70–71; *AVB* 136) characteristic of Yeats's Phase Fifteen. More unexpectedly, perhaps, the esoteric context of *A Vision* places this work at an oblique angle to one of Yeats's major uses of the classical heritage—it in no way replicates the blatantly nationalist use Yeats made of ancient Greece earlier in his career. At a surface level, and despite the fact that Yeats's attraction to Plotinus was in part motivated by the fact that this philosopher's most eminent modern translator was an Irishman (MacKenna), there is no strong Irish dimension to Yeats's use of the classical past at this stage. Claire Nally has recently argued for a presence of nationalist discourse and themes in *A Vision*, yet this is largely a

subterranean affair.<sup>27</sup> Concomitantly with a vastly expanded knowledge of the traditions of Western metaphysical thought, this apparent distance to local matters enabled Yeats to reinvent himself as a wide-ranging, philosophical poet of considerable speculative verve, with the kind of international relevance that would merit a Noble Prize, during the later stages of his career. Ultimately, though, he could not withstand the temptation of using this philosophical power as an explicit tool in the ideological struggles within Ireland. In “The Statues,” for instance, the concluding stanza belligerently declares the ancient ancestry of the Irish, using the Easter Rising’s upsurge of national identity to contrast the Irish identity’s classical roots to the deracinated decadence of the “filthy modern tide” (VP 611; CWI 345). For better or for worse, without scrutinizing Plotinus and his Greek predecessors, Yeats would never have had the bravery to confront the particular dogmas he opposed in the head-on way characteristic of his late writings. As he puts it in “The Need for Audacity of Thought”:

We must consider anew the foundations of existence, bring to the discussion—diplomacies and prudences put away—all relevant thought. Christianity must meet to-day the criticism, not, as its ecclesiastics seem to imagine, of the school of Voltaire, but of that out of which Christianity itself in part arose, the School of Plato.... (CW10 201; UP2 465)<sup>28</sup>

Those philosophical gains are perhaps the most indisputable ones of Yeats’s use of classical thought in *A Vision*. Although selective and at times misleading, the philosophical formulation of Yeats’s esoteric system is in any case a complex and fascinating phenomenon. It never represents a simple mirroring, or taking over, of timeless truths, but should rather be conceived of as a complex and many-faceted act of mediation. Like Walter Pater before him, Yeats had too much respect for the sensual side of life to not be suspicious of “the ascetic pride which lurks under all Platonism, resultant from its opposition of the seen to the unseen, as falsehood to truth....”<sup>29</sup> Thus, although he embraced the dualism and much of the idealism of Plato and Plotinus, he tempered it with the stress on temporal flux and conflict found in the pre-Socratics. Yet classical philosophy did more than supply Yeats with warring dogmas; it also provided him with the precedent of a mode of thinking flexible enough to question its own verities through generic multiplicity, skepticism, and sheer ludic energy. Although his approach to them was inevitably subject to numerous conventional and mediational contingencies, Yeats’s ancient philosophical sources provided the basis for an invigorating reframing of the concerns endemic to *A Vision*.

### Notes

- 1 Jonathan Culler, *Framing the Sign: Criticism and its Institutions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), ix.
- 2 As early as 17 October 1918, the instructors were advising Yeats to spend “half an hour a day reading philosophic literature” (YVP2 82).
- 3 For a discussion of this episode, see George Mills Harper, *MYVI* 9–12, as well as his *W. B. Yeats and W. T. Horton: The Record of an Occult Friendship* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980), 59–63.
- 4 *Phaedrus*, 246a, in Plato, *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, translated by Harold North Fowler, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1914), 471. The Yeateses owned Jowett’s translation: *WBGYL* 1598 (YL 1586).

- 5 Hazard Adams, *The Book of Yeats's Vision: Romantic Modernism and Antithetical Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 70.
- 6 Blake played an important role in the first version of *A Vision*, and George Mills Harper's commentaries on the automatic script point out several important parallels from the very beginning: see *YVPI* 12, 26, 28; *YVP* 3.
- 7 Matthew DeForrest, "Philosophical Differences and Yeats's Corroborative System in *A Vision*," *South Carolina Review* 32, no. 1 (Fall 1999): 224.
- 8 James Olney, *The Rhizome and the Flower: The Perennial Philosophy—Yeats and Jung* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 150.
- 9 Rosemary Puglia Ritvo, "A Vision B: The Plotinian Metaphysical Basis," in *Review of English Studies* 101 (1975): 34–46.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 35n. Although Ritvo does not contextualize her reading, it is most likely Yeats's receptivity to Romantic tenets that makes possible an agreement with what Pierre Hadot has called "Plotinus' central intuition: the human self is *not* irrevocably separated from its eternal model, as the latter exists within divine Thought" (*Plotinus, or The Simplicity of Vision*, translated by Michael Chase [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993], 27).
- 11 Brian Arkins, *Builders of My Soul: Greek and Roman Themes in Yeats* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1990), 35.
- 12 Matthew Gibson, "Classical Philosophy," in ed. David Holdeman and Ben Levitas, *W. B. Yeats in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 276–287. In personal correspondence with the author, Gibson has also pointed out how Yeats's use of his sources regarding the concept of the Eternal Return changes. While it is presented as a mainly Nietzschean idea in the first edition (*CW13* 142; *AVA* 176), Yeats takes the concept back to ancient Greek thought in the second.
- 13 Walter Pater, *Plato and Platonism: A Series of Lectures* (Amsterdam: Fredonia Books, 2002), 2. The edition in the Yeatses' library was published by Macmillan in 1894 (*WBGYL* 1549; *YL* 1538).
- 14 See for instance Catherine H. Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, Strauss, Derrida* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- 15 Olney, *The Rhizome and the Flower*, 226
- 16 Thomas Parkinson, "This Extraordinary Book," *YAI* (1982) 195–206 at 195.
- 17 The same passage is referred to again in "Enchanted Woods" in *The Celtic Twilight* (*M2005* 41–42; *Myth* 63).
- 18 Margaret Mills Harper, *Wisdom of Two: The Spiritual and Literary Collaboration of George and W. B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 135.
- 19 Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, translated by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 73.
- 20 Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, 64. Yeats presents Platonic anamnesis as "a relation to the timeless" in John Aherne's letter (*AVB* 54).
- 21 H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*, 2 vols. (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1888), 1:76–77.
- 22 See S. L. MacGregor Mathers, *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, (1887; London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981; *WBGYL* 1305 [*YL* 1292]), 21 and 214n.
- 23 Graham Hough, *The Mystery Religion of W. B. Yeats* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984).
- 24 Interestingly, two of Yeats's most important scholarly sources—A. E. Taylor and John Burnet—pointed in opposite directions. According to Frank M. Turner, in Taylor's work "both Socrates and Plato emerged as proto-Christians who had been primarily concerned with the tendance of the soul, which Taylor equated with the modern concept of 'the development of "moral personality"'" (*The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981], 382). On the other hand, John Burnet's work on Plato and Socrates—concurrent, in this respect, with his later work on early Greek philosophy—was "part and parcel of the more general late-Victorian and Edwardian effort to examine sympathetically those features of Greek religion, philosophy, and society that earlier rationalist authors had largely discounted in order to discover an ancient positivistic age" (*ibid.*, 317). Richard Jenkyns has contradicted the tendency to simplify the Victorian stance here: "it was also characteristic of the age, or of its more enquiring members, to feel that between faith in Christianity and the love of Greece there must be a tension" (*The Victorians and Ancient Greece* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980], 70).
- 25 Yeats's passing, disparaging comparison of Platonic thought to death and Christian asceticism in "Dove or Swan" (see *CW13* 153; *AVA* 183; *AVB* 271) is also decidedly Nietzschean in tone: see Otto Bohlmann,

*Yeats and Nietzsche: An Exploration of Major Nietzschean Echoes in the Writings of William Butler Yeats* (Totowa: Barnes & Noble Books, 1982), 88–89.

- 26 See Chapter 1 of Sarah Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- 27 See Claire Nally, *Envisioning Ireland: Occult Nationalism in the Work of W. B. Yeats* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009).
- 28 On the late Yeats as a philosopher-poet, see Matthew Gibson, *Yeats, Coleridge and the Romantic Sage* (Basingtoke: Macmillan, 2000).
- 29 Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, edited by Michael Levey (London: Penguin, 1985), 147. Cf. *WBGYL* 1548 (*YL* 1537).

**“TIMELESS AND SPACELESS”?—YEATS’S SEARCH FOR MODELS  
OF INTERPRETATION IN POST–ENLIGHTENMENT PHILOSOPHY,  
CONTEMPORARY ANTHROPOLOGY AND ART HISTORY, AND  
THE EFFECTS OF THESE THEORIES ON “THE COMPLETED SYMBOL,”  
“THE SOUL IN JUDGMENT” AND “THE GREAT YEAR OF THE ANCIENTS”**

*by Matthew Gibson*

**Introduction**

**W**hile Yeats declared in the second edition of *A Vision* (1937) that he was told by the instructors not to read philosophy until his book was completed, he nevertheless admitted that his failures in understanding the geometry and “distinctions upon which the coherence of the whole depended” were due to “ignorance of philosophy” (*AVB* 19). Philosophy was of immense importance to him in organizing the movement of *Faculties*, *Principles* and *Thirteenth Cone* in the second edition, in accordance with existing ontological and epistemological ideas. The following study seeks to explain how his reading of philosophers as diverse as Plotinus and Oswald Spengler helped him to develop the *Principles* into a theory of perception and experience, to comprehend the mutual and dependent relation between incarnate and discarnate life, and to style the Great Year of the ancients as a theory of civilization akin to the views of ethnographers and anthropologists current to his age. Above all, however, it will be shown how Yeats’s occultist background made him reinterpret the work of previous and contemporary scholars to become part of his own individual theory, a theory which melds classical conceptions of history with the contemporary.

**I. Sequence and Eternity—The Role of Kant, Gentile,  
Plotinus, Berkeley, McTaggart and Dunne**

KANT AND GENTILE<sup>1</sup>

Yeats’s first use of modern philosophy in the 1937 edition of *A Vision* occurs with the appropriation of Giovanni Gentile’s view that time is spatialization into the description of the symbolism of the gyres. Originally, as in the first edition, Yeats begins his exposition of the symbolism by discussing the relationship of time to space as a corollary of subjectivity to objectivity:

A line is a movement without extension, and so symbolical of time—subjectivity—Berkeley’s stream of ideas—in Plotinus it is apparently “sensation”—and a plane cutting it at right angles is symbolical of space or objectivity. Line and plane are combined in a gyre which must expand or contract according to whether mind grows in objectivity or subjectivity.

The identification of time with subjectivity is probably as old as philosophy; all that we can touch or handle, and for the moment I mean no other objectivity, has shape or magnitude, whereas our thoughts and emotions have duration and quality, a thought recurs or is habitual, a lecture or a musical composition is measured upon the clock. At the same time pure time and pure space, pure subjectivity and pure objectivity—the plane at the bottom of the cone and the point at its apex—are abstractions or figments of the mind. (*AVB* 70–71)

Yeats illustrates time and subjectivity, space and objectivity, with the following images:

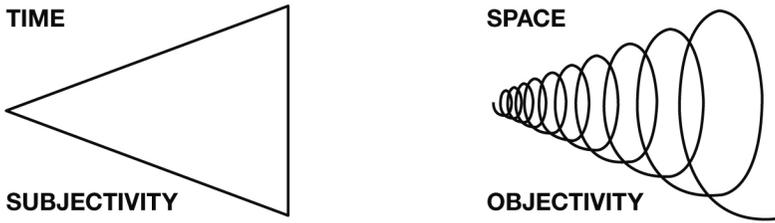


Figure 1

The single cone serves two purposes. Firstly, it provides some metaphorical justification for the cone as an image of the growth and expansion of subjectivity and objectivity. Yeats quickly replaces it with the opposed double gyre, however, whose logic inherently contradicts the seemingly commensurate growth of the two. Secondly, it links the dispositions of the *antithetical* and the *primary*—which is what these two conditions become—with the philosophical understanding of time and space.

While in the first edition Yeats had been happy to ascribe the origin of his symbol (erroneously) to Berkeley's apparent view that time and space are *a priori* forms in the mind (*CW13* 104; *AVA* 129), his more recent reading of Kant and the Italian philosopher Giovanni Gentile were now brought to bear. Kant had famously argued that the transcendental aesthetic (our consciousness of the manifold) was a result of the *a priori* forms of the mind—the sense of “outness,” space and the internal sense of consecution, “time”—which bestowed continuity to phenomena and allowed the Understanding (*Verstand*) to make cognitive judgments of experience.<sup>2</sup> A more recent post-Hegelian philosopher, Giovanni Gentile, argued that while Kant's *a priori* forms were essential in organizing the manifold, time was really the spatialization of space, since any point of time in the spirit's immediate experience multiplies spatially if prolonged, suggesting that apprehension of the manifold is a result of the spirit's continual becoming.<sup>3</sup> In a footnote to the passage on the single gyre, Yeats noted Gentile's description of Kant's time and space as the “internal” and the “external,” since it appeared to relate them to the *antithetical* (subjective) and the *primary* (objective). He was also clearly interested in Gentile's own portrayal of their relation, since it accorded with some of the ways in which time and space had been discussed in the automatic script as “sequence” and “allusion” (*YVP1* 388; 17 March 1918). He declared later that “Time spatialises” in both *Husk* and *Creative Mind*: a most unclear statement, perhaps reflecting a desire to import Kantian terminology into his own epistemology. He

may mean by it that the *Husk's* incarnation of images gives sensory form and thus continuity to phenomena which in fact exist spiritually and outside image or sequence, and that the *Creative Mind*, the “knowledge of Universals,” helps to give a kind of categorical form—or knowledge—to these phenomena through judgment (AVB 70n; 192).<sup>4</sup>

#### PLOTINUS AND THE *PRINCIPLES*

As was demonstrated in Graham Dampier's essay, the movement of the *Faculties* over the gyres in life is but one half of the movement of the Wheel of the *Principles*. The *Principles* “inform” the *Faculties* and constitute their “innate ground” (AVB 188), but have a life and movement of their own. To recapitulate: the *Principles* are *Husk* and *Passionate Body* (“sense...and the objects of sense” [AVB 188]), and *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* (“mind and its object” [AVB 189]). The *Husk* and *Passionate Body* reflect as *Will* and *Mask* in the *Faculties*, while the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* would seem, from Yeats's triangle figure (AVB 194), to have an influence on *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate* (are *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* not also the “innate ground” of the *Faculties*?). However, this is never made explicit in the second edition, unlike in the first (CW13 119; AVA 146).

When comprehending the ontological make-up of the *Principles*, Yeats drew upon the *Enneads* of Plotinus, a classical philosopher whose hierarchy of being Yeats nevertheless used frequently when discussing ideas of time and ontology espoused by more modern philosophers like Berkeley and McTaggart, thus making a discussion of his work crucial in relation to theirs as well. Through his rigidly defined hypostases, Plotinus had forged a full system from Plato's earlier description of ideal forms, transmigration of souls and realms of being and becoming. Plotinus introduced the two converse movements of emanation and contemplation to explain how the One and the Many, the higher and the lower in the different areas of Plato's latent “system,” actually caused and communicated with each other. In Plotinus's universe there are four major hypostases, beginning with the One, beyond Knowledge and Being, transcending and containing all. Its goodness overflows into the Intellectual Realm, or *nous*, which contains the potential separation into Act and Being, subject and object, but which contemplates that above it. Here what knows is identical to what is known, and thus is both coalescive and divisive, the initial break-up of the One into a duad. Here reside the Authentic Existents: what Plato had called the Ideal Forms. This realm in turn overflows into the Third Hypostasis, the All-Soul, *psyche*, in which reside the nature-principles and reason-principles of our sensible universe, and which also contemplates the *nous* which has directly caused it. Together with the Second Hypostasis it emanates into the individual *logoi* of souls and the condition of discursive reasoning, which is apparent to the intellect of man. Matter, *hyle*, with which comes the possibility for imperfection and Evil, is the Fourth Hypostasis.<sup>5</sup>

Yeats relates the *Celestial Body* to Plotinus's “First Authentic Existant” and *Spirit* to its “Second Authentic Existant.” The “discarnate *Daimons*, or *Ghostly Selves*,” he relates to the “Third Authentic Existant,” which can then reflect as *Passionate Body* and then *Husk* (AVB 194) to form, effectively, the objects and mechanism of a living man's sensation (for a fuller account of how Yeats turned his discussion of man, incarnate *Daimon* and discarnate *Daimon* into an idealist theory of perception, see the section on Berkeley below). However, as Rosemary Ritvo points out, the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body*, “Mind and

its Object," are in fact Plotinus's "Second Hypostasis," or realm of *nous* (the realm of the "ideal forms" or "authentic existents"—a term which Yeats confused with "hypostasis"), but divided into its two mutually conditioning parts of "knowing" and "being."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, one can see that this attribution collapses macrocosm into microcosm, as though *Spirit* and *Celestial Body*, which are particular to the human soul, constitute the entire *nous* of the universe, projecting an individual man's reason over the complete realm of the discarnate *Daimons* and the reflected *Passionate Body*. This is a complete change from Yeats's tentative and unsure attribution of Plotinian terms to the *Principles* in the first edition of *A Vision*, in which he suggests: "I am inclined to discover in the *Celestial Body*, the *Spirit*, the *Passionate Body*, and the *Husk*, emanations from or reflections from his One, his Intellectual Principle, his Soul of the World, and his Nature respectively" (*CW13* 142–43; *AVA* 176). While this was itself an ambitious attempt to see Plotinus's entire universe repeating itself in miniature in the soul of man—even, and impossibly, the One itself—it did not actually collapse all the hypostases solipsistically into the mind of the man, as appears to be the case in the second edition. Yeats's reasons for making the later error are partly to do with his reading of Coleridge's post-Kantian theories on mind in which "conscious self-knowledge is reason" (*AVB* 187n), but also surely derive from Plotinus's Ennead V.7, in which it is argued that the Second Hypostasis contains not only the ideal forms or reason-principles, but also the "archetypes" of individual souls, which leads Yeats to subsume a shared and universal hypostasis within the particularity of the individual soul (cf. "Introduction to *The Resurrection*" (1934; *Ex* 396). Plotinus introduced these archetypes to explain why all men are not simply the same characters (as they surely would be with the more generic understanding of man's pre-existence proposed by Plato).<sup>7</sup>

This effective collapsing of macrocosm into microcosm is accompanied by other inversions of Neo-Platonic logic. Yeats relates the so-called "*Ghostly Selves*" or "discarnate *Daimons*"—those that have left the cycles of incarnation and constitute spiritual reality—to the "Third Authentic Existant" (Plotinus's All-Soul), which reflects as *Passionate Body*. However, he also sees these purified beings as encompassing the more supersensual hypostases when seen from another perspective, mentioning elsewhere that these (discarnate) *Daimons* are "one in the *Celestial Body*" (*AVB* 189), or "Mind's" "object." Thus the multitude of *Ghostly Selves* can be understood as constituting a macrocosm within the microcosm of the individual soul, but also as effectively conflating the delicate hierarchy of the *Principles*, the noetic and the sensory, onto competing axes within that microcosm. Hence the *Passionate Body* which reflects the "discarnate *Daimons*" simply constitutes the appearance of "certain *Daimons*" when contemplated sensually rather than supersensually, when "subject to time and space" (*AVB* 189).<sup>8</sup>

The *Passionate Body* is not a lower, degraded condition of a traditional Neo-Platonic hierarchy, but enjoys a symbiotic relationship with the spiritual. Hence in the discarnate phases, from Aries to Virgo in the diamond-shaped cone of the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body*, the *Spirit* seeks to become one with the *Celestial Body*, "pure mind, containing within itself pure truth" (*AVB* 189), but in doing so must first contemplate the *Passionate Body* through states like the *Dreaming Back* and the *Return*: an inversion of movement unthinkable in classic Neo-Platonic terms, in which contemplation is always upwards. Finally, Yeats's depiction of the *Thirteenth Cone* also involves a far more plural conception of godhead than Plotinus's, since it is effectively constituted by the *Ghostly Selves* (*AVB* 189): *Daimons* that have come to

the end of reincarnation and sensory experience but which are still “the source of that which is unique in every man” (*CW13* 183; *AVA* 221): a congeries of realized, Neo-Platonic archetypes rather than a Neo-Platonic One beyond Knowledge or Being.<sup>9</sup> The *Thirteenth Cone* also involves an unusual understanding of eternal time which is at variance with the purely Neo-Platonic notion of the eternal, which denies plurality or sensory experience.

Although both the *Thirteenth Cone* and the *Principles* are rooted in the automatic script, two issues which Yeats resolved through reading philosophy were the relationship of spiritual incarnation through the incarnate *Daimon* to general sensory perception, and the preferred articulation of the *Thirteenth Cone*’s simultaneous unity and plurality, without either deprecating the sensory or denying the ontological priority of the spiritual. The former he resolved by reference to Berkeley and medieval theologians, the latter also by reference to the younger Berkeley and to contemporary philosophers of time.

#### BERKELEY<sup>10</sup>

Berkeley was Yeats’s favorite philosopher. As his long correspondence with the poet and illustrator T. Sturge Moore shows, he was particularly interested in the arguments Berkeley used to contradict Locke’s distinction between primary and secondary qualities (*TSMC* 66–67).

Locke had argued that we do not see the primary qualities of shape, extension and color, merely an object’s roundness, its particular extension and its greenness: or “secondary qualities.” However, greenness and roundness, while immediately seen, still depend on the more abstract qualities of an object—shape and color—which we know an object to have due to our understanding the generic nature of greenness and roundness to be color and shape.<sup>11</sup> Hence, while the secondary, or visible qualities are in the mind and have no independent reality—and can easily change or differ from person to person, and thus be contradictory—primary qualities, which cannot be immediately seen and cannot change, are in the external world. Berkeley argued in his *Principles* and *Three Dialogues* that (a) we do not see objects only as round or green but as having color and shape, and thus that the primary qualities are as mental as the secondary,<sup>12</sup> and (b) a sensory image, which is experienced by the spirit, cannot be caused by something not homogeneous in substance, since cause must resemble effect (*WGBI* 32, n19). Hence reality itself must be spiritual like our minds. Our sensory percepts are the non-sensory percepts of God.

Yeats was enthralled by this, but was particularly delighted by *Siris*, Berkeley’s late meditation on the virtues of tar-water, which “proved” that light was the animating substance of the world through allusion to ancient authority, and also argued that it gave sensory form to spirits and hence the impression of materiality to sense.<sup>13</sup> Through various earlier occult sources, Yeats had understood light as constituting the substance of spiritual incarnation, mentioning this in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (*CW5* 23 & 26; *Myth* 353 & 357) and “The Stirring of the Bones” (*CW3* 280; *Au* 372–73). He became particularly interested in Balzac’s *Louis Lambert*, which argued that the agent of the will and the five senses were simply transformations of light (*CW5* 124–25; *E&I* 440), which was itself simply the pure, elemental form of fire, the most active element in the medieval universe.<sup>14</sup>

Yeats related this theory to *Husk* and *Passionate Body*, seeing the *Passionate Body* as “identical with physical light”: not the modern-day visible spectrum, but “physical light,

as it was understood by medieval philosophers, by Berkeley in *Siris*, by Balzac in *Louis Lambert*" (AVB 190). He also related the *Husk* and *Passionate Body* to the mechanism of perception, explaining that: "Behind the *Husk* (or sense) is the *Daimon's* hunger to make apparent to itself certain *Daimons*, and the organs of sense are that hunger made visible. The *Passionate Body* is the sum of those *Daimons*" (AVB 189). Owing to Berkeley's theory, Yeats argued continually with T. Sturge Moore that phantom experience, so understood, was as real as material experience. The concept of "continuity of perception" ("Pages from a Diary Written in 1930," *Ex* 331), which G. E. Moore, his brother, had used to distinguish between the real and the imaginary (which is not continuous) in sensory experience, Yeats understood as being simply a difference of "degree" not "kind" in the sensory incarnation of the spiritual (*TSMC* 94; 9 June 1926). This "continuity" he understood to exist in the "Passionate Body of the permanent self or daimon" (*Ex* 331), which needs the *Husk* (symbolically the human body, and the memory of the *Daimon's* past lives) to find sensory incarnation.<sup>15</sup> Hence he explained the seeming stability and regularity of a material world which is really every bit as spiritual as the fleeting phantoms of imagination.<sup>16</sup>

Yeats noted that the later Berkeley was a Platonist, who accepted a doctrine of "divine ideas" that "behold and determine each other" (*Ex* 304–5). In this he was probably recalling an exchange in the Third Dialogue when Philonous sees all "things perceiving and things perceived" as "perceived by some mind...the infinite mind of God, in whom 'we live, move and have our being'" (*WGBI* 185). Philonous defines a concept of deity similar to the coalescive knowing and being inherent to the Authentic Existents that constitute Plotinus's Second Hypostasis (rather than the unmoving First), and which in *A Vision* become the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* which seek to coalesce and become "pure mind" or "the Divine Ideas in their unity" (AVB 190). However, Yeats's Berkeleianism actually took him into conflict with Plotinus, since such Neo-Platonic platitudes, as Yeats noted, may have been Berkeley's means of concealing the exciting polytheism mooted in his earlier *Commonplace Book* (*Ex* 304). This work also refuted Locke's primary qualities and materialism, but appeared to understand reality as a plurality of selves and—dangerously—refused to accept the omniscience or unity of either a single or three-Personed God.<sup>17</sup>

Owing to Berkeley's influence, Yeats understood the incarnation of non-incarnate *Daimons* through the *Husk* and *Passionate Body*—the "innate ground" of the *Faculties Will* and *Mask*—as constituting the mechanism of perception. This means that the soul's perception of material objects in life is as much the result of spiritual incarnation as it is of remembered phenomena in the six so-called "discarnate" states:<sup>18</sup> all sensory experiences are a result of the incarnate *Daimon's* desire to lead the man to the *Passionate Body* and incarnate sensory experience through the agency of physical light. As we shall see, it was the early, polytheistic Berkeley, who, in refuting the "abstractions" involved in monotheism, provided a most important influence on Yeats's understanding of the supersensual *Daimons* or "*Ghostly Selves*" which inhabit the *Thirteenth Cone*. This is despite the fact that Yeats clearly interpreted Berkeley through the prism of McTaggart.

#### McTAGGART AND DUNNE

In 1932, roughly a year after completing the final draft of *A Vision*, Yeats wrote a flattering review of George Russell's highly theosophical *Song and its Fountains*. He noted with

delight Russell’s distinction between the conscious and prenatal self, how creative inspiration was the distillation of some earlier childhood mood, and the different mystical states which the creative mind encounters (*CW5* 115–16; *E&I* 416). These states are similar to the various states of consciousness involved in yoga, and the last of these is similar to the yogic state Turiya, or AUM,<sup>19</sup> which distills “in its ecstasy of infinite vision” elements of all preceding states, the waking conscious self, the dreaming self and dreamless sleep<sup>20</sup>—states that Yeats had also very loosely related to the six discarnate phases, labeled Aries to Virgo, of the diamond gyre, from his own knowledge of the states described in the *Upanishads* (*AVB* 220). However, what appears to have impressed Yeats most of all in Russell’s book was the seemingly atemporal aspect of Russell’s understanding of the Ancient Memory and the ability of the adept—or artist—to find all moments of beauty in a simultaneous moment: an intimation of the soul’s ultimate destiny beyond reincarnation.<sup>21</sup> He quotes a fragment from a Russell poem illustrating it:

I know when I come to my own immortal I will find there  
 In a myriad instant all that the wandering soul found fair,  
 Empires that never crumbled and thrones all glorious yet  
 And hearts ere they were broken and eyes ere they were wet.

Plotinus had not this thought; the Cambridge Platonists, the more exhaustive ethical logic of Christianity spurring them on, might have discovered it had not the soul’s re-birth, though it fascinated Glanvil, been a dangerous theme. Now, however, that McTaggart has made that doctrine the foundation of the first English systematic philosophy, one can invite attention to what may bring all past ages into the circle of conscience. (*CW5* 116–17; *E&I* 417)

The link between Russell’s theosophically taught conception of reaching the highest state described in the *Upanishads* after reincarnation and McTaggart’s systematic philosophy, which “can invite attention to” this (*CW5* 117; *E&I* 417), means that George Russell’s ideas have relevance beyond the world of occult speculation, and in the world of philosophy in which Yeats had recently been immersing himself.

One source to which Yeats turned in attempting to find a more scientific definition of extra-temporality, mentioned briefly in his review (*CW5* 115; *E&I* 414), was J. W. Dunne’s *An Experiment with Time*, first published in 1927. Dunne argued that the mind “moves” through time, since time is the fourth dimension, and as such is simply another form of the extension of space. Man, however, is forced to observe the three-dimensional world and so has this four-dimensional movement represent itself through past, present and future.<sup>22</sup> Thus there exist two observers in the mind, and two different times, the first observer being the moving consciousness attending to three-dimensional space, and the second one, who surrounds the first from the position of matter’s fourth dimension properly perceived, absolute time, in which all events are simultaneous. This observer reveals itself in dreams when concentration on the three-dimensional world ceases, and the observer floats freely between past, present and future, taking its “act of attention” out of sequential time. The first observer is merely the central focus of the second, to whom the four-dimensional universe is a timeless reality of the co-present.<sup>23</sup>

In his 1931 introduction to "Bishop Berkeley" (an essay which he had begun writing late in 1930), while attempting to define Berkeley's concept of deity as more concrete than the abstractions of Plotinus, Yeats praises the "prophetic afflatus" in Dunne's book. He nevertheless still registers in a footnote his realization of the central problem in Dunne's argument: "No heaping up of dimensions, what is successive in a lower dimension simultaneous in a higher, can bring him to the Pure Act or Eternal Instant, source of simultaneity and succession alike" (*CW5* 352 n25; *E&I* 402n). Yeats appears to have understood that Dunne's "act of attention" is not outside time, and simply has its own new-found serialism: the dreamer, even if he alters the normal pattern and consecution of events, is still attending to separate temporal experiences along the substratum in a new sequential order. The "Pure Act" that Yeats wishes to discover in modern philosophy clearly must comprehend *all* individual acts, but must also place all these in absolute simultaneity while constituting the source for their sequential order, which Dunne's observer cannot do.

After attacking Dunne in a footnote to "Bishop Berkeley," Yeats refers the reader instead to McTaggart, whose system is "consistent with itself and with philosophical tradition" (*CW5* 352 n25; *E&I* 402n), but whose name is oddly absent from *A Vision* (1937). The reason for this is that Yeats incorporated his ideas into those of the young Berkeley, and in doing so provided a full, idealist and yet idiosyncratic philosophy in support of his occult definitions concerning the absolute.

McTaggart attacked the prevailing view, proposed by Bertrand Russell, that the distinction between "earlier" and "later" events constituted the reality of time and that the distinction between past, present and future was not to do with time, since it only inhered in the perception of a perceiving subject.<sup>24</sup> For McTaggart if time was real, the past, present, future series was as much a part of time as the "earlier than" "later than" series. In any case, both were unreal.

For McTaggart the contents of any position in time constituted an event, and the varied, simultaneous contents of a single position were a plurality of events (e.g., Napoleon fighting Wellington as Blücher arrives from Ligny). However, events are in substance and thus form a connected group, which group must be a compound. Thus any group of events taking place simultaneously must be one compound event in substance (*NE2* 10). Thus change in this compound at any one point is change everywhere, and effectively constitutes the movement of time in space: "The fall of a sand-castle on the English coast changes the nature of the Great Pyramid" (*NE2* 11–12). Change, therefore, is the central element of time, and must be involved in both the "earlier than" "later than" series and the "past, present, future" series for them to be real series in time.

The "earlier than" "later than" series does not involve change. If one event (M) is earlier than another event (N), this relation is fixed and unchanging. M does not cease to be an event (or become unreal) in this series once N comes into being. There is no change in the series and so this series is not a part of time (*NE2* 12–13).

The "past, present, future" series does involve change, and so must be a part of time (*NE2* 15). However, it cannot be called a series at all. For the series to be true, there must be consistent relations between the various positions and some term *x* outside the series (he provides no example), which does not take part in the "past, present, future" series, and to which all the terms that are defined as past, present, or future keep a constant relation (*NE2* 20). No such term can be found, and so the necessary definitions of any event in the A series

as either past, present or future is not constant since the event will partake of more than one of these definitions in the course of time. Thus they are “incompatible definitions” since “Every event must be one or the other, but no event can be more than one” (*NE2* 20) for the definition of them to be true. In the A series any event is past, present and future at different times, meaning that the terms of the A series all contain contradictions, and thus cannot be logically true (*NE2* 20–21). Put more simply, an event in a series cannot enjoy more than one definition as either past, present or future if the series is logically true, for if they are defined as having contradictory qualities the series is not itself true (*NE2* 22).<sup>25</sup>

While McTaggart’s “earlier than” “later than” series cannot be part of time because it does not involve change, he argues that the past, present, future series, which does involve change, is still experientially a part of time, but not a demonstrably true series in itself. Rather, it is a series whose objectivity exists in some other way, which he seeks to define by reference to Hegel, who “regarded the order of the time-series as a reflection, though a distorted reflection, of something in the real nature of the timeless reality” (*NE2* 31), which McTaggart calls the C series.

In McTaggart’s philosophy, therefore, time is unreal, merely the distortion of another order. He argues further that matter does not really exist, since if matter’s qualities existed they could be “divided into parts of parts to infinity” (*NE2* 43–44), as must the C series or “timeless reality,” which is congruent with substance and necessarily infinite.<sup>26</sup> Sensory perceptions (*sensa*) are also every bit as unreal as matter (*NE2* 59). Substance, which does not include matter, is in fact spiritual, consisting of a community of selves, which all share the same infinite, self-causing substance, but are nevertheless separable since they cannot share the same content and parts (such as an “awareness” or “state” [*NE2* 68]). Spiritual substance may be universal in essence, as it is in Spinoza’s definition, but the entities which are formed from it in McTaggart’s understanding are unique. While the substance we see in events is merely changing “compounds” of an ontologically ideal order, and the selves which make up that substance (spirit) are the primary parts of the Universe, they do not all immolate into an “absolute self” like the Brahman of the *Upanishads*, and maintain a particularity of consciousness.<sup>27</sup> He further argues that God as a personal, supreme and good being cannot exist (*NE2* 84).

In Yeats’s prose McTaggart is variously admired for his adherence to Idealist ontology, for seeing judgment and perception as the same (which in Yeats’s view aligns him closer to Berkeley [*CW5* 354 n35; *E&I* 406n]), and for affirming the rebirth of the soul, which aligns him closer to Hinduism and Yeats’s own twelve reincarnatory cycles (*Ex* 396).<sup>28</sup> However, where McTaggart made his most important impression on Yeats was in his depiction of the Absolute beyond time—the C series: or rather, that is, from Yeats’s understanding of how he describes it.

#### DISCARNATE LIFE

If we return to the passage he wrote in his 1932 article on George Russell’s *Song and its Fountains*, we may recall that Yeats praised McTaggart for giving philosophical expression to the ideas related in George Russell’s poem, in which the narrator contemplates reaching the resurrection of “what was ‘lovely and beloved’” (*CW5* 116; *E&I* 417). Yeats believes that the soul’s rebirth is an essential component of this idea, since the reincarnated soul

restores all its glorious past moments, including the ancient wisdom of other souls, into “the circle of conscience” (*CW* 5 117; *E&I* 417). This idea does not translate entirely to *A Vision B*, since there the memory of the individual past life alone is what is recalled in the first three discarnate states. However, in Yeats’s own system this resurrection of all glorious past moments actually corresponds to the soul’s ultimate deliverance, and completed discarnate life as an all-knowing *Ghostly Self*.

In the 1930 diary, when defining his *Principles* through Neo-Platonism, Yeats described ultimate reality as the realm where “all thought, all movement, all perception are extinguished” (*Ex* 307), much like Plotinus’s One which is beyond Knowledge and Being, and in *A Vision B* he also describes the *Thirteenth Cone* as the region which “may deliver us from the twelve cycles of time and space” (*AVB* 210) as though from movement. However, as soon as he has declared this, Yeats quotes an esoteric source to elaborate on the complexity of the *Thirteenth Cone*: “‘Eternity also,’ says Hermes in the Aeslepius dialogue, ‘though motionless itself, appears to be in motion’” (*AVB* 211). The *Thirteenth Cone* intersects the gyres of the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body*, explaining why its *Teaching Spirits* are able to guide the *Spirit* toward the *Celestial Body* in the discarnate phases (*AVB* 229). Furthermore, the scenes of the *Dreaming Back* involving the *Passionate Body* incarnate as ghostly phenomena, and are “repeated until, at last forgotten by the *Spirit*, they fade into the *Thirteenth Cone*” (*AVB* 227), which implies that these repetitive cycles do not actually vanish entirely (being simply “forgotten”), but still enjoy some form of continued existence.

Nor are the *Teaching Spirits*—“*Spirits of the Thirteenth Cone*” who “conduct the *Spirit* through its past acts” (*AVB* 229)—indistinguishable and amorphous. As Yeats describes them, he cautions:

We must, however, avoid attributing to them the pure benevolence our exhausted Platonism and Christianity attribute to an angelical being. Our actions, lived in life, or remembered in death, are the food and drink of the *Spirits* of the *Thirteenth Cone*, that which gives them separation and solidity. (*AVB* 230)

These *Spirits* are never too clearly defined, and can even use “representatives from any state.” Nevertheless, they can probably be identified with the *Principle* the *Spirit* of any discarnate self, since we are quickly told that they are “those who substitute for *Husk* and *Passionate Body* supersensual emotion and imagery; the ‘unconscious’ or unapparent for that which has *disappeared*, the *Spirit* itself being capable of knowledge only” (*AVB* 229). Thus they are probably to be identified with the *Spirits of Daimons*, or “permanent selves,” that have found resting-place in the *Thirteenth Cone* (*Ghostly Selves*).<sup>29</sup> Especially noteworthy here in relation to the concept of the *Thirteenth Cone* being a congeries rather than a unity, is that the purified *Spirits* of the *Thirteenth Cone’s Daimons* possess a “supersensual” equivalent of the *Husk* and *Passionate Body’s* most obvious sensual qualities, emotion and imagery. Moreover, they appear to need the constant antinomial contact with the incarnate and sensory—incarnate *Daimons* and their *Principles*—leading the dead man’s *Spirit* through the imagined, now sensually incarnated acts of his “discarnate” experience (in this case meaning not simply the post-mortal, but the unapparent/supersensual) in the *Phantasmagoria*. This means that the *Phantasmagoria* performed by the *Teaching Spirits* on the *Spirit* only occurs because the *Teaching Spirits* themselves desire the opposite: a mu-

tual exchange of sensual for supersensual rather than the disinterested moral guidance of “Tutelary Spirits” described by Plotinus in *Ennead* III.4.<sup>30</sup> Thus not only is the *Thirteenth Cone* dependent upon the “many” for its unity, but the supersensual and eternal features of its *Daimons* are dependent upon the sensual experience of those souls not yet delivered from time and space, in a continual, symbiotic relationship.

While the *Thirteenth Cone* in its true form as the phaseless sphere can be “sufficient to itself,” Yeats envisages it as enjoying an antinomial relation with a person’s combined mortal life and life between lives, when describing the latter as a single cone but “without waiting to portion out the *Faculties* and *Principles*, and the contrasting cone as the other half of the antinomy, the ‘spiritual objective’ ” (*AVB* 210). He continues: “The cone which intersects ours is a cone in so far as we think of it as the antithesis to our thesis, but if the time has come for our deliverance it is the phaseless sphere” (*AVB* 210). In both cases the *Thirteenth Cone* is ultimately comprised entirely of the *Ghostly Selves*, which can also inhere in different aspects of the incarnate soul’s entire cycle.

However, quite apart from the sensual incarnations of the supersensual induced by the *Thirteenth Cone*’s opposition to the cones of experience, Yeats appears to understand its events as a perpetual repetition even when “sufficient to itself”: the events of life are not extinguished once we are “delivered from the twelve cycles of time and space” (*AVB* 210); rather, “All things” exist “as an eternal instant,” which can be comprehended by the “*Daimon* (or *Ghostly Self* as it is called, when it inhabits the Sphere)” (*AVB* 193), which plurality is reflected by the fact that when the *Thirteenth Cone* is seen by the living as the *Record*, or the “*Passionate Body* lifted out of time,” “the images of all past events remain for ever ‘thinking the thought and doing the deed’ ” (*AVB* 193). This is a physical representation of the “source of succession and simultaneity alike” and eternity of “autonomous beings” which Yeats describes in his 1930 diary in relation to Berkeley (*Ex* 311), and presumably an eternity whose contemplation requires the necessary serialism involved in Dunne’s failed “act of attention”: the moveless sphere must be a moving cone as soon as we attempt to observe it in its entirety.

Yeats’s concept of ultimate reality is far different from Plotinus’s: a unified, eternal being, which is also a becoming, comprehending the particular events experienced by autonomous souls in a perpetual simultaneity; a being whose immaterial nature does not negate equal stature to the sensory perceived through the incarnation of light, since the incarnate *Daimon*’s *Husk* and *Passionate Body* are necessary to the *Spirits* of certain discarnate *Daimons* (*Teaching Spirits*) who seek “separation and solidity” (*AVB* 229). This latter idea is certainly not permitted by McTaggart, who gave no ontological status to the sensory, any more than to the material, although he did see the experiencing of it as unique to each self (*NE2* 61).<sup>31</sup>

Yeats now takes McTaggart’s theories and combines them with those of the younger Berkeley in *A Vision*. The ontological pluralism here corresponds to the potential heresy of Berkeley’s *Commonplace Book*—as he understood it—in which divinity is simply a collection of active spirits rather than a single, unified God, and not the Neo-Platonic abstraction and totality to which Berkeley later—as Yeats noted—subjected his notion of deity (*CW5* 110; *E&I* 407; *Ex* 301). In his introduction to Hone and Rossi’s biography (1931), Yeats reprised a passage from his 1930 diary where he had juxtaposed the earlier Berkeley with the later, Platonist Berkeley:

Berkeley wrote in his *Commonplace Book*: “The Spirit—the active thing—that which is soul, and God—is the will alone”; and then, remembering the mask that

he must never lay aside, added: "The concrete of the will and understanding I must call mind, not person, lest offence be given, there being but one volition acknowledged to be God. Mem. carefully to omit defining Person, or making much mention of it." Then remembering that some member of his secret society had asked if our separate personalities were united in a single will, a question considered by Plotinus in the Fourth Ennead but dangerous in the eighteenth century, he wrote, "What you ask is merely about a word, unite is no more." (*CW5* 110; *E&I* 407).

The fear of defining "person" and dismissal of the word "unite" in the section of entries from which Yeats draws,<sup>32</sup> suggest that Berkeley understood deity to be a "congeries of autonomous beings" (*Ex* 311) or plurality of spirits. Yeats also takes such plurality to have meant that Berkeley could see heaven as "an improvement of sense," or concretization of the spiritual (*CW5* 111; *E&I* 410), combined with the belief that light incarnates spirits.<sup>33</sup> In a footnote to "The Completed Symbol," when discussing the role of light in Berkeley's thought as the agent of sensation, he refers once more to the theme of personality, and elaborates: "In the *Commonplace Book* he warned himself to avoid the theologically dangerous theme of personality. Did he in his private thoughts come to regard Light as the creative act of a universal self dwelling in all selves?" (*AVB* 191n).

In this passage Yeats has remarked well that Berkeley's "private thoughts" suggest a position slightly different to those of the formulaic Platonist who eventually put platitudes concerning the oneness of God and creation in Philonous's mouth in his *Third Dialogue* (and only there). Yeats's explication of Berkeley—both here and in his introductory essay to Berkeley's biography—is nevertheless in tune with the ideas of McTaggart who, unlike Berkeley, actually used the term "selves" to represent reality, and who redefined its temporal nature as a form of "simultaneity" which contains the basis of "succession": a C series. The universal self that dwells in all selves, like the "congeries of beings" and "single being" (*Ex* 305) that constitutes Yeats's own *Thirteenth Cone*, is a "unity" like McTaggart's, where the individual "selves" which make up substance maintain their unique and particular parts, and do not coalesce (*NE2* 83). Indeed McTaggart's self bears similarities to Yeats's *Ghostly Self* as described elsewhere, the "permanent self" and "source of that which is unique in every man" (*CW13* 183; *AVA* 221).<sup>34</sup> Thanks to the work of McTaggart and the young Berkeley, Yeats could articulate the temporal and ontological oppositions contained in his understanding of the *Thirteenth Cone* through the terms of more established traditions of philosophy, and was also able to establish "a reality which is concrete, sensuous, bodily" (*AVB* 214): as involving, not negating, the sensory and particular.

In conclusion, we see that Yeats understands human consciousness as a commensurate growth of space and time while paradoxically presenting space and time as contrary dispositions like the *primary* and *antithetical*. He uses the Neo-Platonic hierarchy of the *Enneads* to arrange the various levels of his system, but in doing so manages to compress the macrocosm of the *nous*, or universal reason, into the mind of man, and variably sees all reality as part of the individual soul. He uses Berkeley's ideas to develop an unusual theory of sensory experience, which presents all experience as consisting in spiritual incarnation. Due to his reading of McTaggart he understands the time of the ultimate reality or phaseless sphere as "simultaneity and succession" alike (*CW5* 352 n25; *E&I* 402n), a realm where events remain "thinking the thought and doing the deed" (*AVB* 193): a realm of

individual *Daimons* all communing with each other, both a unity and a “congeries.” Here we are delivered from the time and space, or sequence and allusion of the cycles—but not from the simultaneity and succession which these two incarnate.

## II. East and West: Time and Space in Yeats’s Philosophy of History

Discussing the movement of history through a Great Year of 26,000 years—his wheel at its most macrocosmic—Yeats asks: “Is that marriage of Europe and Asia a geographical reality? Perhaps, yet the symbolic wheel is timeless and spaceless” (*AVB* 205). This suggestion in “The Completed Symbol” is interesting not only in that it shows the importance of seeing the gyres as alternating in Eastern and Western influence—a feature far less defined in the first edition—but that it would seem to reject the importance of time and space to the alternations. However, effectively what Yeats is asking is whether the definitions of East and West which he has just been attributing to the gyres in the previous section, and whose influence he certainly sees as alternating, should be related to historical Europe and Asia, or seen as pure *primary/antithetical* symbolism and not rigidly rooted in specific, geographic determinations. Yeats elsewhere reneges upon his commitment to see them purely symbolically and appears—at least in discussing the 4,000 or so years of recent history—to give these polarities a local habitation and a name. With this, however, they continue the struggle between a spatial disposition of the mind and a temporal one in the seesaw movement between *primary* and *antithetical* cultures. Yeats’s reading of Petrie, Schneider, Strzygowski and ultimately Spengler, allowed him to understand the motivation and the stages behind the rise and fall of *antithetical* civilizations, but also gave him the chance to re-characterize the “Time-mind” of Wyndham Lewis—present in Futurist art and Modernist literature—as being a form of spatialization and to comment on and explain the art of his own day.

### THE GEOMETRY OF THE GREAT YEAR AND EAST AND WEST

The following constitutes a brief explanation of the Great Year in *A Vision*, the changing relations between East and West in the year’s religious eras (its solar months), and the further inherence of these eastern/western polarities within the gyres of civilization and art history (its lunar months). Yeats’s treatment involves complexities in which solar and lunar wheels are sometimes measured according to different scales and also run in contrary directions around the wheel. Some of the nuances will, however, be put to one side for the present, and in the following exposition there will be a discussion of (a) the geometry of the wheel relating to the Great Year, and (b) an explanation of the uses to which Yeats puts “solar” and “lunar” gyres when explaining the alternate “begettings” of West on East and East on West in the “solar” wheel/gyres of religious era against the criss-crossing “lunar” gyres of the contemporary civilization.

The application of phases to history takes place over what constitutes the most macroscopic use of the wheel, which is the Great Year, or movement of the *Faculties* considered as twelve 2,150-year cycles or smaller wheels (*AVB* 202–3). In “The Completed Symbol” Yeats describes how the twenty-eight phases of the moon can be reduced to both twelve calendar months and the signs of the zodiac on the wheel, with Phases 1, 8, 15 and 22

each being apportioned a calendar month or sign apiece, and the others being grouped in threes (AVB 196–98). Hence Phase 15 corresponds to the zodiacal sign Aries (East) in a *primary*, solar cycle and March in an *antithetical*, lunar one: Phase 1 corresponds to Libra (West) in a solar cycle and September in a lunar. Phases 12, 13 and 14 correspond to the single zodiacal sign Pisces. While this classification can of course be applied to any version of the 28-phase wheel, Yeats uses it in particular when discussing the Great Year. In this he sees the movement of *Will* as corresponding to the movement of the twelve cycles of civilization (lunar/calendar months), and the movement of *Creative Mind* to those of the twelve cycles of religious era (solar/zodiacal signs). *Creative Mind* always moves clockwise through the solar signs while *Will* always moves counter-clockwise through the lunar months.<sup>35</sup> This sometimes causes confusion, as Yeats twice discusses the movement of *Will* (the gyre of civilization) when discussing the intended movement of the *Creative Mind* through its phases, those of the religious era (e.g., AVB 207; AVB 254): not a contradiction at all for Yeats, since when *Will* moves, *Creative Mind* is for him automatically perceived as moving in its own, clockwise direction, and thus is implicit to the description of *Will*'s movement.<sup>36</sup>

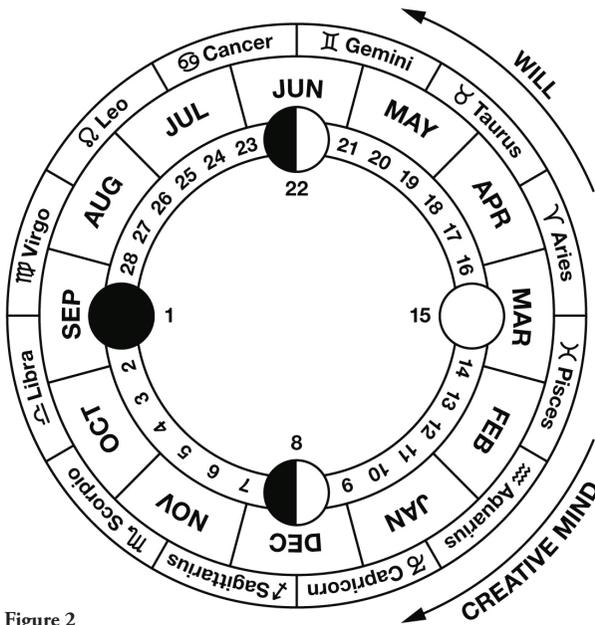


Figure 2

The movement of *Creative Mind* backwards through the zodiac owes much to both the automatic script and to Yeats's later reading of writers like Franz Cumont and Pierre Duhem, who were interested in classical and medieval cosmology and discussions of temporal movement, and who helped Yeats to interpret the instructors. That said, Yeats would have known of this retrograde movement through the zodiac, which is associated with the precession of the equinoxes, from his reading of Madame Blavatsky and other Theosophical sources many years earlier, although he makes no mention of these in either published edition of *A Vision*.<sup>37</sup>

In the automatic script (summer 1918), there are constant exchanges with the controls concerning the ways in which both the *Faculties* and the attributed zodiacal signs correspond to historical cycles, with George Yeats, as medium, drawing up one-thousand-year periods, two-thousand-year periods (*YVPI* 467), and a four-thousand-year period when she places Buddha at “cycle” 12 (Phase 15) and the “new” Christ at “cycles” 6 and 7 (Phases 1–28 [?]) (*YVPI* 460–1; 26 May 1918).<sup>38</sup> Thus throughout these exchanges the 28 phases, and the 12 zodiacal signs, are used to describe variously (in a rounded, classificatory form) one-thousand, two-thousand and four-thousand-year cycles of history, although Yeats infuriatingly never settles on a fixed count of years for any of these cycles, and the more accurate measurement for the two-thousand-year cycle is probably 2,150 years.<sup>39</sup> In the *Vision Notebooks* the use of the zodiacal signs reaches its largest articulation when Yeats mentions the “Great Year” as a means of organizing this most macroscopic form of the wheel into twelve two-thousand-year “months” of history (*YVP3* 187; 23 Nov [?]1923), inspired by his reading of Masson’s introduction to Milton’s poetry (*YVP3* 297).<sup>40</sup>

Originally a pre-Socratic idea, the Great Year was reportedly computed by Heraclitus, Empedocles and others as a complete movement of the known planets starting from alignment under Cancer, moving through Capricorn and back to alignment under Cancer, and measured against the fixed stars, or what Plato called the “Circuit of the Same” (*SMI* 276). However, in the second century BCE Hipparchus provided the potential for a different form of measurement, by showing that the “Circuit of the Same” (the fixed stars beyond the planets) was in fact shifting slightly each hundred years, and that during the sidereal year—the year measured by the *real* positions of the zodiac—the sun was positioned in a different zodiacal sign at the vernal equinox every 2000 years or so (*SM2* 185): a backwards movement from Taurus to Aries to Pisces etc., rather than the forward movement performed by the sun through the year itself. Thus the Great Year could be measured by the slow shift in position of the vernal equinox; this is the measurement adopted by Yeats. As Yeats notes, after the discovery of this “precession of the equinoxes,” the Great Year of the Christian commentators Syncellus and Nemesius begins at Aries—East—Spring. This is in keeping with the idea of the world being renewed at this point by a “World-restorer” (*AVB* 249; cf. *SM2* 164–66), when Caesar died and Christ was born at Aries 0°, just before the spring equinox began to occur in Pisces (*AVB* 243 & 254). In Yeats’s own wheel this movement corresponds to the *Creative Mind’s* movement from Phase 15 (Aries) to 14, 13 and 12 (Pisces) as it moves through the solar months of religious era (see Figure 2).

Yeats also understands the individual “months” of the Great Year (i.e., each 2,150-year cycle) as constituting complete wheels of 28 phases, and as being similarly divisible into signs and months, with Libra at Phase 1 and Aries at Phase 15 if they are “solar” months of religious era, and with September at Phase 1 and March at Phase 15 if “lunar” months of civilization. Hence the above figure can just as easily be used to describe 2,150-year eras as it can the 26,000 years of the Great Year, and in this shorter wheel each month constitutes around 150 to 200 years.

When formulating the relation between the twelve lunar and solar months of the Great Year, Yeats describes them as beginning in opposition to each other. Each lunar month of civilization begins when *Will* is at Phase 1 of a 2,150-year set of gyres, each solar month of religion at Phase 15. Hence in a 2,150-year era this means that the new gyre of

civilization will begin at the mid-point of the religious gyre, a fact demonstrated by the syncopated relation between calendar months and zodiacal signs in Figure 2: hence the lunar, classical era of civilization began around 1000 BCE with Oedipus solving the riddle of the Sphinx, a myth Yeats borrowed from Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. At its midpoint (1 CE) there was the beginning of a new solar, religious era, which occurred at Phase 15 of the gyres (Christ's birth). At Phase 1, or the religious era's midpoint (around 1000 CE), came the beginning of a new month of civilization (*AVB* 204). Thus the midpoint of the lunar gyre is the beginning of a new solar gyre.

On the solar gyre of religion Yeats also sees this point of change as involving an inversion in the influence of East and West, but one which has an effect on the lunar gyre as well. Yeats relates the zodiacal Aries (Phase 15) to "symbolical East" and Libra (1) to "symbolical West" (*AVB* 211–12), and uses this distinction to convey the idea that every 2,000 years or so there is a reversal of symbolical East (*antithetical*) and symbolical West (*primary*) influence, with the constant interchange between the two being represented as alternating "begettings," which produce the new illumination or avatar to an age. Yeats also discusses this interchange as facilitating a change between European and Asiatic influence, although he does not make the relationship between Aries-East (15) and Asia a necessary one at all. Being actual geographical locations rather than symbolical points, the relations between Asia and Europe—and their contributions to each other—can themselves change on account of the movement of the gyres, and are by turns *antithetical* and *primary* (*AVB* 203). For example, Yeats writes that he disagrees with Hegel's definition of Asia as Nature in the riddle of the sphinx, which corresponds to his own beginning of the two-thousand-year, lunar month of civilization (1000 BCE), and sees it as only becoming nature—which in this case is *primary*—at Phase 1, when a *primary* West impregnates East. Not only that, but Yeats's propensity for drawing up larger and smaller cycles means that he also sees Asiatic and European influence as interchanging every one thousand years, as in "Dove or Swan" (where "Asiatic" barbarity, beginning around 1000 BCE, gives way to a Western impregnation around 1 CE [*AVB* 269]). Thus Europe and Asia cannot be seen as fixed polarities or as consistently *antithetical* and *primary* like East or West, but as enjoying multiple and contradictory relations due to a multitude of intersections in their "marriage." Despite this, Yeats does eventually, and rather uneasily, attempt to relate geographical locations to the cardinal points on the wheel in the main interchange between East and West—that is, the beginning of the 2,150-year religious era—when discussing art history in "The Great Year of the Ancients."

Yeats initially depicts the alternation of East and West as follows:

A wheel of the Great Year must be thought of as the marriage of symbolic Europe and symbolic Asia, the one begetting upon the other. When it commenced at its symbolic full moon in March—Christ or Christendom was begotten by the West upon the East. This begetting has been followed by a spiritual predominance of Asia. After it must come an age begotten by the East upon the West that will take after its Mother in turn (*AVB* 203).

Yeats was aware that a solar cycle of 2,000 years inevitably follows a path back to the same phase or position of lunar-Aries-East (Phase 15), and thus fails to illustrate sufficiently the alternation in the impregnations of East/West, *antithetical/primary*. Thus he resorts to a 4,000-year gyre/wheel on several occasions. In the following passage he is describing a lunar (civilization) gyre of 4,000 years, from 1000 BCE until a date after 3000 CE, which, as we shall see, still incorporates the solar, *primary* gyres of religion:

When, however, one wants to show, as the automatic script generally does, that each civilisation and religious dispensation is the opposite of its predecessor, a single revolution constitutes two solar or lunar months. For instance, classical civilisation—1000 B.C. to A.D. 1000 let us say—is represented by the movement of *Will* from Phase 1, the place of birth, to Phase 15, the place of death, and our own civilisation is now almost midway in the movement of the *Will* from Phase 15 to Phase 1. (*AVB* 204)

The 2,000-odd years that were taken as a single, complete cycle of civilization (starting and ending at the lunar point of Phase 1), are now viewed as being simply half of a larger cycle of 4,000-odd years. The 2,000-year cycle moves within this larger, double gyre from a designated Phase 1 (1000 BCE) to its completion at Phase 15 (around 1000 CE), 28 phases collapsing to 15. After that there is a movement from Phases 15 to 1, from around 1000 CE (1050 CE in “Dove or Swan”; *AVB* 266) to a date after 3000 CE, with Yeats’s own day as the midpoint, nearing the year 2000, marked by the middle of Phase 17 on Figure 2. This larger, four-thousand-year wheel is effectively the amalgamation of the two months March (classical civilization 1000 BCE–1000 CE) and April (Christian civilization 1000 CE–3000 CE) on Figure 2 into a single wheel.

Immediately, however, Yeats forgets this four-thousand-year, lunar wheel, and goes on to describe this large cycle of civilization as being simply those two separate, lunar months of two thousand years, but as incorporating the alternations of East/West illumination from a four-thousand-year, religious, solar wheel, which occur at their own midpoints. He also charts the positions of the lunar months and solar alternations on the much larger wheel of 26,000 years. Thus he is effectively alluding to three different scales of measurement (2,000 years, 4,000 years and 26,000 years) in two sentences, when he writes:

At or near the central point of a lunar month of classical civilisation—the first degree of Aries on the Great Wheel—came the Christian *primary* dispensation, the child born in the Cavern. At or near the central point of a lunar month of our civilisation must come *antithetical* revelation, the turbulent child of the Altar. (*AVB* 204)

The midpoints of these two lunar months/cycles of civilization, coming at 1 CE and 2000 CE, correspond to the beginnings of new solar, religious months/cycles. The first of these midpoints, when *Will* is in the center of March (1000 BCE to 1000 CE) on the wheel of the Great Year of 26,000 years, coincides with the degree zero of (the solar month) Aries in the twelve zodiacal months of religious era, where symbolically Christ was born around 0 CE, and when *Creative Mind* (and the vernal equinox) was moving across Pisces 30°

(identical with 0° Aries) on the same wheel of the Great Year (see Figure 2). Most importantly, Yeats clearly sees the next *antithetical* revelation, when *Creative Mind* will be at Pisces 0°, and *Will* in mid-April, as being a complete opposition to the present *primary* one.

This complete change-over in influence means that both the solar, religious months of Aries and Pisces are also understood as constituting one four-thousand-year wheel from 2000 BCE to 2000 CE, with the movement from 1 CE to 2000 CE being like a movement of *Creative Mind* from its designated Phase 15 (East) to a Phase 1 (West), where an illumination wholly the opposite of that at 1 CE will occur. Yeats's terms "child born in the Cavern" and "child of the Altar," also show that he sees this point as a major reversal of eastern and western influence in a solar/religious month/cycle, since, as he explains in a footnote, he has in mind the "Cavern" and "Altar" discovered by Leo Frobenius. The first is "symbol of the nations moving westward" (but originating in the East) and the other "symbol of the nations moving eastward" (but originating in the West). The parallels between these lunar and solar wheels of varied length can best be depicted by the following line drawing.

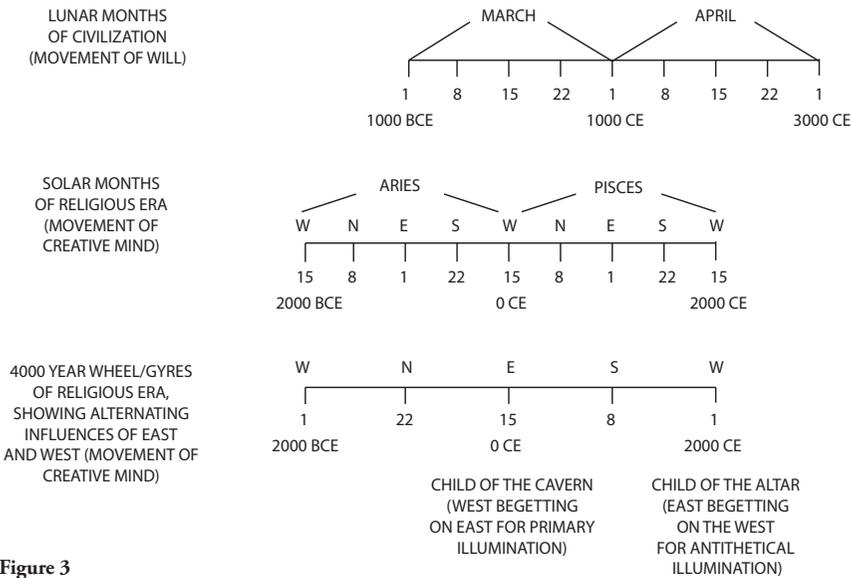


Figure 3

Yeats later writes, when discussing eastern/*antithetical* and western/*primary* illuminations in history, of "a child born at Phase 15, or East" on a solar, religious wheel, "as acquiring a *primary* character from its father who is at Phase 1, or West, and of a child born at Phase 1, or West, as acquiring an *antithetical* character from its father at Phase 15, or East, and so on, man and woman being alternately Western and Eastern" (*AVB* 211). What this effectively means is that *Creative Mind* around Phase 15, East, is a western illumination, and at Phase 1, West, an eastern illumination, on what must again be seen as a four-thousand-year double cone if applied to the illuminations of history. Yeats's use of astrological conjunctions around Phase 15 to explain these different illuminations and reversal of impregnator/impregnated is most perplexing (*AVB* 207), and despite Colin McDowell's brilliant attempt to solve the issue, still

remains unsolved and probably insoluble due to Yeats’s own confusion.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the belief that the eastern illumination on a four-thousand-year wheel occurs around the western pole, Phase 1, but is governed from the opposing pole to which it now returns, Phase 15 (AVB 207), has parallels with Frobenius’s ideas, and was also probably stressed in *A Vision B* because Yeats realized its wider philosophical import to the struggle between *antithetical* time and *primary* space, since he later relates Frobenius’s two symbols to space and time. As we shall see, in doing so he was to reverse completely the way the symbols are initially described here.

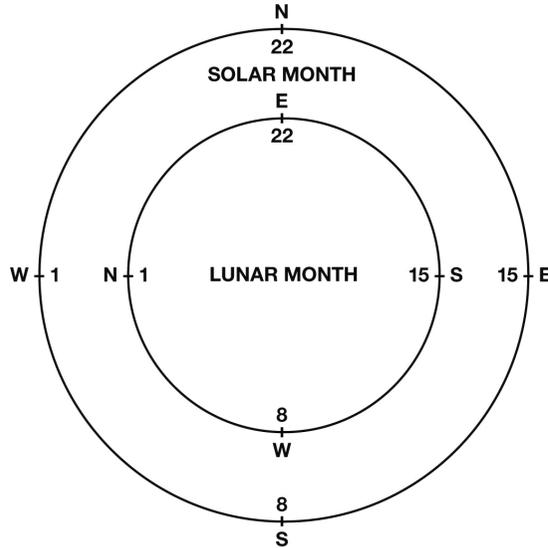


Figure 4

We can thus see the Aries-East of two smaller, two-thousand-year, solar wheels as being alternately East and West on a four-thousand-year solar wheel, so that East and West impregnate each other by turns every 2,000 years or so, *primary* and *antithetical* influences swapping round. This is important not least because even when Yeats discusses the lunar gyres of civilization, the most important alternation between East and West is usually understood as an intersection from the solar month/wheel, and as being governed by religious history. This is partly because the polarities East and West are placed at Phase 22 and Phase 8 on lunar wheels, and not at the more important Phases 1 and 15, although Yeats makes this more explicit in the first edition than the second (CW13 113; AVA 140). In summation, Yeats developed a geometry which saw the history of the world as mapped onto a cycle of twelve months making a single year of 26,000 years; he distinguished between the twelve lunar cycles of civilization (calendar months) and twelve solar cycles of religion which it encompasses (zodiac months); he saw these separate types of month as beginning, in a classificatory (although not actual) sense, at each other’s midpoints; but he understood the solar gyre of religion as affecting the lunar gyre of civilization as well, its beginning and end being the midpoints on the months of civilization. Thus Yeats discerned the movement of the 2,000-year solar months on the wheel of the Great Year as involving a constant interchange of symbolic eastern (*antithetical*) and western (*primary*)

influence, and was able also to relate these influences to similar movements between *antithetical* and *primary Tinctures*, and time and space.

#### PETRIE AND SCHNEIDER

In the first edition of *A Vision* Yeats had used Fritz Hommel's inferences concerning the Babylonian calendar from Hastings's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, which corresponded in time span to his lunar rather than solar months, to articulate the Great Year's cycles. He had admitted that the spans were wrong, since Hommel placed the equinoctial point in 1000 BCE at Aries 30°, meaning that Yeats's starting point of 1 CE falls at the middle or 15° Aries (*CW*13 122; *AVA* 151).<sup>42</sup> It was W. M. Flinders Petrie, however, who led Yeats to understand the concept of the Great Year as pertaining particularly to Etruscan cosmogony, which connection he stressed further in the second edition. According to the Etruscan sages, cited by Plutarch in his "Life of Sulla," there were ten "great years" (not one), the last eight of which corresponded to the eight races of men.<sup>43</sup> Petrie took this to be uncannily proleptic of his own observations of Egyptian civilization, but added two extra to take in the two millennia since the birth of Christ, and to make the full number of years twelve. Egyptian civilization enjoyed seven great manifestations from the Stone Age to the decline of Roman Egypt, followed by the great Moorish civilization of North Africa, whose decline began in the late medieval era (*RC* 38). Concentrating on sculpture rather than political freedom (which he considered to be irrelevant in measuring a culture's success), he saw eight revolutions of civilization over eleven thousand years, the average length of each being about 1,330 years, some 230 more than the Etruscans' 1,100 (*RC* 85). In the northern Mediterranean (Europe) he saw a similar correlation in the Cretan civilizations, through to classical Greece and Rome, with the medieval period just before the Renaissance being the height of our present era in Europe (number 8) (*RC* 74). Petrie also believed that racial strength was important for the development of civilization (*RC* 125), both in terms of the dynamism of struggle and the blending of two cultures through invasion.<sup>44</sup>

Yeats referred to Petrie in both *A Vision* and his 1930 diary as a major source for the concept of the Great Year, even though his Etruscan temporal concept is entirely different in length to that of most classical sources. Yeats also interpreted the first phases of humankind through reference to Hermann Schneider's description of Aurignacian and Neolithic man, "the hunting age" up until "agriculture" and the invention of solar mythology "symbol of all history and of individual life, foundation of all the earliest civilisations" (*AVB* 205). For Yeats this occurs when the vernal equinox was at Phases 4 to 5 (presumably the *Will* of "universal man") in the circle of the Great Year (*AVB* 254). In the description of the basic wheel this is just where the *primary Tincture* begins to close and also the point, in Phase 4, where "the wisdom of instinct" appertaining either to one's "well-being or that of the race" (*AVB* 110) predominates. On the basic wheel the closing itself is where "reflection" begins and man begins to free himself of "Fate" (*AVB* 111). Hence, beginning from this point, we can see ten months on the Great Year out of the twelve in which civilization can occur. This occurs not least because the rise of racial instinct is also an important precondition, since Yeats understands "that conflict or union of races stated by Petrie and Schneider as universal law" in creating the "new *antithetical*" after some 500 years, whose "culture lives only in certain victorious classes" (*AVB* 205), before dying into the *primary* after Phase 22: Yeats commonly complains about *primary* democracy overtaking

*antithetical* aristocracy and unity of culture (AVB 81n), an opinion analogous to the ideas of Giambattista Vico, of which parallel Yeats was also aware (AVB 261).<sup>45</sup>

However, another contribution was more significant. Petrie argued that the East was always 365 years further on in its cycles than the West.<sup>46</sup> By East Petrie does not mean Egypt or the Phoenicians, whose revolutions correspond almost exactly to those of Europe, and are thus part of the West, but Persia, India and China. The difference in time puts the two in constant struggle. Yeats cites Petrie as making the difference 500 years (AVB 203n), which is enough to see the East as the antithesis of the West if applied to Petrie's own revolution (1,330). Thus Yeats adds more sustenance to his view that the two battle with each other and create civilizations within both parts of the globe through alternate begetting and opposition, with the West as *primary*, the East *antithetical*. Unlike Petrie, Yeats still questions whether the “marriage” between the geographical West and East is real, before insisting that the Wheel has “timeless and spaceless” polarities (AVB 205), meaning that he refuses to impose rigid historical definitions on the points.

Petrie's views on race are given a more detailed explication by Schneider, who looks at the various invasions and migrations in Egypt, Babylon, Persia and elsewhere, to establish when races were most perfectly blended and to create what Yeats calls “race-cultures” (AVB 206), a term which he uses not least because of his interest in eugenics and Theosophical root-races.<sup>47</sup> Yeats was also most impressed with Schneider's description of solar mythology, “the sacred legend of the sun,” as the basis for all world religions. Like Petrie, Schneider sees gradual peaks and declines in cultures, although he does not try to map out the “Great Year” with the same precision as Petrie.<sup>48</sup>

Yeats discerns a difference between himself and Petrie when writing that Petrie sees all cultures and civilizations as being a continual progression (AVB 261). Rather than there being progression, Yeats believes that “every phase returns, therefore in some sense every civilisation” (AVB 206). His understanding of the reason for decline in an era, which Petrie blames, in Viconian fashion, on political freedom and moral organization, is that there is a descent into spiritual contemplation followed by tyranny, a movement he illustrates with Schneider's own description of Aeneas as a puppet guided by fate in contrast to Achilles' assertive free will. Yeats maintains that the cultures, “having attained some Achilles in the first blossoming, find pious Aeneas in the second” (AVB 206), which corresponds to his description of the *Principles* overriding the concrete and personal *Faculties* in the final phases of the wheel (AVB 89).<sup>49</sup>

Thus Yeats here finds more respectable support for his belief in the reality of the Great Year, the alternation between Eastern and Western power, the rise into *antithetical* aristocracy and decline into *primary* objectivity, and the importance of race to culture. Schneider, for example, makes reference to the “Indo-German” (HWCI 18–19), as a comparative type throughout his work, understanding this type to have provided the original basis of European civilization. While Yeats appears to have accepted race as a form of teleology, his reading of Strzygowski shows that he does not see Aryanism as its motivating force.

#### STRZYGOWSKI

Yeats's particular organization of art history by geographical influence in “The Great Year of the Ancients” owes much to a fascination with Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941), an enthusiastic National Socialist. Strzygowski's basic theory was that the early spirit of Christian

architecture (and spirituality) came from the East Aryans of Persia and Armenia (the Armenians converting, he believed, some time before Gregory the Illuminator), and that we must thank them for the domed and vaulted churches of Asia Minor,<sup>50</sup> as well as for some of the less “individual values” of early Christian representative art (*OCCA* 159).<sup>51</sup> The impetus behind this expression of spiritual purity was the Northern Aryan influence, which came to Armenia and Persia in the form of Mazdaism, the Northern Aryans inspiring their Eastern brothers (*OCCA* 18–19). It was the Semites, however, (in particular the Aramaeans)<sup>52</sup> who, “inspired by their rulers’ lust after power” (*OCCA* 161), developed the more corrupt representational art of Christianity. They further influenced the Greeks to introduce the bearded Semitic image into their own art, rather than Christ Pantocrator, the earlier Greco-Roman image (*OCCA* 161–62). The emergence of a more geometric, less naturalistic representation of Christ was a welcome East Aryan influence which entwined with the Greco-Semitic form of the South as representational art moved eastward to Armenia, where the East Aryans had been celebrating Christ through purer, non-representational forms.

Strzygowski backs these theories up with his observations of Armenian churches, seeing in them eastern influences rather than Greek adoptions, such as the use of domed structures on square bases, which appeared in Armenia before the rest of the Christian world, including Byzantium (*OCCA* 63–67). He sees a movement around Mesopotamia of Northern Aryans (Indo-Germanic tribes) to Eastern Aryans (Persians and Armenians) to the southern world of Roman Judaea and Greece, with the Greco-Roman world eventually accepting the Semitic form of Christ and replacing the non-representational art of the East with their own representational images (*OCCA* 168).

In the first edition of *A Vision*, Yeats did not link the geographical compass points described by Strzygowski in relation to art to the movement of the Great Year with any conviction. He did, nevertheless, admit that, “The cardinal points in the Solar and Lunar cones are not merely symbols of the Sun and Moon’s path, but are held to refer to the actual geographical points” (*CW13* 141; *AVA* 174). Although Yeats depicts the coordinates in a way bearing some similarities to their description in the second edition, he does not actually provide examples of places or empires.

The same is not true, however, of the second edition, where Yeats eventually reneges—if hesitantly—on his initial refusal to link his *antithetical* East to “not only symbolical East but to geographical, Asiatic,” as he believes this was the instructors’ original design (*AVB* 256), despite the fact that he had earlier denied this (*AVB* 205), and had understood Asia as being *primary* when seen separately from the symbolic direction East. He then immediately relates the wheel to Strzygowski’s geographical coordinates. Yeats has already described the interchange between East and West at 1 CE (the start of the Christian religious era of 2,000 years, the midpoint or Phase 15 of the two-thousand-year lunar month of civilization and the beginning or Phase 15 of the new religious era, on the two-thousand-year solar month) as constituting a spiritual impregnation of Western ideas in Eastern form (*AVB* 211), and has characterized Asia as “Palestine onwards.” Now he is firmly relating the alternating polarities to the historical and geographical locations Europe and Asia. Drawing our attention to the woodcut of the wheel, Yeats sees North and South as being Phases 1 and 15, West and East as Phases 8 and 22 (“East is marked by a sceptre,” he declares, which is depicted at Phase 22 in the woodcut [*AVB* 70]). When delineating this new wheel—and his definitions here leave us inevitably having to substi-

tute possibilities—Yeats therefore appears to have a doubled, four-thousand-year, lunar, rather than a solar wheel in mind, like the four-thousand-year wheel first mooted when discussing the classification of a single four-thousand-year wheel (AVB 204), for which the East is at Phase 22, the South at 15, the West at Phase 8, like the inner circle in Figure 4 above. Despite the fact that this wheel is lunar, Yeats appears to envisage the movement over the wheel as being clockwise, like that of the solar *Creative Mind*.<sup>53</sup>

In relation to Strzygowski’s attributions of geography to polarity, Yeats notes that “From the Semitic East [Strzygowski] derives all art which associates Christ with the attributes of royalty,” replacing the “mild Hellenic Christ” (AVB 257). Unlike Strzygowski, however, Yeats allows the Semitic East to subsume the Aryan East. Misreading his source he declares that, “To him the East, as certainly to my instructors, is not India or China, but the East that has affected European civilisation, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Egypt” (AVB 257). Confusingly, Yeats also describes the “South” of Strzygowski and of his own Phase 15 as corresponding to “Egypt or India,”<sup>54</sup> the duplication of Egypt reflecting the distinction between what Strzygowski wrote and how Yeats read his definition of East, since for Strzygowski the South comprised classical Greece and the Ancient Semitic cultures, with the East being reserved for Armenia, Persia and India or the East Aryans (Strzygowski made no comment on Egyptian civilization before Alexander’s invasion, any more than he did on Sumerian). For Yeats, East must always be “human power... stretched to its utmost” (the Semitic “attributes of royalty”), regardless of whether in the wheel of the *Principles* or the *Faculties* (AVB 257), while North and West are “superhuman power.” Yeats also understands the South (15) as “naturalistic form,” the North (1) as the source of “non-representative art,” the West (8) as a “mirror where all movements are reflected” (AVB 258). He hesitates to apply Strzygowski’s “geographical” North—the culture of the Northern and Asiatic nomads—to his symbolic North, but does so anyway.

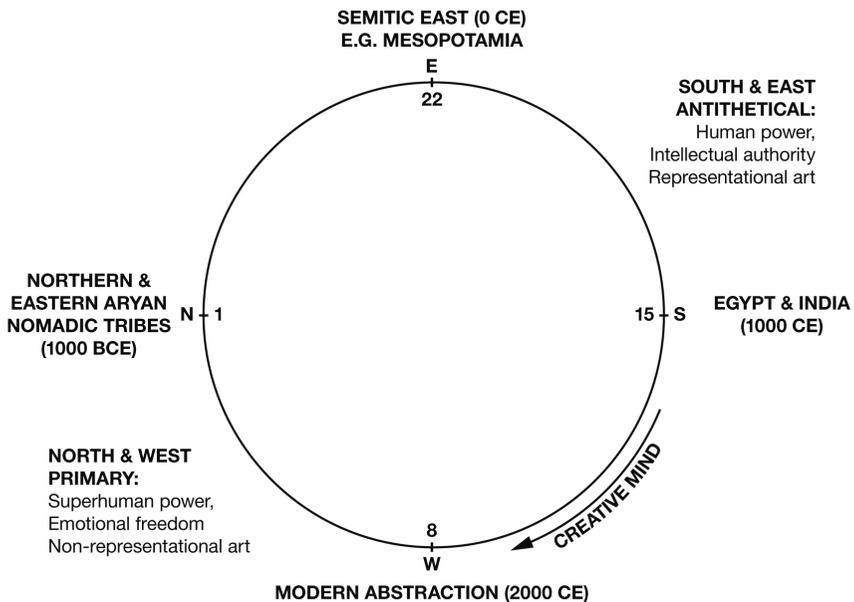


Figure 5

Yeats continues the adaptation of Strzygowski's geographical determinations to his cardinal points and phases by describing them as periods in history, and as contrary East/West illuminations. If we were to see this as the movement of *Creative Mind* (and the movement is clockwise, like *Creative Mind's*) it would represent a movement from North (Phase 1) (1000 BCE) to East (Phase 22) (1 CE, the birth of Christ) to South (1000 CE, curiously Egypt and India) to the West at 2000 CE, where "the *antithetical* East will beget upon the *primary* West and the child or era so born will be *antithetical*" (AVB 257). As in the two-thousand-year religious gyres, Christ comes at *antithetical* East (1 CE), but was impregnated by a West which will gradually take over, thus constituting a *primary* "dispensation" (AVB 204).

The complexities and possible inconsistencies of the geometry need not trouble us at this point (Yeats is himself unsure of the exact parallels), since the intellectual reading of Strzygowski is nevertheless clear. Yeats understands the representational art linked to the East at 1 CE as an *antithetical* period in the gyres of civilization, but sees the Aryan culture of the North as representing a decline in personality, which is again predominating as we move back to a *primary* phase in our civilization. Yeats therefore merges Strzygowski's Aryan East with Semitic East, and strips from the East exactly what Strzygowski understands to be the East's most significant contribution: the spirit of non-representational art in Christianity. He instead sees this as a recurring *primary* impulse from the North, resulting in a new West, in which "the non-representative art of our own time may not be but a first symptom of our return to the *primary tincture*": a recurrence from "the nomad Aryans of northern Europe and Asia" who are "the source of all geometrical ornament, of all non-representative art" (AVB 258).<sup>55</sup>

This is despite the fact that he agrees with Strzygowski in "Dove or Swan," written earlier, that the non-representative character of Byzantine art was an Eastern, Persian impulse, seeing it as a "superhuman" *primary*, spiritual influence, which nevertheless combined with Greco-Roman form to create a new *antithetical* art in Byzantium 560 CE.<sup>56</sup> It arrives as a result of change on an undrawn "horizontal gyre" (AVB 281–82), and effectively replaces the "Doric vigour" and decoration which had reinvigorated Ionian art 1,000 years earlier, after the defeat of Persia by Greece (c 500 BCE) (AVB 270). The "horizontal gyre," which Yeats defines as lunar in another context, and as at right-angles to the solar (AVB 197),<sup>57</sup> would appear to be a lunar gyre of artistic form and culture which is syncopated with the one-thousand-year solar gyre/wheel described by Yeats in "Dove or Swan," its East and West alternations coming in the middle of one-thousand-year religious epochs, just as the main two-thousand-year solar and lunar gyres are syncopated elsewhere. The horizontal gyre clearly shows alternations in the marriage of Asia and Europe which contradict Yeats's description of Asia and later reading of Strzygowski here, as Yeats now chooses on a much larger wheel to relate these impulses to the North, and even attributes some of the Aryan features of Byzantine art which Strzygowski praised—such as "domed and arched buildings where nothing interferes with the effect of the building as a whole"—to a "return to the *primary tincture*." (AVB 258)

The reason why Yeats transforms the relation between Strzygowski's East, North and South, and completely recharacterizes his East in relation to its influence and geographic location, springs equally from both the inevitable logic of his own East/West alternations when applied over this time span to Asia and Europe respectively—so that East/Asia must be *antithetical* by nature—and from his renewed understanding of art's future after reading Spengler's dire warnings for Western forms of art. The spirit of the Northern Aryans—emotional freedom and superhuman power—is on the verge of winning as Europe slides into

abstraction, being no longer the subjective, personal culture of the *antithetical* East—of Semitic East, of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia—but of an objective, abstract culture: the abstract element of art praised by Worringer and T. E. Hulme, which had made such an impression on the Vorticists, and which was also evident in the soulless arches and domes of Italian Futurism. This abstract, depersonalizing art, which corresponded politically to the amassing of people into groups (AVB 82n), was another manifestation of the Modernism and “flux” despised by the *antithetical* and personality-minded Yeats. He also characterizes this art as a return to a spatial as opposed to a temporal mind-set.

#### SPENGLER AND FROBENIUS

Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* greatly impressed Yeats with its chronology. The classical era’s ending at 1000 CE and the Faustian era’s beginning at that same date accorded with his own understanding of the lunar months of the Great Year (e.g. DWI 167; 185; 201; 235).<sup>58</sup> Spengler’s main contention rests on his refutation of Kant’s understanding of number, time and space, and further belief that modern conceptions of being and becoming do not accord with those of classical man (DWI 60). In particular, number as an abstract relation was not something which classical man understood. He only saw numbers as the “become” (DWI 81ff): that is, as figures realized and not as *a priori* relations of the mind. Similarly, the idea of becoming, which included the concept of destiny, involved an understanding of linear time and the physiognomy of change not known to classical man, who understood simply the actual world of the “become” (DWI 140). History, epoch and the movement of becoming-in-itself, in contrast to the being which propels it, is an aspect of the Faustian soul, involving consciousness of time as a form distinct from space (which further explains the lack of physiognomic distinction between ages in classical man’s understanding of history). Nevertheless, time is not to be understood as the *a priori* form of sensuous intuition described by Kant, but is a modern development which has also helped man symbolize the sense of depth involved in abstract space (since time necessitates symbol [DWI 168]).

Spengler opposes the “Apollonian,” classical space of manifestation and the Faustian, abstract depth space, which latter we consciously explore and symbolize through time (such as the spacious magnitude of Gothic cathedrals [DWI 188]). He cites Leo Frobenius’s *Paideuma* as his source for the *Höhlengefühl* (DWI 184), or “cavern-feeling,” a corollary of Apollonian space: a point Yeats picked up on.

Yeats himself could never have read Frobenius’s essay in *Paideuma* on the Ghanaian tale of Samba Gana and Anallja Tu-Bari, although he did possess a copy of this book in his private library.<sup>59</sup> While Rapallo Notebook E shows that Yeats read Frobenius’s mammoth *The Voice of Africa*,<sup>60</sup> neither the symbols nor the story explaining the relationship between the “cavern-feeling” and the “breadth-feeling” are there, although Frobenius does mention its opposing symbol of the “altar” and sixteen radiating roads in the East in that book. Frobenius equated this particular symbol with the Etruscans’ mythology of the *Templum* and their equal penchant for dividing the cosmos by the number sixteen (which Yeats had surely observed despite not overtly exploiting it in *A Vision* when he refers to Frobenius’s discussion of the Etruscans [AVB 259]).<sup>61</sup>

In *Paideuma*, however, Frobenius tells of a mighty hero who died after an eight-year fight with a snake for the sake of his beloved, and whose burial pyre she built with 8 times

80 heroes, not allowing them to stop until she could see Wagana in the West. She then urged them to go off in all directions and copy Samba Gana, which the German believed to express the concept of the *Weitengefühl* or "far/breadth-sense."<sup>62</sup> Frobenius notes that the opposite form to this was the "cavern/depth-sense," *Höhlengefühl*, found in the West, but symbolizing the nations moving eastward.<sup>63</sup> The *Weitengefühl*, or "breadth-sense," corresponds to the Diarra people of Ghana, a western people who have spread eastward into Africa, and become heroes and created works of empire; the cavern corresponds to the "fanatical" Trarza tribe of West Africa, an Islamic people who have moved west, who understand the earth purely by the limits of the sky, and can only destroy.<sup>64</sup>

Yeats knew no German and this essay was never translated, and so he was dependent on either Ezra Pound's or George Yeats's ad hoc translation.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the combined reading of *The Voice of Africa*, Spengler and conversations with Ezra Pound led Yeats to an understanding that Frobenius "discovered among the African natives two symbolical forms, one founded upon the symbol of the Cavern, one upon that of the central Altar and sixteen roads radiating outward" (*AVB* 258–59).

Yeats informs us that Frobenius thought those peoples around the Cavern symbol looked eastern, while those domiciled near instances of the roads symbol appeared to have actually moved east from the Atlantic. Frobenius "found methods of divination based upon the symbolism of the roads in the furthest East, and the symbolism of the Cavern in the West" (*AVB* 259). So the Cavern was a symbol found in the West, but appertaining to people clearly from the East, while the symbol of the sixteen roads from the Altar was one to be found in East Africa, but originating from the West. This immediately recalls the contrary impregnations in the solar gyres, in which we must think of "a child born at Phase 15 or East as acquiring a *primary* character from its father who is at Phase 1, or West, and of a child born at Phase 1, or West, as acquiring an *antithetical* character from its father at Phase 15, or East, and so on, man and woman being alternately Western and Eastern" (*AVB* 211). A *primary* dispensation arrives at a phase in the middle of the *antithetical* half of the Wheel (around 15) (of a double gyre of religious era) an *antithetical* dispensation at a *primary* phase in the middle of the primary half of the Wheel (around Phase 1), the influx that will determine the character at the end of an era.

Yeats's understanding of Frobenius takes him into conflict with Spengler's definition of space. He identifies the Cavern—the symbol found in the West but originating in the East—with Time, and declares that Spengler's association of it with space constitutes merely a succumbing to the idea of space as the finite form which creates the flux of time: the Bergsonian time evident in the work of Modernists and disparaged by Wyndham Lewis.<sup>66</sup> The Cavern must be Time and the roads Space, because the Cavern is associated with the movement of the heavens in the Hermetic fragments, and the roads "could never suggest anything to ancient man but Space" (*AVB* 260).<sup>67</sup>

Yeats suggests that although he associates the Cavern with Time and not Space, he believes his mind "still runs with" Spengler's because the German describes the symbol of the Cavern as though it were time. This is a hard notion to fathom, but probably derives from the fact that the Cavern clearly defines a conception of space more concrete than the "Time-philosophy" of Modernism, which latter Yeats believes he discerns in the description of the Faustian soul (*AVB* 259–60) and hence can see as temporal. Thus the symbol of Time, Cavern, occurs in the West as a result of an Eastern/*antithetical* impregnation,

while the symbol of Space, roads and Altar, occurs in the East but is a Western impregnation. It also represents the abstract, *primary* art present in the West today. Unfortunately, this interpretation did not prevent Yeats from accepting Spengler's and Frobenius's more obvious definitions of the two symbols in “The Completed Symbol,” and placing “the Christian *primary* dispensation, the child born in the Cavern” at East and the *antithetical* “turbulent child of the Altar” at West, when first introducing Frobenius's concept (AVB 204)—an inconsistency with his later, Lewis-inspired interpretation (see Figure 3), if one takes East and West as relating to geographical positions, as his inclusion of theories like Spengler's and Strzygowski's ultimately forces Yeats to do.

If we bear in mind that Yeats read Wyndham Lewis and Strzygowski before actually centering upon Frobenius's influence in Spengler's work, we can explain how Strzygowski's view of the West as a “mirror” of all other compass points is later interpreted by Yeats as meaning a *primary*, abstract art, linked to the sense of space in “Time-philosophy” but not to *antithetical*, subjective time (East). This mirror is the ultimate fruition of a “western” impregnation at East (1 CE)—the Altar and roads—which ends in a return to the *primary* tincture at West (AVB 258). We can understand why Yeats recharacterized Strzygowski's East and Asia as *antithetical* “human power” (Time/Cavern), blending Semitic East with Aryan, and West as *primary* “superhuman power” (Space/Altar), despite the conflict this causes with his earlier reading of Strzygowski. He now understands abstraction as a Western impulse that impregnated the East at Christ's birth, but which has finally come to fruition in Modernism, rather than the Asian purification of Greek art he had earlier understood it as being (AVB 281). Finally, we can also see why Yeats divorced the Faustian soul of Spengler from idealist time, equated it with the mind of Bergson's organic realism, and further associated it with the roads, his *primary* symbol of space, the “Time-Mind” of Modernism being really a subjugation to the spatial. Yeats's distaste for Modernism and its portrayal of time appears to have been central in his reinterpretation of Strzygowski, Frobenius and Spengler, making the later books of *A Vision* appear, above all else, an attempt to explain the tawdriness of his own day.

The correlations to both the gyres and Yeats's description of East-West illuminations, Cavern and Altar, elsewhere are not quite consistent. Nevertheless, despite inconsistencies, the relevant results of his reading are that Yeats sees a cyclical relation between East and West over the solar months, and furthermore raises the spiritual and artistic achievements of the East over the West. In the struggle the representation of time and subjectivity in art predominates when the East is male at the beginning of a religious era, and midway in the gyres of civilization, while that of space and objectivity predominates when the West is impregnating in the religious era—i.e., the birth of Christ and the arrival of the drilled eyeball in Roman statuary (AVB 276). In the alternations of historical cycle, Yeats has wound back to his beginning, the tensions of the single gyre of time and space infusing his dynamic of world history.

In conclusion, Yeats uses modern philosophy to organize and comprehend the dictates of the automatic script. The theories of Kant and Gentile he employs to see both incarnate and discarnate experience as a form of spatialization through time, and the *Enneads* of Plotinus allowed him to relate the *Principles* to an existing ontological hierarchy, which he in any case erroneously conflated into the soul of an individual man. The ideas of Berkeley were useful to him in reformulating the relation between man and Daimon, and the discarnate

Daimons, as being a theory of perception within an idealist ontology. The work of the younger Berkeley and McTaggart further allowed him to see the individual self as both a particularity which never cedes its uniqueness and as partaking of a wider ontological unity, being part of a "community of selves." Ultimately, Yeats used philosophy of time and ontology to express the contradictions of his system: an individual soul which is part of a larger unity and yet can subsume that universe within itself; a spiritual ontology in which the sensual has an equal and symbiotic status with the abstract; an eternity containing all individual successive events in a state of simultaneity. Philosophy helped Yeats to balance and articulate the concrete and sensuous aspects of his system with the abstract.

In relation to history, Yeats takes many different theorists of civilization and anthropologists like Schneider, Petrie and Frobenius, and effectively adapts their ideas in accordance with the logic of his own gyres and the dictates of the automatic script, to understand the movements of culture as an alternating struggle between East and West. This process of "conversion" frequently and fundamentally alters the theories of the originals, but in a way which strips them of their original political significance and narrow understandings of racial history, and also progressively roots the compass points of his gyres in a geographic spatial determination he had originally sought to avoid. In doing this he manages to relate the philosophical conceptions of time and space promoted by Spengler, and the racial artistic descriptions described by Strzygowski to the *antithetical* and *primary Tinctures* and to the history of artistic representation, although is led to draw opposite conclusions to the originals. He employs these contemporary ideas to understand the descent into abstraction of the art of his own era, and ultimately attempts to raise *A Vision's* status from that of an esoteric book to an original essay on the movements of civilization, race and culture with a unique, spiritual dynamism.

### Notes

1. This section details arguments first related in Matthew Gibson, "Yeats, Kant and Giovanni Gentile: The Single Gyre of Time and Space," *YAI5* (2002) 313–325.
2. Immanuel Kant, "Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysic," *Kant's Critical Philosophy for English Readers*, trans. and ed. J. P. Mahaffy and J. H. Bernard, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1915 [WBGYL 1062; YL 1052]), 1:14–17 (chap. 2, pt. 2). Immanuel Kant, "Transcendental Doctrine of Elements. Part First: Transcendental Aesthetic," *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn (London: J. M. Dent and Sons; New York: E.P. Dutton and Co. Inc., 1934), 41–61. Intro. pt. 4, pp. 30–2, *Everyman's Library*, ed. Ernest Rhys, 909.
3. Giovanni Gentile, *The Theory of Mind as Pure Act*, trans. H. Wildon Carr. (London: Macmillan, 1922 [WBGYL 752; YL 742]), 19–20 (chap. 3, pts. 3–4).
4. Kant argued in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that cognition occurs through judgment, and that while specific concepts like "chair" or "house" allow objects to be cognized in experience, these *a posteriori* concepts in the understanding are themselves only possible due to innate categories of judgment like "unity," "singularity" and "reality" etc. These categories allow us to make fundamental judgments about what we see and comprehend, and are involved in all judgments that we make beyond basic perceptual ones. Kant deduces them not, as a Neo-Platonist like Cudworth or Shelley might, through reflexive-thinking and a kind of mystical dissolution of the self that then reveals the innate idea (which he believed the mind of man can never know directly), but through inference from experience and the subjective judgments *a priori*: judgments which cannot be proven by the law of contradiction, and yet are self-evidently true when we reflect upon experience. It was a most perceptive comment of Yeats when he declared that "Coleridge restated Kant in terms of Plato" (*TSMC* 131).
5. For a fuller explanation of Plotinus's system, the reader is referred to Stephen MacKenna's "Explanatory Matter" in Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna, *Vol I: The Ethical Treatises*, (London: P. L. Warner

- for the Medici Society, 1917), 1:118–25 (*WBGYL* 1601; *YL* 1589).
6. Rosemary Puglia Ritvo, “A Vision B: the Plotinian Metaphysical Basis,” *Review of English Studies* 26, no. 101 (1975), 34–46.
  7. Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna, *Vol IV: The Divine Mind*, (London: P. L. Warner for the Medici Society, 1917), 69–72 (*WBGYL* 1604; *YL* 1592) and Pierre Duhem, *Le système du monde: doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic* 10 vols. (Paris: A. Hermann et fils, 1913–59), 1:284–85. Duhem was a most important source for Yeats; referred to hereafter as *SMI* etc. in the text.
  8. Illustrative of this conflation is the fact that in the automatic script Yeats is warned by the controls not to call “spirit” “mind,” but “Nous,” since “mind implies fraternity” (*YVP2* 289; 25 May 1919). That he should have renamed it Mind illustrates his ultimate acceptance that the individual soul collapses the macrocosm into itself.
  9. See Neil Mann, “The *Thirteenth Cone*,” 159–193 in this volume.
  10. This section in part details—and improves upon—some theories presented in M. Gibson, “Yeats and Idealism: the Philosophy of Light,” *YAI4* (2001) 284–297.
  11. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding: An Abridgement*, ed. John W. Yolton (London: Dent/Everyman, 1977), 58 (bk 2, chap. 8, pts. 9–10).
  12. *The Works of George Berkeley D.D., Late Bishop of Cloyne in Ireland*, 2 vols (London: G. Robinson; Dublin: John Exshaw, 1758 [*WBGYL* 161; *YL* 160]), 1:27–28, n10–n13; referred to hereafter as *WGB1* and *WGB2* in the text.
  13. “...fire is a subtle, invisible thing, whose operation is not to be discerned but by means of some grosser body, which acts as a vehicle to bring it into view. This is the sole use of oil, air, or any other thing that passes as food of that element” (*WGB2* 552 n197).
  14. Yeats read Pierre Duhem’s *Le système du monde* to discover information concerning the medieval theologians Grosseteste and Bonaventura (*SM5* 356–58). Grosseteste understood light as corporeality while Bonaventura understood the five senses as simply being transmutations of light, and thus they became another analogue to the views expressed in *Siris* (*AVB* 190n). Yeats’s occult experiences and invocation of symbolic presences through Cabala had frequently involved stronger experiences of light than were normal, and despite initially distinguishing between the conditions of air and fire when separating ghosts and purified *Daimons* in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (*CW5* 26; *Myth* 357), Yeats soon forgot this distinction. Yeats’s central image of the lamp, as a metaphor of mind for romanticism and imagination in the “Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*,” is also influenced by Berkeley and Grosseteste (*CW5* 198; *OBMV* xxxi). That light was an animating principle in nature was not a new concept for Yeats, being a central tenet of Eliphas Lévi’s interpretation of the Cabala, to name but one source, see E. Levi, *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual*, trans. A. E. Waite (London: George Redway, 1896), 62.
  15. Yeats conveniently ignores the fact that in *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, Berkeley argues that imagination and sensation are quite separate, with the former not constituting anything other than private invention (*WGB1* 37).
  16. In the 1930 diary he even refers to this as “the multiple Passionate Body” (*Ex* 332), reflecting the fact that it is made up of other, discarnate *Daimons*.
  17. The notes which Yeats particularly liked and which inspired him were S. 724, S. 725 and S. 726, which deal with the equation of spirit to the Will, the need to avoid defining person, “lest offence be given, there being one volition acknowledged to be God,” and whether all “volitions make one will,” see George Berkeley, *Commonplace Book*, ed. G. A. Johnston (London: Faber and Faber, 1930 [*WBGYL* 160; *YL* 159]), 87.
  18. As will become clear later in the essay, Yeats does not quite present a consistent interpretation of the discarnate/incarnate division, although its most convenient description would be a division between the “supersensual” and the “sensual.”
  19. See “Introduction to *The Holy Mountain*” (esp. *CW5* 147–51; *E&I* 462–66) and “Introduction to ‘Mandukya Upanishad’” (*CW5* 157–58; *E&I* 476–77)
  20. George Russell, *Song and its Fountains* (London: Macmillan, 1932), 63.
  21. *Ibid.*, 48.
  22. J. W. Dunne, *An Experiment with Time* (London: A. & C. Black Ltd, 1927), 99–105.
  23. *Ibid.*, 151–53.
  24. J. M. E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence*, ed. C. D. Broad, 2 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1927), 2:13–14 (bk. 5, chap. 33); referred to hereafter in the text as *NE1* and *NE2*.
  25. Implicit to McTaggart’s argument are the laws of contradiction and excluded middle. In the law of contradiction if a statement is true then its opposite is not true, for if its opposite is true then the first statement

is not true. If an event is past, then to say it is not past is untrue. To say it is future is to say that it is not past, therefore it cannot be future. The term cannot contain contradictory qualities. In the law of excluded middle it is assumed that two contradictory statements about an object cannot be both true.

26. Like Spinoza, he argues that any substance must be infinite in its attributes, self-causing and unique—although his later conditions for substance are different to Spinoza's in arguing the non-coalescence of the selves which constitute substance.
27. McTaggart argues that all "selves" are immortal and harmonious, and part of an "absolute reality," *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918 [WBGYL 1216; YL 1203]), 28. He further argues that "selves have no existence except in so far as they manifest the unity of the Absolute" (*Studies*, 30). McTaggart nevertheless avoids conferring a coalescent unity upon (ideal) substance, much as Berkeley did in the *Commonplace Book*. Many pages in the first three chapters of Yeats's copy of *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* have marginal scorings, (although only page 61 from that above): these tend to be pages where McTaggart directly quotes or refers to passages from Hegel or Lotze (see YL pp. 163–64).
28. Since McTaggart denies time, reincarnation is for him an experience rather than a reality of the soul's immortal existence (or rather, that of the "self"), and is not, as Yeats claims in his introduction to *The Resurrection*, "the foundation of McTaggart's own philosophical system" (*Ex* 396–97; *VPI* 934).
29. Or they could be equivalent representatives from the higher states of the reincarnating soul's discarnate phases, from after the *Shiftings*, when the *Spirit* is purified of memory and no longer attaches itself to the sensory.
30. Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna, *Vol II: Psychic and Physical Treatises*, (London: P. L. Warner for the Medici Society, 1921), 46–53 (WBGYL 1602; YL 1590). The exchange of "supersensual emotion and imagery" in the *Shiftings* may be related to the condition of *Victimage*, when the relation between a *Spirit* of the *Thirteenth Cone* and an incarnate *Daimon* is reversed, since this also happens in the *Shiftings* (*AVB* 238).
31. Yeats's marginalia to *The Nature of Existence* show he was partially aware of this problem. In a note to McTaggart's passage beginning "Perception is the awareness of what Mr Russell calls particulars," Yeats writes that he must confine "perception" to "sense data," since the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* were "universal" but not "creative" (YL p. 163). He somewhat ambiguously declares that the *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* are a "subtler alternative."
32. Berkeley, *The Commonplace Book*, 87, SS. 724–726.
33. In his 1930 Diary, Yeats describes Berkeley's rejection of Newton by calling "visibility, light—mind and light [sensation] the Siamese twins that constitute the whole of reality" (*Ex* 324). He thus interpreted Berkeley as giving an ontological status to the visible as well as to the "mind" it incarnates.
34. See Neil Mann's essay in this volume, "The *Thirteenth Cone*," 189 n68, on the discarnate *Daimon*, or *Ghostly Self*, as the soul in its complete state at the end of the cycle of lives. This description of the *Ghostly Self* as "permanent Self," which gives each man his uniqueness, also bears a resemblance to the Plotinian understanding of the *eidos*, or idea of the individual and particular soul which continually reincarnates until it has acquired freedom (Ennead V.7).
35. It should be noted that while Yeats envisages the *Creative Mind* as moving through the signs in the order of the equinoctial precession (Taurus, Aries, Pisces, Aquarius), and as certainly doing so when it represents movement through the religious eras of the Great Year, in the Wheel of the *Principles* the *Spirit* moves not from Aries to Pisces but from Pisces to Aries and then Taurus in its own solar cone (*AVB* 196): this latter movement is through the tropical zodiac of the ordinary year and not through the sidereal zodiac of the equinoctial precession.
36. He makes this much clearer in the first edition of *A Vision*, when describing the movement of the *Will* of "Eternal Man" through Phase 15 of the Great Year considered as lunar months, "the civilisation that climaxed in Athens and Rome," in the middle of which we have Aries 30 which is also the beginning of the new solar month: "at the foundation of Christianity [*Will*] entered upon the gyre of Phases 16, 17 and 18, while his *Creative Mind* entered upon that of Phases 14, 13 and 12" (*CW13* 117; *AVA* 144).
37. Helena Blavatsky, "The Esoteric Character of the Gospels: Part 1", *Lucifer* 1:174 . See also William Quan Judge, *The Ocean of Theosophy* (NY & London: The Path & Theosophical Publishing Society, 1893), 121.
38. Yeats confirms that the instructors drew the diagrams as meaning two lunar or solar months in *A Vision B* when he writes: "When, however, one wants to show, as the automatic script generally does, that each civilisation and religious dispensation is the opposite of its predecessor, a single revolution constitutes two solar or lunar months" (*AVB* 204). This perhaps warrants the view of seeing the "new" Christ at 6/7 and

- Buddha at 12 as illuminations to different months of a 4,000-year gyre, although his views on Buddha had changed by 1937 (*AVB* 207).
39. In the automatic script the main month cycles are variously written as 2,000 years, 2,150 years and 2,200 years. Yeats himself refers to the months as being 2,000 and 2,200-year cycles (*AVB* 203-4) (cf. <http://www.YeatsVision.com/Numbers.html>). In my own references to the cycles I have mainly stuck to round figures, one thousand, two thousand and four thousand years for the sake of clarity, even though these are technically imprecise.
  40. In “NB6” George Yeats recalls how they were instructed by a control to present two sets of twelve cycles with “East as top & west as bottom. Starting then from Phase (1) at north the first division would mark first cycle. This series of 12 Cycles is repeated 28 times....He said this was something like the precession of the Equinoxes. We were not to think of this increase as implying a longer lapse of time. It merely meant going further in the cycle psychologically” (*YVP3* 62; 12 Dec 1920). However, in the card file based on this notebook entry, C39 and C39x, it is made clear that these cycles relate to 2,000-year epochs that start regularly but can then become irregular (*YVP3* 262). In the card files relating to the script from November 1917, Yeats and George drew the figure labeled “Diagram Early,” which shows the signs of the zodiac on three concentric circles of the Wheel. The second one, which has West at a position corresponding to Phase 1 and East at a position corresponding to Phase 15, he calls “sidereal progress of individual” and then, on the reverse, “2<sup>nd</sup> circle civilization in world” (*YVP3* 296; CF D47 & D47x), and then relates this to the “Progress in Present Equinoxes” in a simplified version of this diagram on a card marked “Diagram Equinoxes” (*YVP3* 297; CF D49). In a second card file marked “Equinoxes,” he mentions Masson’s discussion of the Precession of the Equinoxes in his introduction to Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (*YVP3* 297; CF E1). The circles of the “Diagram Early” are discussed at length by Colin McDowell in his essay in this volume, “Shifting Sands,” 198–201, with the inner circle appearing to have been employed to cast individual horoscopes: a feature left out of the eventual published editions.
  41. Colin McDowell, “‘Heraldic Supporters’: Minor Symbolism and the Integrity of *A Vision*,” *YA10* (1993) 207–217, at 215–216.
  42. “Calendar, (Babylonian),” *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings, John Selbie et al., 12 vols. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1908–21 [*WBGYL* 864; *YL* 855]), 3:73–78.
  43. W. M. Flinders Petrie, *The Revolutions of Civilisation* (London and New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911), 9–10 (cf. *WBGYL* 1570; *YL* 1559 [3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1922]). Hereafter *RC* in text.
  44. Thomas Whittaker notes that Petrie does not include Byzantium as a period of artistic achievement, concluding that: “Byzantine art would be for him a rigid archaism,” Thomas Whittaker, *Swan and Shadow: Yeats’s Dialogue with History*, Critical Studies in Irish Literature 1 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press of America, 1964), 83.
  45. A note recording a communication with “Carmichael” in “NB6,” written in Mrs. Yeats’s hand, compares East and West by seeing eastern civilizations as more constant due to racial purity, while western civilizations have greater movement due to racial flux. In a note which perhaps relates to the growth of racial instinct and then decline of the race culture, Mrs. Yeats opines that now only culture can create unity, since the races are all so mixed. She seems to foresee *A Vision’s* description of the rise and fall of *antithetical* culture when she writes: “There was migration of peoples about 500 & migration of Educated Class, of Ideas, about 1500 & now comes consequent unrest” (*YVP3* 63; 15 Dec 1920).
  46. “The cause of the constant struggle between East and West is likewise seen to be owing to the difference of phases. If Mesopotamia and Europe were in the same phase, there would be a balance of power, as there is around the Mediterranean, when even a political ascendancy does not involve a change of population. But with Mesopotamia always leading, it is bound, politically, to overrun the West a few centuries before the rise of the West in each period. The Mediterranean was almost an Arab lake at the time of El Manum; Persia dominated all the civilized Mediterranean in the sixth century B.C. Yet, on the whole, the West more usually controls the East, because from the time of its maximum, during the gradual decline of each period, it is always on a higher plane than the East” (*RC* 108–9).
  47. In alighting on Schneider’s description of solar mythology, Yeats may also have had his own solar months of the Great Year in mind, which begin midway between the lunar months of civilization, and hence its own Phase 15 (although Phase 1 on the main Wheel, since the lunar month begins at 15), and thus was linking the further rises and falls of civilization described throughout Schneider’s gargantuan book with a dynamism which in actual fact was not there.
  48. O’Shea’s transcription of Yeats’s marginalia to pages 41–44 of Schneider’s book shows how Yeats saw Schneider as developing four “race cultures” in Egypt (*AVB* 206), and why it is he used that term; see

Hermann Schneider, *The History of World Civilization*, trans. M. M. Green, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1931 [WBGYL 1867; YL 1853]), hereafter *HWC1* and *HWC2* in text. Next to Schneider's descriptions of the different kingdoms of Egypt, beginning with Menes, Yeats writes "2800. First prime of 2<sup>nd</sup> Culture," then at "Then the empire was broken up," he writes "End of first culture," and also writes "First Prime of Second Culture. 2100" at the first 8 lines of p. 42. At the top of p. 44 he writes, at "barbarians," "end of Third Culture" (YL p. 241). The reference to "primes" is clearly echoing a phrase which Schneider makes on p. 40, when he writes: "The principal implements were still made of stone until Egypt's first civilization approached its prime." Throughout the chapter Schneider uses the classic language of racial anthropology, talking of "stock" (*HWC1* 37), and the importance of "fusion of races in the [Nile] Delta" (*HWC1* 42) for Egyptian history to begin.

49. Schneider declares that Virgil's Aeneas was meant to be "a more manly counterpart to Achilles" (*HWC2* 649), but that "To us this pious knight, who has no will apart from the will of the gods, is a somewhat inhuman puppet, where he appears to be guided and controlled entirely by the gods, and somewhat e-feminate where he feels as a man and takes flight.... This idea of Fate and the desire to present a model of voluntary self-conquest necessarily conflicted, as Fate and free-will do in every philosophic system, especially when it is the work of a poet" (*HWC2* 650).
50. Josef Strzygowski, *Origin of Christian Church Art: New Facts and Principles of Research*, trans. O. M. Dutton and H. J. Braunholtz (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923 [WBGYL 2038; YL 2026]), 51–74. Hereafter *OCCA* in the text.
51. Strzygowski also refers to the "purifying influence of Mazdaism upon art," and to "my repeated opposition throughout this work of Iranian form to Hellenic-Semitic objectivity" (*OCCA* 182).
52. Strzygowski carefully distinguishes "the Jews," who had no representational art (*OCCA* 156), from the "great Semitic empires" (*OCCA* 155).
53. Of course it could be argued that Yeats is envisaging a 4,000-year Wheel of the *Principles* here, like that described at the end of "The Great Year of the Ancients" (*AVB* 263). However, while the *Principles* no doubt manifest themselves in this historical document, particularly at the cardinal points, the movement which Yeats describes is one of gradual progression from East to West, and so is best illustrated by reference to the *Faculties*, rather than the *Principles*, which can only "shine through" (*AVB* 89) at the polarities of history.
54. This approximation may be inspired by Strzygowski's assertion that Islam, Buddhism and Christianity were all "southern religions" which encroached on Mazdaism (*OCCA* 19).
55. Yeats's confusion of Aryan East with Semitic at this point explains why Yeats groups South and East together as "human form" and North and West together as "superhuman form," the one loosely *antithetical*, the other loosely *primary*. Whitaker is wrong to group North and East together as *primary* "Symbolic Asia," and South and West as *antithetical*, since this stems from a belief that the portrayal of Strzygowski's East in "The Great Year of the Ancients" is entirely consistent with its use in "Dove or Swan" (Whitaker, *Swan and Shadow*, 84).
56. As Brian Arkins rightly observes, Yeats is lighting upon the movement called "Iconoclasm," which in fact took place between 726–843 CE, and not 560 CE, as the gyres demand. He also notes, however, that "the Monophysite bishop of Hierapolis in Syria, Xenaias, was a forerunner of Iconoclasm who in 488 banned icons in his diocese, and Yeats, with his usual insight and fine disregard for chronology, translates him to the time of the Emperor Leo III in the eighth century," Brian Arkins, *Builders of My Soul: Greek and Roman Themes in Yeats*, Irish Literary Studies 32 (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1990), 182.
57. The concept of cycle cones being either horizontal or perpendicular is contained in "NB6" of the automatic script, where Mrs. Yeats describes how the control described "preliminaries for a diagram of the cycles" (*YVP3* 62; 12 December 1920). The "right-angling" of the lunar and solar cones, so that Phase 15 in a solar wheel is East, and South in a lunar wheel, is something which Yeats explicitly uses for the relation between the *Principles* and the *Faculties* in the second edition of *A Vision* (*AVB* 188; 249), seeing the right-angling there as involving a right-angling of actual phases as well, so that Phase 15 in the *Faculties* "corresponds" to Phase 22 in the *Principles* (*AVB* 189).
58. "...the history of higher mankind fulfils itself in the form of great Cultures, and...one of these Cultures awoke in West Europe about the year 1000..." (*DWI* 145).
59. Leo Frobenius, *Paideuma: Umrisse einer Kultur- und Seelenlehre* (München: C. Y. Beck'sche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1921 [WBGYL 726; YL 715]).
60. Leo Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*, trans. Rudolf Blind (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1913).
61. Frobenius sees the Templum amongst the Yorubans of the Sudan, but himself describes the image from the observations of Heinrich Rissen, who had seen it as working in Etruscan culture, and as predicated by the roads go-

ing in a number of directions: “The Romans had four, but the Etruscans, from whom the Romans adopted the basic idea of the system, had sixteen of these directions. On these lines, then, every such ground-plan expressed the Templum, i.e., if we translate the meaning of this word freely, the ancient philosophic idea of the universe,” (*The Voice of Africa* 1:260–61). Later he writes of how the “unAfrican” Yorubans have “methods of divination” based on the idea of the Templum (*The Voice of Africa*, 1:320), confirming a link between both peoples and the Phoenicians, and hence earlier invasions of the East to the West.

62. Leo Frobenius, *Paideuma: Umrise einer Kultur- und Seelenlehre* (Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Societäts-Druckerei, 1928), 95–102 (Spengler was working from the 1921 edition, of which this is a reprint).
63. *Ibid.*, 105.
64. *Ibid.*, 106–9.
65. In a letter to T. Sturge Moore from Rapallo, Yeats writes of how Frobenius, to whose work Pound has introduced him, “originated the idea that cultures, including arts and sciences, arise out of races as if they were fruit and leaves in a preordained order” (*TSMC* 153–54; 17 April 1929).
66. Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1926 [*WBGYL* 1136; *YL* 1126]), 167–68.
67. In “Introduction to *An Indian Monk*” (1932), Yeats writes of how “The West impregnated an East full of spiritual turbulence, and that turbulence brought forth a child Western in complexion and in feature.” However, the “tonal values” of Romantic verse as opposed to the “sense of weight and bulk” found in European art suggests that “the converse impregnation [East on West] has begun” (*CW5* 134; *E&I* 432). These tonal values are clearly a contrary influx to the anti-figurative art of Modernism, and suggest—as I argued in *Yeats, Coleridge and the Romantic Sage* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000)—a concept of immanence similar to that in Byzantium, where eastern supersensuality modifies figurative art to create immanence.

## W. B. YEATS'S *A VISION*: "DOVE OR SWAN"

by Matthew DeForrest

Along with the descriptions of the twenty-eight incarnations that make up the largest section of "Book I: What the Caliph Partly Learned" and the poems "The Phases of the Moon" and "All Souls' Night," which frame the main text, "Dove or Swan" is one of the few sections of *A Vision* that did not undergo a radical revision when Yeats rewrote his philosophical treatise. Indeed, Yeats goes out of his way in "A Packet for Ezra Pound" to call attention to these unchanged sections:

The first version of this book, *A Vision*, except the section on the twenty-eight phases, and that called "Dove or Swan" which I repeat without change, fills me with shame. I had misinterpreted the geometry, and in my ignorance of philosophy failed to understand distinctions upon which the coherence of the whole depended, and as my wife was unwilling that her share should be known, and I to seem sole author, I had invented an unnatural story of an Arabian traveller which I must amend and find a place for some day because I was fool enough to write half a dozen poems that are unintelligible without it. (*AVB* 19)

If we, for the moment, take this admission at face value, Yeats is essentially stating these two core texts form the foundation of *A Vision* (1937). They are the framework of Yeats's system—"the hard symbolic bones under the skin" (*AVB* 24)—upon which he structures his interpretations and understanding of the interchange between the *primary* and the *antithetical*.

This foundation, however, is more than metaphor. Because they are constantly grounded in particulars and provide illustrative examples, the description of the twenty-eight incarnations and "Dove or Swan" are the most concrete, comprehensible sections in both editions. As such, they serve a particular function within *A Vision B*: they are the specific expressions of Yeats's system which follow after and balance against the sections that deal in the abstractions of the more theoretical and philosophical concepts—a structural balance appropriate to his duality-based system. "The Twenty-eight Incarnations" (Part III of "Book I: The Great Wheel") follows the explication of the system's geometric underpinning in "The Principal Symbol" and "Examination of the Wheel" (Parts I and II, respectively), and the theoretical "Book IV: The Great Year of the Ancients" is followed by the concrete "Book V: Dove or Swan,"<sup>1</sup> which outlines, in broad strokes, how the interplay between the *primary* and the *antithetical* plays out in the context of great political, historical, and artistic movements. This pairing with *A Vision A*'s "What the Caliph Refused to Learn"—especially sections X, XV, XVII, and XXII (*CW13* 121–28, 131–32, 133–37, and 141 respectively; *AVA* 149–58, 161–64, 164–69 and 174)—and *A Vision B*'s "The Great Year of the Ancients" is what allows Yeats to outline the mechanics of his historical ages in a single paragraph:

One must bear in mind that the Christian Era, like the two thousand years, let us say, that went before it, is an entire wheel, and each half of it an entire wheel, that each half when it comes to its 28th Phase reaches the 15th Phase or the 1st

Phase of the entire era. It follows therefore that the 15th Phase of each millennium, to keep the symbolic measure of time, is Phase 8 or Phase 22 of the entire era, that Aphrodite rises from a stormy sea, that Helen could not be Helen but for beleaguered Troy. The era itself is but half of a greater era and its Phase 15 comes also at a period of war or trouble. The greater number is always more *primary* than the lesser and precisely because it contains it. A millennium is the symbolic measure of a being that attains its flexible maturity and then sinks into rigid age. (*AVB* 267–68; cf. *CW13* 150; *AVA* 180)<sup>2</sup>

These mechanics explain both the diagram of the historical cones which precedes them (*AVB* 266; *CW13* 147; *AVA* unnumbered page between [178] and 179) and the nature of Yeats's descriptions of the eras, which are comparatively illustrated—Ionic vs. Doric columns (*AVB* 270; *CW13* 152; *AVA* 182), the eyes of Greek vs. Roman statues (*AVB* 276–77; *CW13* 156–57; *AVA* 187), and the Basilica of Hagia Sophia vs. that of St. Peter (*AVB* 281–82; *CW13* 160; *AVA* 193).

Yet before beginning an examination of the particulars of "Dove or Swan," we must not overlook the two other works carried over from *A Vision A*: "The Phases of the Moon" and "All Souls' Night: An Epilogue"—the two poems that bookend the explicatory sections of *A Vision*. These also remain for a purpose. As Yeats would write at the end of his life, "Man can embody truth but he cannot know it" (*L* 922): such embodiment, within writing, is more likely to be found in the connotation of art than the denotation of exposition. It was a contrast Yeats considered in the field of spiritual architecture, mentioned above, during his discussion of the Christian era in "Dove or Swan":

If I were left to myself I would make Phase 15 coincide with Justinian's reign, that great age of building in which one may conclude Byzantine art was perfected; but the meaning of the diagram may be that a building like St. Sophia, where all, to judge by the contemporary description, pictured ecstasy, must unlike the declamatory St. Peter's precede the moment of climax. (*AVB* 281–82; *CW13* 160; *AVA* 193)

Even before the publication of his system in 1925, he had been asking readers to explore his system through his art—supported with notes when he felt it important to make a point particularly clear. Indeed, these artistic expressions—whether these two poems or others, like "The Second Coming" or *Purgatory*—are more successful transmissions of his system. Because they do not try and delineate detail, they are simultaneously dancer and dance ("Among School Children," *VP* 446, l. 64; *CW1* 221) and, therefore, are free to reveal and transmit truth in a holistic sense. This is why Yeats chose to open "Dove or Swan" with "Leda and the Swan," a poem that was created, as will be explored more fully below, to embody what would be explained while incorporating his poetry into his explication. The poetry serves to embody his system and, as a result, offers readers a clearer understanding of what they are reading.

This consistent content and form underscores the importance of these sections not only to the writing but to the writer as well. That "Dove or Swan" is important to both versions of *A Vision* is evident not only within the text but in its earliest explicit appear-

ance in the automatic script in April 1918,<sup>3</sup> as George Mills Harper indicates in his *The Making of Yeats's "A Vision": A Study of the Automatic Script*.

...George did not want to experiment while they were staying at Coole.

Nevertheless, Yeats was insistent. He was anxious to know if they could “apply funnel [the initial diagram of how the phases applied to history] to human history.”

...Disregarding bad conditions and George's lack of enthusiasm, Yeats returned to the subject of the funnel and human history. In an involved and somewhat uncertain series of questions he sought to discover or establish some of the details which the theory of history in “Dove or Swan” projects. (*MYV2* 2–3)

While Yeats's long-standing interest in the transformation of the world through annunciation, seen in *The Tables of the Law [and] The Adoration of the Magi* (1897),<sup>4</sup> and the fall of civilization, already “a persistent intuition of his” 1912,<sup>5</sup> meant that these scripts doubtless attracted his attention, there was quickly more to it than his usual millennial fever. Harper's analysis demonstrates that Yeats's insistence on and interest in the revelation of the historical dates and the mechanism behind them directly translate into poetry—particularly “The Second Coming” (*MYV2* 13).

While it would be reasonable to take Yeats at his word that “Dove or Swan” is reproduced “without change,” as quoted above, there are some significant changes in the text of *A Vision B*. The most significant difference is the addition of a two-page coda, strangely left out of the Contents,<sup>6</sup> entitled “The End of the Cycle” (*AVB* 301–2). As Neil Mann points out, this section actually replaces “the final five pages dealing with the current period, and the near future,”<sup>7</sup> and Mann argues this is likely a hedge on Yeats's part—a movement away from pronouncements on his own era and prophecies of its immediate future towards a more generalized vision of transformation he believed was “passing, or to come” (“Sailing to Byzantium,” *VP* 408, l. 32; *CWI* 198).

This hedging is not, strange as it may seem, based in a need for Yeats to disavow particulars. As can be seen in the following example, much of the material presented concerns art and literature and the rest is made up of abstracted and generalized comparisons between near-future society and societies of the past:

A decadence will descend, by perpetual moral improvement, upon a community which may seem like some woman of New York or Paris who has renounced her rouge pot to lose her figure and grow coarse of skin and dull of brain, feeding her calves and babies somewhere upon the edge of the wilderness. The decadence of the Greco-Roman world with its violent soldiers and its mahogany dark young athletes was as great, but that suggested the bubbles of life turned into marbles, whereas what awaits us, being democratic and *primary*, may suggest bubbles in a frozen pond—mathematical Babylonian starlight. (*CWI3* 176; *AVA* 213)

Indeed, for most scholars of the literature of the period, these five pages are a loss, as they include public statements by Yeats on high Modernism and the men we still most associate with it:

I find at this 23rd Phase which is it is said the first where there is hatred of the abstract, where the intellect turns upon itself, Mr Ezra Pound, Mr Eliot, Mr Joyce, Signor Pirandello, who either eliminate from metaphor the poet's phantasy and substitute a strangeness discovered by historical or contemporary research or who break up the logical processes of thought by flooding them with associated ideas or words that seem to drift into the mind by chance; or who set side by side as in *Henry IV*, *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses*, the *physical primary*—a lunatic among his keepers, a man fishing behind a gas works, the vulgarity of a single Dublin day prolonged through 700 pages—and the *spiritual primary* delirium, the Fisher King, *Ulysses*' wandering. It is as though myth and fact, united until the exhaustion of the Renaissance, have now fallen so far apart that man understands for the first time the rigidity of fact, and calls up, by that very recognition, myth—the *Mask*—which now but gropes its way out of the mind's dark but will shortly pursue and terrify. (*CW13* 174–75; cf. *AVA* 211–12)

From a poet who immersed himself in and drew upon myth, this must be seen as being damning as well as descriptive. As Foster indicates and others have shown, Yeats kept loyal to tradition and kept the modernity these younger writers embraced at arm's length: "Talk to me of originality and I will turn on you with a rage. I am a crowd, I am a lonely voice, I am nothing. Ancient salt is the best packing." Thus Pound (and others) receive again their come-uppance, and the phantasmagoria is asserted once more" (*Life2* 591; quoting *CW5* 213; *E&I* 522). While this may have set him at odds with writers he admired, Yeats cannot be characterized as one who shied away from a fight—even with his friends. Avoiding such disagreements, then, cannot have been the root cause of the change.

A desire not to be wrong because he feared he might have missed something, however, could be a cause for removing this section. Yeats freely admitted in a paragraph cut from "A Packet for Ezra Pound" that some of this might be a result of a generational difference:

It is almost impossible to understand the art of a generation younger than one's own. I was wrong about "Ulysses" when I had read but some first fragments, and I do not want to be wrong again—above all in judging verse. Perhaps when the sudden Italian spring has come I may have discovered what will seem all the more, because the opposite of all I have attempted, unique and unforgettable. (*PEP* 4)

Yeats liked and praised Pound, Eliot, and Joyce but he found their work strange and, despite critics' attempts to include him among the Modernists, alien. This difference—especially as he worked on a system that dealt with mutually exclusive but equally valued opposites—may have been enough for him to reconsider his pronouncements of *A Vision A*.

As with the aesthetic, political concerns influenced his decision to withdraw these pages. The five pages excised, however, do not contain dates of things that did not occur. The only date given in this section talks of an age beginning rather than a completed action: "During the period said to commence in 1927, with the 11th gyre, must arise a form of philosophy, which will become religious and ethical in the 12th gyre and be in all things opposite of that vast plaster Herculean image, final *primary* thought" (*CW13* 177; *AVA*

214). And while this apparent reference to the future importance of his own system may have later seemed too grandiose a claim, given what he writes in *A Vision B's* "The End of the Cycle," discussed below, he had not made any concrete predictions that had been proved wrong between the first and second edition.

A more likely explanation for his pulling back is found in the political landscape of the period. As Foster points out, that which seemed a *fait accompli* in the 1920s had not come to pass by the mid-1930s:

WBV had anticipated political reconstruction through totalitarian rule in Europe since 1919; indeed, he was increasingly sceptical about the efficacy (and benefits) of democratic government. He admired, like many, the apparent achievements of modern Italy in the 1920s, but in terms which might not be immediately recognizable nowadays. He had told MacGreevy ten years before that Mussolini "represented the rise of the individual man as against what he considered the anti-human party machine," which seems, in retrospect, to have interpreted the movement exactly the wrong way round. (*Life*2 468)

This reversal had, by the early 1930s, literally arrived on his doorstep in the person of General Eoin O'Duffy, the leader of Ireland's para-fascist Blueshirt Movement. As Yeats considered the movement, and his involvement in it, his system was in the forefront of his mind (*Life*2 473–74). That Yeats increasingly found himself in opposition to O'Duffy's principles—most notably "O'Duffy's aggressive Catholicism" (*Life*2 475) and the absence of a move toward a meritocratic aristocracy—and watched the Blueshirt Movement wither and die under pressure brought by then President Éamon de Valera. These events and others must have given pause and made him reconsider the certainty with which he made some of his pronouncements.

Although it is likely that, rather than any one thing, all of the above-mentioned influences played a part in his decision to remove these pages, Yeats's withdrawal of these five pages is a tacit admission that the period between 1925 and 1934 had not turned out as he believed it would.

If, for whatever reason, Yeats felt the need to abandon the particulars of his claim for the near future, he does not appear willing to abandon the images and metaphors he used to express them. As seen here, he retains them in "The End of the Cycle":

Shall we follow the image of Heracles that walks through the darkness bow in hand, or mount to that other Heracles, man, not image, he that has for his bride Hebe, "The daughter of Zeus the mighty and Hera shod with gold"? (*AVB* 302)

The change from declamation to introspection is a rhetorical one rather than one based on a shift in content and follows a pattern seen elsewhere. During the period of the automatic script, Yeats had to readjust his thinking more than once because of inaccurate prophecies and utterances. The communicators' most infamous mistake was their mistaking Anne Yeats for a boy (*MYVI* 226).<sup>8</sup> This was not, however, an isolated instance. They mistakenly assured Yeats that World War I would enter into violent, combative phase in 1918 rather than wind down—the end, in a session dated 23 February 1918, they had predicted for 1919 (*MYVI* 211). While such inconsistencies would have naturally made Yeats leery of main-

taining predictions in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, what it did not do, however, was force him to abandon his belief in the greater truth of his system, a position he staked out in "A Packet for Ezra Pound," rewritten for its inclusion in the 1937 edition:

Some will ask whether I believe in the actual existence of my circuits of sun and moon. Those that include, now all recorded time in one circuit, now what Blake called "the pulsation of an artery," are plainly symbolical, but what of those fixed, like a butterfly upon a pin, to our central date, the first day of our Era, divide actual history into periods of equal length? To such a question I can but answer that if sometimes, overwhelmed by miracle as all men must be when in the midst of it, I have taken such periods literally, my reason has soon recovered; and now that the system stands out clearly in my imagination I regard them as stylistic arrangements of experience comparable to the cubes in the drawing of Wyndham Lewis and to the ovoids in the sculpture of Brancusi. They have helped me to hold in a single thought reality and justice. (*AVB* 24–25)

It is best to approach the particulars of "Dove or Swan" with this conditional acceptance of the communicators' message in mind—for more than one reason. Rather than see "Dove or Swan" as a section of iron-clad analyses supported by a series of facts with historical certainty—arranged like butterflies set upon pins—it should be read as a series of "stylistic arrangements of experience." These arrangements allowed Yeats to hold historical moments and artistic movements in some kind of meaningful order rather than leaving them unsupervised and disordered within "the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast" (*CW5* 204; *Ec&I* 509).

In doing so, the constancy of the prose sections common to *A Vision A* and *A Vision B* becomes comprehensible. The first, the description of the twenty-eight incarnations, provides a shorthand for understanding and classifying individuals within a larger system—much as a contemporary reader might use the shorthand of newspaper astrology to classify people without necessarily believing in the influence of fixed stars and planets that undergirds astrology. Thus, an individual artist can be explained via the phase he occupies. What is left unexplained by this is how individuals are able successfully to navigate the place and age they find themselves in or the movements they create or react against. For that, the historical eras detailed in "Dove or Swan" become a similar kind of shorthand.

The system of *A Vision* was offered to Yeats as more than a theoretical guide to artistic and historical movements, though. The primary motivation for the entire exercise, as the communicators reminded Yeats, was "to give [him] metaphors for poetry" (*AVB* 8). As such, it is informative to read the above passage alongside its poetic equivalent—"A Meditation in Time of War":

For one throb of the artery,  
While on that old grey stone I sat  
Under the old wind-broken tree,  
I knew that One is animate,  
Mankind inanimate phantasy. (*VP* 406; *CWI* 192)

Here, we see the above-quoted philosophical discussion of *A Vision* transformed directly into poetry. Individual phrases and images remain constant across both—the reference to William Blake's moment of inspiration being tied to the heartbeat in his long prophetic poem *Milton*, for example:<sup>9</sup>

Every Time less than a pulsation of the artery  
Is equal in its period & value to Six Thousand Years.  
For in this Period the Poets Work is Done: and all of the Great  
Events of Time start forth & are conceived in such a Period  
Within a Moment: a Pulsation of the Artery.<sup>10</sup>

So too does the theme that what may appear to be inconsistencies are limitations of vision when seen from the vantage point of the whole, because it is we who are the imagined rather than we who imagine and understand.

The most obvious associations between the explication of “Dove or Swan” and the poetry, of course, are the poems of his own that Yeats, in part or whole, incorporated into the text: “Leda and the Swan” (*AVB* 267; *CW13* 150; *AVA* 179; more strictly “Leda,” see below), “Under the Round Tower” (*AVB* 270),<sup>11</sup> “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes” (*CW13* 176; *AVA* 213), and “Conjunctions” (*AVB* 302). Giving pride of place to “Leda and the Swan” clearly marks it as the most important of the four for understanding both the section and its relationship to art, history, and politics.

Before beginning, however, it should be stressed that this is not an exercise in which *A Vision* comes, like some scholarly-minded communicator, to give us footnotes for the poetry. These poems, because Yeats has integrated them into the text of “Dove or Swan,” are both illustrations of the ideas in the section as well as examples of how those ideas are incorporated into poetic and, by extension, other artistic works.

An understanding of this relationship between “Dove or Swan” and “Leda and the Swan”<sup>12</sup> must begin with the note Yeats provided for the poem:

I wrote Leda and the Swan because the editor of a political review asked me for a poem. I thought, “After the individualist, demagogic movement, founded by Hobbes and popularized by the Encyclopaedists and the French Revolution, we have a soil so exhausted that it cannot grow that crop again for centuries.” Then I thought, “Nothing is now possible but some movement from above preceded by some violent annunciation.” My fancy began to play with Leda and the Swan for metaphor, and I began this poem; but as I wrote, bird and lady took such possession of the scene that all politics went out of it, and my friend tells me that his “conservative readers would misunderstand the poem.” (*VP* 828; *CW1* 664)

While Yeats claims the direct applicability to contemporary politics—glossed by Daniel Albright as a movement “towards Mussolini and authoritarian government” (*EP* 664)—has left the poem, he does not claim that its applicability to history has also left. Indeed, his decision to place it at the opening of “Dove or Swan” implies that this applicability grew as the other faded and the interplay between the personal tragedy and impersonal history, as brought together by the moment of annunciation, took center stage.

Its role as annunciation—the first that he believes can be traced in the current historic and mythological record—allows it to serve an illustrative role similar to his use of Blake's "The Mental Traveller" in *A Vision A*. As he has implied by quoting Heraclitus's dictum "Dying each other's life, living each other's death" and explained in "The Great Year of the Ancients," a historical age is birthed by an incarnation of its opposite *Tincture*:

When our historical era approaches Phase 1, or the beginning of a new era, the *antithetical* East will beget upon the *primary* West and the child or era so born will be *antithetical*. The *primary* child or era is predominantly western, but because begotten upon the East, eastern in body, and if I am right in thinking that my instructors imply not only the symbolical but the geographical East, Asiatic. Only when that body begins to wither can the Western Church predominate visibly. (*AVB* 257)

Each annunciation, therefore, is equal in weight but, because it reverses the values of society, simultaneously sacred and heretical: "What if every two thousand and odd years something happens in the world to make one sacred, the other secular; one wise, the other foolish; one fair, the other foul; one divine, the other devilish?" (*AVB* 29). The annunciation of the Rough Beast, therefore, is that of the Anti-Christ who will bring the Christian era to an end. Christ, the product of the Marian annunciation, is the Anti-Helen who brings the heroic, pagan era to an end. Helen, along with her brothers and sister, is the product of the Ledaean annunciation that brought about the end of the era based on an ideal found in Babylonian astrology that preceded the heroic age.

While the relationship between these annunciations is clear, the *Tincture* associated with each avatar is a potential point of confusion. Because the avatars, more than most incarnations, are tied to a *Tincture* through the era they create, it is tempting to view them as a pure embodiment of either the *primary* or *antithetical*—physical embodiments of Phases 1 and 15, which Yeats identified as being "a supernatural or ideal existence" (*AVB* 77):

Phase 1 and Phase 15 are not human incarnations because human life is impossible without strife between the *tinctures*. They belong to an order of existence which we shall consider presently. (*AVB* 79)

As the avatars belong to a different order of existence, the question becomes whether they are fundamentally *human* incarnations and, as such, cannot be physical manifestations of the *primary* and *antithetical* extremes of the Great Wheel, or they are supernatural incarnations and, as such, are the exceptions to the rule that Phases 1 and 15 do not incarnate.

While, as we shall see, the system contains strange complexities when addressing the avatars, *A Vision* is clear on one point: the avatar of the *antithetical* age that preceded the Christian era was not a physical manifestation of either Phase 1 or Phase 15, as is seen in the text detailing the nature of Phase 14: "Here are born those women who are most touching in their beauty. Helen was of the phase..." (*AVB* 132; *CW13* 56; *AVA* 67).

Based on the placement of Helen, we would expect to find Christ either placed or used as an example in either Phase 28 or 2. Instead, these draw their examples from the Fool of the Tarot deck and William Watson's "Epigrams II: The Play of 'King Lear'" for Phase 28 (*AVB* 182; *CW13* 93; *AVA* 115–16) and from Blake's "Mental Traveller" and

Keats' *Endymion* for Phase 2 (*AVB* 106; *CWI3* 35–6; *AVA* 39–40). Given that the *Tinctures* are supposed to be opposite one another, the example of Christ comes at the place we would least likely expect the avatar of the *primary*, Christian era—Phase 15:

Even for the most perfect, there is a time of pain, a passage through a vision, where evil reveals itself in its final meaning. In this passage Christ, it is said, mourned over the length of time and the unworthiness of man's lot to man, whereas his forerunner mourned and his successor will mourn over the shortness of time and the unworthiness of man to his lot; but this cannot yet be understood. (*AVB* 136–37; *CWI3* 59–60; *AVA* 71)

This clustering of the avatars at or near Phase 15 defies the logic of the simple *primary-antithetical* dynamic at the center of Yeats's system. While complex, it appears to address a mechanism found in the 9 February 1921 entry in Notebook 6 (*YVP3* 69) and, as quoted here, Card File entry F27, detailing the Fountains found in *AVA*:<sup>13</sup>

“First Masters are in Sphere which is objective to those outside—2nd & 3rd Masters in cycles 13 & 14 respectively. Phase of master not that of age he is born in but opposite Phase of Christ 15 Second Master 16. 17. 18 (this is muddle—see cardinal points on Wheel). (*YVP3* 308–9)

This placement of Christ is counterintuitive. Christ, as the avatar of the *primary* age, should be born at the height of an *antithetical* civilization or, at best, the border between the two religious dispensations but, as the being who opens or creates the era, erring on the side of the *antithetical*. The communicators, however, had declared that Christ's birth came after the beginning of the *primary* era and that the next avatar—the Rough Beast of “The Second Coming”—would come before its end, which obviously puzzled Yeats: “Why was C[hrist] born so long after the start of cycle & why is new coming so long before its end” (*YVPI* 467)?

This was strange enough for Yeats, as is seen above, to worry that he had muddled the explanation. Puzzling though this may have been (and may still be), the communicators explained on 27 June 1918 that the avatars are “independent of all” (*YVPI* 295) and, as Yeats summarized in Card File entry C32, “They are the types of saint reincarnated...out side phase.” Yet this card undermines its own clarification by placing Christ and the Buddha “after 25 & before 1” (*YVP3* 260).

Likewise, the text of *A Vision* resists answering this question in these terms. Indeed, it appears to go out of its way to reject the distinction:

From the Semitic East [Josef Strzygowski] derives all art which associates Christ with the attributes of royalty. It substitutes Christ Pantokrator for the bearded mild Hellenic Christ, makes the Church hierarchical and powerful. The East, in my symbolism, whether in the circle of the *Principles* or the *Faculties*, is always human power, whether *Will* or *Spirit*, stretched to its utmost. (*AVB* 257)

How can an avatar, who should stand as one of the most starkly clear figures in human history, be so fluid? While an initial response would be to associate Christ-as-avatar with

the plastic *primary*, such an explanation would require that the previous, multiple avatar—Helen, Clytemnestra, Castor, and Pollux<sup>14</sup>—have a fixed *antithetical* image. They, of course, do not. While the explanation that Christ is functioning as a *Mask* or *Daimon* for the Christian era feels like a way out, it has no explicit grounding in *A Vision* and does not align with the placement of Helen at Phase 14.

The crux of the problem lies not with the avatars but with our viewpoint, which is trapped within the realm of the antinomies. As indicated on Card File entry F27, quoted above, the Sphere appears objective from the vantage point of this world (*YVP3* 308). Within the eternal realm of the *Thirteenth Cone*, however, the antinomies are resolved and beings can be both *primary* and *antithetical*, as Yeats described in the final section of "Sailing to Byzantium" (*VP* 408, ll. 25-32; *CW1* 198). Yeats, albeit indirectly, places the avatars within the *Thirteenth Cone*:

[It] is always called by my instructors the Thirteenth Cycle or *Thirteenth Cone*, for every month is a cone. It is that cycle which may deliver us from the twelve cycles of time and space. The cone which intersects ours is a cone in so far as we think of it as the antithesis to our thesis, but if the time has come for our deliverance it is the phaseless sphere, sometimes called the Thirteenth Sphere, for every lesser cycle contains within itself a sphere that is, as it were, the reflection or messenger of the final deliverance. Within it live all souls that have been set free and every *Daimon* and *Ghostly Self*... (*AVB* 210–11)

Thus, the avatars, described above as "types of saint reincarnated...out side phase" (*YVP3* 260), pass through *tinctured* reality as a kind of bodhisattva of the *Thirteenth Cone*. Yet we, like the two-dimensional denizens of Edwin Abbot's *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* (1884), cannot see the avatar's totality, as Yeats implied when discussing the metaphorical depiction of the movement from one *Principle* to the next:

The resolved antinomy appears not in a lofty source but in the whirlpool's motionless centre or beyond its edge.\*

\* The whirlpool is an *antithetical* symbol, the descending water a *primary*. (*AVB* 195)

The metaphor of whirlpool or descending water is based not on the thing represented but our viewpoint when perceiving it. This shifting of image as the viewer observes *primary* and *antithetical* annunciations has significant implications for Yeats's creative works as well as his depiction of the historical cones.

Yeats symbolically places the Ledaean annunciation at the start of the historical cycle that begins in 2000 BCE. The actual "historic" date of Leda, of course, is somewhat later (likely somewhere in the 1300 to 1200 BCE range) and it is certain Yeats was aware of this. Were he concerned with a purely mechanical view of his system, or exact precision in prophecy, this would be a problem. Indeed, a careful reading of both editions of *A Vision* demonstrates that he does not attempt to place the rape of Leda at 2000 BCE.<sup>15</sup> As quoted above, Yeats was interested in "stylistic arrangements of experience" that brought order to his understanding of things and he is careful to not make the Ledaean annunciation a historical moment, dealing, instead, in symbolic time:

I imagine the annunciation that founded Greece as made to Leda, remembering that they showed in a Spartan temple, strung up to the roof as a holy relic, an unhatched egg of hers; and that from one of her eggs came Love and from the other War. But all things are from antithesis, and when in my ignorance I try to imagine what older civilisation that annunciation rejected I can but see bird and woman blotting out some corner of the Babylonian mathematical starlight. (*AVB* 268; cf. *CW13* 151; *AVA* 181)<sup>16</sup>

While his note in *A Vision B* citing Toynbee's *A Study of History* raises two paths of exploration—the replacement of Minoan or Babylonian preeminence with Mycenaean dominance—understanding what he is attempting to accomplish with the placement of “Leda and the Swan” does not require such specificity. It is the destruction of the decadent but civilized East, as embodied in Asiatic Troy,<sup>17</sup> by the energetic but barbaric West, as embodied in Mycenaean Greece, and the high cost to all those involved, whether Trojan or Greek: “The broken wall, the burning roof and tower / And Agamemnon dead” (ll. 10–11). Only such a complete destruction, Yeats would argue, would be sufficient to prevent us from getting more than a glimpse “of the Babylonian mathematical starlight” which preceded it.<sup>18</sup> He states as much in the paragraph preceding his description of the era stretching from 2000 BCE to 1 CE:

A civilisation is a struggle to keep self-control, and in this it is like some great tragic person, some Niobe who must display an almost superhuman will or the cry will not touch our sympathy. The loss of control over thought comes towards the end; first a sinking in upon the moral being, then the last surrender, the irrational cry, revelation—the scream of Juno's peacock. (*AVB* 268; *CW13* 150; *AVA* 180)

A peacock's scream was, according to classical and medieval bestiaries, supposed to inspire fear. Yeats could have limited himself to citing one of these or leaving the association open to the reader. Instead, he specifically ties the terror-inducing scream to the story of Juno (Hera to the Greeks) and Io—another rape myth involving Zeus. This particular section of the myth, of course, involves Hermes, who lulls to sleep and then kills many-eyed Argus, whom Hera had set to watch over Io. It is Argus's eyes that are set by Hera into the peacock's tail. Hermes is also the messenger who sends the three brothers from western Ireland to Paris in search of “a dying woman [who] would give them secret names and thereby so transform the world that another Leda would open her knees to the swan” (*Myth* 310; *M2005* 202).

Present in all these stories, however, is the coupling of this terror to the possibility of revelation at the moment when terror so overwhelms that only surrender is possible:

Being so caught up,  
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,  
Did she put on his knowledge with his power  
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop? (*VP* 441, ll. 11–14; *CW1* 218)

This is different from the description offered by Hermes, who sees such things from the viewpoint of a god—akin to the shift between *primary* and *antithetical* viewpoints discussed above—of the “woman who has been driven out of Time and has lain upon the bosom of Eternity” (“The Adoration of the Magi,” *Myth* 312; *M2005* 203). The question is whether Leda, like the woman in “The Adoration of the Magi,” learned in her terror.

It is also worth noting here that, while the references to the poem thus far denote the canonical title, they are incorrect in the context of this analysis. Both editions of *A Vision* employ a shorter title: “Leda” (*AVB* 267; *CWI3* 149; *AVA* 179). The absence of the title supplied to *The Dial* and used in *The Tower* creates a significant shift in the meaning of the poem. So long as both are present in the title, Zeus and Leda are given equal billing and, as such, a certain parity of significance within the poem. Likewise, by keeping them connected in a way that parallels the personae of Blake’s “The Mental Traveller,” Zeus is seen as the active force imposing himself on the passive Leda. Removing “the Swan” does more than place Leda’s personal pain and loss on the same plane as Niobe’s, mentioned in the section quoted above. Moving “the Swan” to the title of the book within *A Vision* simultaneously gives a kind of equality to the two annunciations that will be discussed and impersonalizes Zeus’s presence—making him less a god acting out of lust or, as is the case in “The Adoration of the Magi,” actively choosing to “overthrow the things that are to-day and bring the things that were yesterday” (*Myth* 312; *M2005* 203), and more a being used by the powers inhabiting the *Thirteenth Cone* to engender the coming *antithetical* age.<sup>19</sup> As such, he matches the description found for those *primary* beings inhabiting Phase 1:

Mind has become indifferent to good and evil, to truth and falsehood; body has become undifferentiated, dough-like; the more perfect be the soul, the more indifferent the mind, the more dough-like the body; and mind and body take whatever shape, accept whatever image is imprinted upon them, transact whatever purpose is imposed upon them, are indeed the instruments of supernatural manifestation, the final link between the living and more powerful beings. (*AVB* 183; *CWI3* 94; *AVA* 116)

This plasticity of form is represented within the poem through the fragmentary description of the swan, which is present only in its parts rather than ever being seen as a whole<sup>20</sup>—a technique he also employs when describing the Rough Beast<sup>21</sup> in “The Second Coming” exclusively through its component parts:

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds. (*VP* 402, ll. 14–17; *CWI* 189–90)

The multiple nature of the Ledaean annunciation—a fragmentation of love and war as embodied in multiple individuals, as seen in the above passage from the beginning of “Dove or Swan,” is clearly contrasted with the single revelatory birth of a perfectly proportioned man: “the tradition is founded which declares even to our own day that Christ alone was exactly six feet high, perfect physical man” (*AVB* 273; *CWI3* 154; *AVA* 185).

Herein lies one of the complexities resulting from the shifting viewpoint from *primary* to *antithetical*, as raised above in connection with the avatars. One of the inherent challenges with any analysis of the system is that each of the *Tinctures* reflects and is attracted to the other. In those moments when the reflections and attractions become critical, many of the words we use to describe elements of the system can be used to describe both the *primary* and the *antithetical*. This cannot be done arbitrarily, however. Take, for example, the drive towards pure individuality found at Phase 15—the extreme expression of the *antithetical*. This phase produces an extreme form of individuality unity—one so self-absorbed it cannot conceive of anything outside of itself or its own thought: “nothing is apparent but dreaming *Will* and the Image that it dreams” (AVB 135; cf. CW13 58; AVA 70).<sup>22</sup> Such a state of being is as singular as possible. This, however, initially appears to be at odds with Yeats’s own characterization of the *antithetical* as “multiple” (AVB 263).<sup>23</sup> And yet this multiplicity is one born of fragmentation at the societal level—one that separates the individual from the societal whole. Indeed, Yeats points out in the description to Phase 15 in “The Phases of the Moon” that inhabitants of this phase fall back into incarnation at Phase 16 because of a desire for others—they grow lonely:

*Robartes*. And after that the crumbling of the moon:  
The soul remembering its loneliness  
Shudders in many cradles; all is changed... (VP 375, ll. 87–89; CW1 167)

The reverse, of course, is true of Phase 1 and the *primary*. The individual falls completely into the group—a drive towards a corporate unity but one that produces a whole that is composed of many parts.

This tension can be seen in the contrast between the descriptions of the First and Third Masters in Yeats’s notes:

First Master monotheistic. monotheism breaks up unity. Instead of unifying it characterizes by the importance it gives to the individual.  
Second Master philosophical.  
Third Master. Polytheistic. Polytheism unifies. It adapts its self to each personality. It unifies races as well as individuals. (YVP3 65)

In each of these descriptions, Yeats focuses on the relationship of the belief system to the believers. From this vantage point, for example, the common set of Greek myths can be seen as providing a unity to the larger Greek world—whether it is on mainland Greece, in Syracuse, or in Asia Minor. Nevertheless, polytheism advocates the direct opposite of unity when considering the godhead, which is, by definition, multiple.

For the majority of Yeats’s work, outside those like *A Vision* and “The Phases of the Moon” that describe the system directly, this tension is only subtly expressed. In his dealings with the heralds of the *primary* and *antithetical* ages, however, this tension becomes more pronounced as one discusses—although, perhaps, not as one experiences—the poems, prose, and plays.

The ultimate distinction between these apparently conflicting characterizations of the *primary* and the *antithetical* is driven by whether the focus is on the individual, as in the case

of the heralds of an age or one of the incarnations described in "The Twenty-eight Incarnations," or on one of the historical eras, which inherently deal in groups. Indeed, as Mann has pointed out, it becomes even more complex when dealing with the historical cones:

Within the historical cones, it is complicated slightly, because the gyres of civilization and religion are syncopated, so that religion is at the maximum when civilization is at the minimum; so the *antithetical* annunciation comes at the height of *primary* civilization (or vice versa), and turns the tide.<sup>24</sup>

Classifying a person or a period of history as *primary* or *antithetical*, therefore, is a function of not only the metaphysical forces being applied on the *Faculties* and *Principles* but also on the viewpoint of the observer. If, for example, some kind of external system is being imposed upon an individual—such as the astrology of Babylon or the Christian move towards integration into the mass of the congregation—the classification is that of the fated *primary*. If, instead, individuals set themselves apart from the mass, as do the *antithetical* heroes of the Trojan War, they are classified as *antithetical*.

That such a tension exists within the system is unsurprising, given two fundamental and foundational elements: that the ultimate reality is the phaseless sphere that contains both the *primary* and *antithetical*, and that the ultimate drive towards Unity of Being is an attempt to replicate the phaseless sphere.

In the abstract, this appears to mean little. It is, however, important for the diction of the poetry. As is discussed above in the discussion of "Leda and the Swan" and "The Second Coming"—both composed while he was still working through the placement of the Buddha, Christ, and what he called "the Sphynx" (*YVPI* 468) and their *Daimon*-like association with the era they will inspire, the choice of the definite or the indefinite article in the poetry is used to create an inversion of language and images that represent the totality of the change from one dispensation to the other. Because of the confusion growing out of Yeats's shifting understanding of the associations between the *Tinctures* and their avatars, the temporary abandonment of the *Tinctures* as labels allows for greater clarity as the parallels between the poems and the use of definite and indefinite language and images are examined.

The individual and particular in these two poems embody one side of the divide, retaining either individual unity or the definite article "the." Such poetic choices can be seen in the use of the definite article in "The Second Coming," where the poem begins with the "the falcon" and "the falconer" becoming increasingly separated as the *primary* age they represent comes to its end (l. 2). It is likewise present in "the staggering girl" of "Leda and the Swan" (l. 2), who is almost uniquely given a singular, named identity.<sup>25</sup>

In contrast to these, the fragmentary and multiple are associated with the indefinite article "a." In "The Second Coming," Yeats shifts from using the definite article in the first octave<sup>26</sup> to the indefinite article in the rest of the poem—"A shape with lion's body" and "A gaze as blank and pitiless as the sun" (ll. 13-14). This shift, of course, corresponds to Yeats's understanding at that period (see Card File entry F27 quoted above, *YVP3* 308-9), when he would have characterized the *primary* Rough Beast as the herald of the coming *antithetical* era, just as the *antithetical* Christ had heralded the current *primary* era. The shift in imagery is clearly seen in Yeats's depiction of Zeus in "Leda and the Swan," where the bird is represented through its parts (e.g., the "great wings," "dark webs," and "bill" of lines

1 and 3) rather than as a coherent, visible whole. It is worth noting that this also serves to give the swan a greater sense of immensity (as too big to take in at a single glance). It also heightens the violence of the annunciation, which shatters the singular Leda into parts (e.g., “her nape” in line 3 and “those terrified vague fingers” in line 5).

Yeats did not, of course, attempt to make every article match the *Tincture* he was representing in the poetry. Such an approach would have severely limited his artistic freedom and would have required weakening the lines he was crafting (consider, for example, the shift in the sound and rhythm of changing “the” to “a” in the second half of line 14 of “The Second Coming,” where “the head” would become “a head,” producing an unwanted aural association with “ahead”). Nevertheless, there is a preponderance of one type of article or image associated with one *Tincture* and the other with its opposite in many of the poems.

By highlighting the *primary* force imposing itself on the *antithetical* (beautiful of form) girl, Yeats heightens the contrast with the annunciation most readers will be more familiar with: that of Mary and the Dove of the title. Here, the *primary* passivity is clearly seen in Mary’s response to the news brought to her by Gabriel as found in the Gospel of Luke:

My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.  
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from hence-  
forth all generations shall call me blessed. (Luke 1:46–48)

Here, it is Mary rather than Zeus who has surrendered herself to be a servant to an active, higher power: the Holy Spirit as embodied in the form of a Dove.<sup>27</sup> This surrender brings forth the singular, *antithetical* avatar discussed above. Likewise, Yeats explored the significance, within the context of his system, of Mary’s acceptance and the terror that he imagined accompanied it in the poem “Mother of God” (*VP* 499 & 832; *CWI* 253 & 607).<sup>28</sup>

In contrast with “Leda and the Swan,” which draws the reader’s eye to a moment of transition brought about by the imposition of one *Tincture* upon the other, Yeats’s reference to “Under the Round Tower” reminds the reader that, for most of history, the *primary* and *antithetical Tinctures* are bound together in a mutually supportive dance:

But one must consider not the movement only from the beginning to the end  
of the ascending cone, but the gyres that touch its sides, the horizontal dance.

Hands gripped in hands, toes close together,  
Hair spread on the wind they made;  
That lady and that golden king  
Could like a brace of blackbirds sing. (*AVB* 270)<sup>29</sup>

As in so many other places, Yeats calls upon the image of dance metaphorically to convey his meaning. While the particulars of these moments may shift slightly, they all bear a single meaning: to separate one unit from the other—whether it is the king and queen of “Under the Round Tower” or the dancer from the dance in “Among School Children”—is impossible without destroying and/or ending the thing observed.<sup>30</sup> Nor can either exist without the other. Were either the king or queen in “Under the Round Tower” to let go,

they would fall away and apart. The image, then, is what happens before the moment of annunciation, of that most quoted of lines from "The Second Coming": "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" ("The Second Coming," l. 3).

Yet the moment of annunciation is just that—a moment of extreme tension. The *Tinctures* need one another. As quoted above, "Helen could not be Helen but for beleaguered Troy" (*AVB* 268; *CW13* 150; *AVA* 180). At the instant of annunciation, incarnation, or revelation,<sup>31</sup> the interchange of the *Tinctures* occurs.

At Phase 15 and Phase 1 occurs what is called the *interchange of the tinctures*, those thoughts, emotions, energies, which were *primary* before Phase 15 or Phase 1 are *antithetical* after, those that were *antithetical* are *primary*. I was told, for instance, that before the historical Phase 15 the *antithetical tincture* of the average European was dominated by reason and desire, the *primary* by race and emotion, and that after Phase 15 this was reversed, his subjective nature had been passionate and logical but was now enthusiastic and sentimental. (*AVB* 89)<sup>32</sup>

Yeats likely tied this discussion to the historical cones from the outset because the nature of historical narrative is continuous while the individual's progression through the twenty-eight phases is episodic.

Yeats expresses this moment metaphorically in "The Second Coming," where the falcon's gyring up and out of the falconer's control is replaced by vultures' spiraling down around the Rough Beast ("The Second Coming," ll. 1–2 and 17). Between the two, as has been pointed out by Vendler, comes a section where there is a "slide from concreteness (the blood-dimmed *tide*) to abstraction (the *ceremony of innocence*)."<sup>33</sup> Indeed, as is indicated in Michael Robartes's pronouncement in "Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends," Yeats saw the balancing of the *primary* and *antithetical* in a mutually supportive tension, represented in "Under the Round Tower" by the dance, as the symbol for the "ultimate reality... a phaseless sphere" (*AVB* 193):

"The marriage bed is the symbol of the solved antinomy, and were more than symbol could a man there lose and keep his identity, but he falls asleep. That sleep is the same as the sleep of death." (*AVB* 52)

Robartes's assertion, which retains echoes of the role Blake's "The Mental Traveller" played in *A Vision A* (*CW13* 107–8; *AVA* 133–34), is based in the myth in Plato's *Symposium* of mankind once being an androgynous, eight-limbed being that was split by the gods into male and female, and points out that a man cannot simultaneously be sexually active, and literally unified with his passive/receiving partner, and post-coitally passive (the moment when, stereotypically, sexual exhaustion makes sleep unavoidable). At that moment between arousal and sleep, however, husband and wife can lie in peace as one.

This particular union had a long-standing role in the system of *A Vision* and was, in "To Vestigia," one of the two areas he singled out as needing more exploration (*CW13* lv; *AVA* xii). This makes it all the more remarkable that Yeats chose not to call on the Biblical stories of Solomon and Sheba or his poems about the couple in "Dove or Swan." As Albright points out, Solomon and Sheba are idealized depictions of the husband and

wife team who produced, recorded, and ordered the material that became *A Vision* (EP 559–60). These poems, as well as the stories of the liaison which inspired them, appear tailor-made to carry some of the matter Yeats wished his readers to understand.

Yeats returns to this image of a dancer-performer and her male audience when considering the exhaustion of both the heroic and Christian eras as they begin the shift into the next age. In the first case, he takes for his image the dance of Salome:

When I think of the moment before revelation I think of Salome—she, too, delicately tinted or maybe mahogany dark—dancing before Herod and receiving the Prophet's head in her indifferent hands, and wonder if what seems to us decadence was not in reality the exaltation of the muscular flesh and of civilisation perfectly achieved. Seeking images, I see her anoint her bare limbs according to a medical prescription of that time, with lion's fat, for lack of the sun's ray, that she may gain the favour of a king, and remember that the same impulse will create the Galilean revelation and deify Roman Emperors whose sculptured heads will be surrounded by the solar disk. Upon the throne and upon the cross alike the myth becomes a biography. (AVB 273; cf. CW13 154; AVA 185)

Set in opposition to this moment is another performer and her audience. In this case, however, it is a Christian bishop who now holds earthly power and is being swayed by the beautiful girl:

A certain Byzantine Bishop had said upon seeing a singer of Antioch, "I looked long upon her beauty, knowing that I would behold it upon the day of judgment, and I wept to remember that I had taken less care of my soul than she of her body," but when in the *Arabian Nights* Harun Al-Rashid looked at the singer Heart's Miracle, and on the instant loved her, he covered her head with a little silk veil to show that her beauty "had already retreated into the mystery of our faith." The Bishop saw a beauty that would be sanctified, but the Caliph that which was its own sanctity, and it was this latter sanctity, come back from the first Crusade or up from Arabian Spain or half-Asiatic Provence and Sicily, that created romance. (AVB 285–86; cf. CW13 163; AVA 197)

Yeats blends these two stories—intentionally or as a result of some internal synchronistic drive—to heighten their role as exemplars of parallel historical moments. As before, he does this through an imaginative act. "Seeking an image," he warns the reader, he describes Salome anointing her arm with lion's fat. What he does not point out, however, is where he takes this detail from. Harper and Paul, in their notes to *A Vision A*, show that the reference to the prescription for lion fat is mentioned in his diary of 1930 (CW13 297) along with the story of the bishop, drawn from "The Life of St. Pelagia the Harlot," which Yeats called on in *The Celtic Twilight* (CW13 306): "Where did I pick up that story of the Byzantine bishop and the singer of Antioch, where learn that to anoint your body with the fat of a lion ensured the favour of a king?" (Ex 291).

Yeats's association of this detail with both stories further demonstrates what he saw as the contrast of how men of power, at these inverted historical moments, react to the gyres'

syncopated fugue. Salome's dance is simultaneously the swan song of the pre-Christian religious era and the overture for the rise of Christianity. Yet it also comes at the height of pagan civilization, when the second of many Caesars sits secure in Rome. Herod, his client king, enjoys the sensuality of the dance while fearing the power of the beheaded ascetic. A thousand years on, when the Christian religion has reached its height and Christendom, its civilization, is coming into being, the Bishop will fear the latent threat of the singer's sexuality—an inherent challenge to the maxim that learning enters through the ear while sin enters through the eye.

Even if he had not blurred his sources, their structures mirror one another. In each case, the representative of that age's *Will* looks upon its *Mask* and senses its own destruction—"Or transformation," to choose the preference of Owen Aherne when describing such encounters between East and West (*AVB* 50). Whether destruction or transformation, however, neither can exist or be aware without the other. One of the results of the clash between the way the Bishop reacts to his singer and the way the Caliph reacts to his singer is the creation of a new artistic mode—that of medieval romance. In each of the historical eras described, such an interplay takes place, where the conflicting visions induced by the expression of the *primary* and the *antithetical* are shown to express the *Gestalt* of the particular moment. This is one of the fundamental beliefs Yeats maintained throughout his life and caused, at times, some strife between himself and his more politically inclined contemporaries, especially Maud Gonno: that while an artist might express something political in his art, it did not begin in politics. Instead, the artist expressed something about the world around him, which, naturally, includes the political.

Although it comes from a section not quoted in *A Vision A*, the dancer also represents the swirl of creation in "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes," the next poem referenced in "Dove and Swan"—albeit from the five pages cut, for reasons addressed above, before the publication of *A Vision B*. The selection used in *A Vision A* describes an exhausted democratic society ready to be led by an aristocratic or fascistic government:

Then with the last gyre must come a desire to be ruled or rather, seeing that desire is all but dead, an adoration of force spiritual or physical, and society as mechanical force be complete at last.

Constrained, arraigned, baffled, bent and unbent  
 By those wire-jointed jaws and limbs of wood  
 Themselves obedient,  
 Knowing not evil or good. (*CWI* 176; *AVA* 213)

As the whole of the poem indicates, these individuals have slipped entirely into *primary* passivity and, as in the description above, are ready to be molded by whatever force chooses to shape them. This aligns not only with what Yeats saw, and partially resisted, happening in politics but also in art. One of the core tenets of the high Modernists—listed out in the section quoted above—is that the artist and critic mediate art and explain it to the masses, who are incapable of understanding it on their own. Yeats hints, also in a passage quoted above, that the purpose of *A Vision* was not only to explain life and art but to constitute one of the guiding philosophies of the coming era.

“Conjunctions,” the final poem Yeats highlights in “Dove or Swan,” comes in the coda that replaces the five excised pages amidst Yeats’s distress over being unable to call up a unifying vision when meditating on the symbols of *A Vision*:

But nothing comes—though this moment was to reward me for all my toil. Perhaps I am too old. Surely something would have come when I meditated under the direction of the Cabalists. What discords will drive Europe to that artificial unity—only dry or drying sticks can be tied into a bundle—which is the decadence of every civilisation? How work out upon the phases the gradual coming and increase of the counter-movement, the *antithetical* multiform influx:

Should Jupiter and Saturn meet,  
O what a crop of mummy wheat!

Then I understand. I have already said all that can be said. (*AVB* 301–2)

Yeats, of course, goes on to say a little more—but surprisingly little, given that “The End of the Cycle” is asked to serve double duty as the conclusion of “Dove or Swan” and as a closing of the prose section of *A Vision B*. (All that remains to offer clarity to readers after “The End of the Cycle” is “All Souls’ Night: An Epilogue.”) Yet, read closely, the couplet does offer some explanation not only to this section of *A Vision* but to why he chose to cut the five pages discussed above and to some of its underlying concerns.

The most obvious of these implications comes out of a direct interpretation of the metaphor. Mummy wheat should not be able to sprout literally, as was known at the time, as shown in the following near-contemporary source:

**Mummy Wheat.** Wheat said to have been taken from some of the Egyptian mummies, and sown in British soil. It is, however, a delusion to suppose that seed would preserve its vitality for some hundreds of years. No seed will do so, and what is called mummy wheat is a species of corn commonly grown on the southern shores of the Mediterranean.<sup>34</sup>

Yet according to the theories found in Yeats’s system, these seeds of the East will metaphorically sprout, renewing and reviving the profane ideologies considered sacred two thousand years before.

In the passage from *A Vision B*, Yeats admits to his inability to read the signs properly—a frustration that likely amplified any and all of the motivations discussed above that he had to cut the section of “Dove or Swan” that “The End of the Cycle” replaced. Like all whose millennial predictions have come to naught, Yeats took comfort in a formulation that echoes Matthew 24:36—“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only”—as can be seen in the continuation of the above quoted section:

Then I understand. I have already said all that can be said. The particulars are the work of the *Thirteenth Cone* or cycle which is in every man and called by every man

his freedom. Doubtless, for it can do all things and knows all things, it knows what it will do with its own freedom but it has kept the secret. (*AVB* 301–2)

As is the case with the image of the husband being unable to remain awake, discussed above, Yeats pleads an ignorance based not on error but on a kind of incapacity: "Perhaps I am too old" and "it [note—not I] has kept its secret" (*AVB* 302). While age may provide an initial excuse, it is clear that Yeats's final analysis is that the secrets of the phaseless sphere that is the *Thirteenth Cone* will be revealed at a time of its choosing and not his.

Nevertheless, there is still, in this couplet, the promise of a kind of sign. The Jupiter-Saturn conjunction mentioned, as indicated above, is a sign of the coming *antithetical* age—the Rough Beast's equivalent of the Star of Bethlehem. Although not immediately obvious, this too is one of many references throughout *A Vision* to "mathematical Babylonian starlight." As mentioned above, the beliefs of Babylonian astronomers, in the form of "the friendships and antipathies of the Olympic gods" (*AVB* 268n), echoed through the *antithetical* era that followed the Ledaean annunciation. It was also used by the Magi who followed the Star of Bethlehem to mark the date and location of the coming of the Marian annunciation of the coming *primary* age as a part of the Christmas story—a trio he had considered for some time, including his 1914 poem "The Magi" (*VP* 318; *CWI* 125) and the above-mentioned "The Adoration of the Magi," where the three are condemned by Hermes:

"I do not know where my soul has been, but I dreamed I was under the roof of a manger, and I looked down and I saw an ox and an ass; and I saw a red cock perching on the hay-rack; and a woman hugging a child; and three men in chain armour kneeling with their heads bowed very low in front of the woman and the child. While I was looking the cock crowed and a man with wings on his heels swept up through the air, and as he passed me, cried out, 'Foolish old men, you had once all the wisdom of the stars.'" (*Myth* 313; *M2005* 204)

Given his interest and the appropriateness, marking his own system's annunciation with some astronomical sign falls somewhere between the natural and the necessary.

This association with "mathematical starlight" also aligns well with Yeats's many references to the mathematical and geometric basis for *A Vision*. The association in the reader's mind of the one with the other makes a subtle but persistent claim to a certain pedigree that lends *gravitas* to the assertion *A Vision* makes to being a herald of and guide for the coming *antithetical* age. Indeed, Mars-Venus and Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions flank the arch-*antithetical* state of Phase 15:

These two conjunctions which express so many things are certainly, upon occasion, the outward-looking mind, love and its lure, contrasted with introspective knowledge of the mind's self-begotten unity, an intellectual excitement. They stand, so to speak, like heraldic supporters guarding the mystery of the fifteenth phase. In certain lines written years ago in the first excitement of discovery<sup>35</sup> I compared one to the Sphinx and one to Buddha. I should have put Christ instead of Buddha, for according to my instructors Buddha was a Jupiter-Saturn influence. (*AVB* 207–8)

There is also, embedded in the whole of the poem, a familial metaphor—one that encodes a different secret. As, again, Albright details, “Conjunctions” refers to both Yeats’s son Michael (Jupiter-Saturn) and daughter Anne (Mars-Venus) (*EP* 766-67), placed at Phases 14 and 16, respectively.<sup>36</sup> As was referenced above, Anne was identified by the communicators initially as being not only a boy but one of the harbingers of the coming *antithetical* age. In the conversations that followed her birth, they expanded to include a second child (*BG* 207). Such a split avatar, of course, parallels the Ledaean annunciation that heralded the previous *antithetical* age.

Yeats’s moving back and forth between poetry and prose should not be confused with a mere recycling of material, or considered a result of commonality of thought driving multiple works.<sup>37</sup> Yeats was very particular in identifying and addressing his audiences. Part of that awareness was driven by an understanding of how his own thinking drove the forms he worked in. It was this recognition he pithily summed up in his oft-quoted dictum, “We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but out of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry” (*Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, *CW5* 8; *Myth* 331). What complicates this, of course, is the nature of the quarrel and its participants. While the communicators are, on one hand, as “other” as one can get, he (and they) also recognizes them as being an inherent part of George and himself: “again and again they have insisted that the whole system is the creation of my wife’s Daimon and of mine, and that it is as startling to them as to us” (*AVB* 22).

Wherever one places oneself along the spectrum of belief about what Yeats and George actually understood the communicators to be,<sup>38</sup> there can be no doubt that siting the quarrel as being either wholly self or wholly other is problematic. As such, the records of the quarrel—the automatic script itself—become a common source for both the rhetoric for the other—including *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, both editions of *A Vision*, and the small editions of the framing material published by Cuala Press—and the poetry for the self.

By examining the nature of these quarrels and how Yeats sets them rhetorically within the context of his treatise, readers can develop a deeper understanding of *A Vision* and its role within his artistic creations and philosophy. Yeats’s historical consciousness, as seen here, is not that of a historian, who is concerned with dates and places. It is that of a poet, who has been given metaphors and has begun to arrange history metaphorically to gain the “stylistic arrangements of experience” that allows him “to hold in a single thought reality and justice” (*AVB* 24–25). Through the comments on his contemporaries—artistic or otherwise—and through the poems he chose to illustrate his points, Yeats, then, provides his readers with a glimpse into the workings of the mind of the poet: how he understands and orders the world around him and employs and deploys it in the creation of his work.

### Notes

1. A similar association exists between “Book II: The Completed Symbol,” which introduces the *Principles*, and “Book III: The Soul in Judgment,” which lays out their implications within the afterlife. Given the necessarily unearthly nature of such topics, however, this pairing lacks the absolute concreteness of the cited sections.
2. In general, I follow the text of *AVB* as the final version. With respect to “Dove or Swan,” the majority of the text is the identical to that of *AVA* (and *CW13*) and I just give the page references for each: *AVB*, *CW13*, *AVA*. There are, however, a number of minor variations, and in these cases, “cf.” is added to indicate that they are not identical: *AVB*, cf. *CW13*, *AVA*. Here, for example, Yeats added the phrase “or the 1st Phase” to make his explanation more precise and accurate.
3. A quick glance at the index of volume one of *The Making of Yeats’s “A Vision”* indicates there were earlier

hints at a historical system. April 1918 is, however, when the Yeatses began their real explorations of the applicability of their system to history.

4. The two stories *The Tables of the Law* | *The Adoration of the Magi* appeared as "privately printed" in 1897, having been excluded at the publisher's behest from *The Secret Rose*, where "they were originally intended to follow 'Rosa Alchemica'..." (*The Tables of the Law*, p. 4).
5. Mary Colum, *Life and the Dream* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1947), 141.
6. The argument that "The End of the Cycle" should have its own entry is based on its having its own sections labeled with Roman numerals rather than being continuous with a previous section.
7. Neil Mann, "The Cycles of History," *The System of W. B. Yeats's A Vision*. Accessed 21 May 2011. <http://www.YeatsVision.com/History.html#Dove>
8. See Ann Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* 206–8, for a summary of the portions of the automatic script which relate to the question of Anne's gender and her association to Yeats's system.
9. See Daniel Albright, notes to *W. B. Yeats: The Poems* (London: Everyman, 1990), 627, for a discussion of Yeats's use of this phrase. The Everyman edition of the *Poems* is referred to as *EP* in the text hereafter.
10. William Blake, *Milton*, plate 28[30], ll. 62–3 to plate 29[31], ll. 1–3 in ed. David V. Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 127.
11. This poem was alluded to, rather than directly quoted, in *A Vision A* (*CW13* 152 and 293).
12. Some of what follows repeats arguments and interpretations set forth elsewhere, primarily in Matthew DeForrest, *Yeats and the Stylistic Arrangements of Experience* (Bethesda, MD: International Scholars Publications, 1998), 97–101.
13. This material can also be found on Card M36 (*YVP3* 343).
14. The avatar for the *antithetical* era preceding the Christian era appears to have been multiple, as the automatic script indicated the avatar of the coming *antithetical* era would be (see *YVP2* 353).
15. It is possible, however, that Yeats was working from the mythology of Vico who, like Hegel, did not see the Trojan war as real but did see the foundation of Thebes as having been instrumental for inaugurating the Age of Heroes. This is one possible explanation for the anachrony of Leda and Oedipus (*AVB* 27–29) in *A Vision*. It is equally true, however, that Yeats approached this difficulty from a position of practical faith similar to the way most contemporary Christians celebrating Christmas on December 25, despite Biblical evidence that the birth took place sometime in the spring—during lambing season.
16. The phrase "that annunciation rejected" (*AVB* 268) replaces "she refuted" (*CW13* 151; *AVA* 181).
17. "That most philosophical of archaeologists Josef Strzygowski haunts my imagination. To him the East, as certainly to my instructors, is not India or China, but the East that has affected European civilisation, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Egypt." (*AVB* 257)
18. There is more than an implication that, while the more distant past is obliterated by each transformation, echoes remain. Yeats's discussion, of course, is filled with references to Greco-Roman myth. The basis of these, he argues, owes something to the era that came before: "'Mathematical Starlight,' Babylonian astrology, is, however, present in the friendships and antipathies of the Olympic gods" (*AVB* 268).
19. The Olympians were subject to a higher power: Fate. This was mentioned throughout Homer and other Classical myths and was used by Percy Bysshe Shelley as a central element of the plot of *Prometheus Unbound*.
20. This approach, of course, also creates a sense of immensity and power as well.
21. The form of the sphinx-like aspect of the Rough Beast both recalls the presence of the sphinx in "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes" (*VP* 382–84) and Yeats's assertion that he "would have [Oedipus] balance Christ" in the symbolism of his system (*AVB* 27).
22. "Image" is italicized in *AVA*.
23. See Mann, "Everywhere that antinomy," in this volume 6ff.
24. Neil Mann, private communication to Matthew DeForrest, 28 May 2011.
25. The only other named person or place is Agamemnon, who is mentioned in the first half of a broken line (l. 11). Even Troy is abstracted into fragmented images from its sack: "The broken wall, the burning roof and tower" (l. 10).
26. I use the technical terminology associated with the sonnet form because, as Vendler points out, "The Second Coming" is a sonnet and a half—an octave followed by a full sonnet (*Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and the Lyric Form* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007], 170–74). The break, unsurprisingly, comes at the moment when the *primary* era ends and the *antithetical* begins.
27. Although the Dove does not appear in the annunciation, those who have painted the scene have taken the image from the later baptism of Christ by John the Baptist, found in Luke 3:22.
28. See DeForrest, *Yeats and the Stylistic Arrangements of Experience*, 101–3, for a fuller discussion of this poem and its associations with "Leda and the Swan."

29. In a sense, this is not an addition to the text of *A Vision B*, as the poem was alluded to, but not quoted, in *A Vision A*: "There is that continual oscillation which I have symbolized elsewhere as a King and Queen, who are Sun and Moon also, and whirl round and round as they mount up through a Round tower" (*CWI* 152; *AVA* 182).
30. Although he arrived at this concept independently, Yeats explored concepts of the New Physics, including Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle (which states you can know with precision the location or velocity of a subatomic particle but not both) that argue you cannot separate the observer from the thing observed while conducting research for *A Vision B*.
31. As is discussed below, Yeats recognized a period of heightened tension as history passed through these three stages.
32. A larger scale interchange takes place on the scale of the two-millennium cycles, at the moments of the incarnation of the avatar: "At the birth of Christ took place, and at the coming *antithetical* influx will take place, a change equivalent to the *interchange of the tinctures*" (*AVB* 262).
33. Helen Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 170–71. She further tracks the division between the worlds of Order and Chaos on pages 172–73 and follows with a similar analysis of "Leda and the Swan" on pages 174–75.
34. Ebenezer Cobham Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 2 vols. (London: Cassell & Co., 1895), 2:870. Accessed 24 May 2011. <http://www.archive.org/stream/dictionaryofphra02brew#page/870/mode/2up>
35. Yeats is referring to "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes" here (*VP* 383, ll. 17–28; *CWI* 173). See Colin McDowell, "Heraldic Supporters: Minor Symbolism and the Integrity of *A Vision*," *YA10* (1993) 207–217.
36. For Anne's placement at Phase 16, see, for instance, *YVP* 2 340 (and 570 n106), and for Michael's at Phase 14, see *YVP* 3 31.
37. Examples could, of course, be applied between his prose and drama as well.
38. An excellent summary of this range in interpretation can be found at: Neil Mann, "Automatic Script," *The System of W. B. Yeats's A Vision*. Accessed 21 May 2011. <http://www.YeatsVision.com/AS.html>

## THE THIRTEENTH CONE

by Neil Mann

Although *A Vision* addresses a whole range of human attitudes towards God, there is little or no sense of the deity existing within or behind the system. God overshadows a significant part of the system, in particular as the specific interest of those in the last quarter of incarnations, and Yeats pays constant attention to humanity's relationships with God, through the wheel's spectrum of temperaments and over the spans of historical time, including belief and skepticism, love and hatred, struggle against and unity with God. Human ideas of God are present throughout, as is an emphasis on the supernatural and spiritual worlds that lie beyond the mundane, but the only figure that shows divine attributes is "the phaseless sphere" (AVB 193), in particular in its secondary guise as the "Thirteenth Cycle or *Thirteenth Cone*" (AVB 210).<sup>1</sup>

This strange geometric abstraction hovers indistinctly at the margins of the system and, from the ways it is referred to in *A Vision B*, takes on a variety of qualities. It has some characteristics of place for "I shall have much to say of the sphere as the final place of rest" (AVB 69) and "Within it live all souls that have been set free and every *Daimon* and *Ghostly Self*" (AVB 210); of a state or attribute, since "the *Thirteenth Cone* or cycle... is in every man and called by every man his freedom" (AVB 302); of an abstraction and a being, as "The *Thirteenth Cone* is a sphere because sufficient to itself; but as seen by man it is a cone. It becomes even conscious of itself as so seen" (AVB 240) or as "the reflection or messenger of the final deliverance" (AVB 210); of deity, for "it can do all things and knows all things" (AVB 302); even, possibly, of "Shelley's Demogorgon—eternity" (AVB 211).<sup>2</sup> These attributes are not impossible to reconcile but Yeats deliberately makes no effort to do so and leaves his readers questioning.

As a consequence few elements of *A Vision* have given readers and commentators as many problems. Some of the reasons for confusion are similar to those related to other areas of *A Vision* and others are peculiar to the Sphere and the *Thirteenth Cone*. There is no clear presentation of the relevant central ideas; the references and allusions to it do not always seem to be consistent; it appears to have a singularly important place within the structure of the cosmos presented, yet is hardly dealt with in accordance with that place. The problem of scattered references is compounded by a variety of names or terms, which may be completely synonymous or indicate different aspects of the concept, and also by a significant difference in the concepts presented in *A Vision A* and *A Vision B*, so that the lack of a clear exposition seems to be connected to Yeats's own uncertainty. Indeed, the *Thirteenth Cone* only really features in *A Vision B*, where Yeats sought to understand the spiritual dimension of the system more fully. Although it is referred to fleetingly in *A Vision A*, which provides some clues about the *Thirteenth Cone's* evolution, the two versions present different concepts that do not really elucidate one another.<sup>3</sup> In *A Vision B* itself, Yeats implicitly attributes the concept's marginalization to the fact that the "instructors, keeping as far as possible to the phenomenal world, have spent little time upon the sphere, which can be symbolised but cannot be known, though certain chance phrases show that

they have all the necessary symbols" (*AVB* 193). Yeats reassures his readers—and himself—that there is a coherent place for the Sphere within the whole system but effectively tells them that whereof the instructors do not speak, thereof Yeats must be silent. Philosophy may talk "about a first cause or a final purpose," but Yeats is convinced that "we would know what we were a little before conception, what we shall be a little after burial" (*AVB* 223) and that is evidently where his own interest lay.

One further difficulty is rather different and probably most important: many readers seem to have a particularly strong resistance to Yeats's ideas in this instance, or to wish that his ideas were other than they appear, in other words closer to their own preferences. Yeats's formulations appear to go against many conceptions about God, religion and spirituality, so that critics have either tried to supply a hidden form of orthodoxy, to disparage a conception they find jejune or wanting, to assert a flat equivalence without much consideration, or else their comments evince bewilderment and just restate questions, often rejecting more obvious meanings as impossible.

The majority of critics see the *Thirteenth Cone* as Yeats's idiosyncratic perception of the divine being,<sup>4</sup> though some argue for a lower status,<sup>5</sup> while others try to see it as a version of the Christian God,<sup>6</sup> or further religious,<sup>7</sup> gnostic,<sup>8</sup> or philosophical conceptions.<sup>9</sup> Many emphasize the element of freedom,<sup>10</sup> and to a lesser extent how it forms the antithesis to our thesis,<sup>11</sup> further embodying the system's antinomies,<sup>12</sup> or see it as "a symbol of the human relationship to ultimate reality than a symbol of that ultimate itself" (*YA6* 195).<sup>13</sup>

The following consideration is not a radical reappraisal, but rather aims to give a fuller and clearer sense of the central concepts and to take more account of some of the complexities that arise. It focuses on the Sphere and *Thirteenth Cone* in *A Vision*, but also looks at manuscript sources and drafts as well, where these illuminate Yeats's thought;<sup>14</sup> it does so largely in Yeats's own terms, while also attempting to take account of the more important contingent details, parallels and queries that Yeats's treatment raises. I have constantly sought to simplify, but find that the material and Yeats's presentation make this next to impossible without removing much of what is interesting—this partly explains the heavy use of endnotes.

The first section therefore sets out a simple overview of the concepts involved, particularly the relationship of the Sphere and *Thirteenth Cone* as presented in *A Vision B*, which remains the touchstone for ideas related to this concept.<sup>15</sup> The second examines the ideas of *A Vision B* more fully, teasing out the implications of key passages where the *Thirteenth Cone* and Sphere are considered, looking particularly at the aspects related to time and eternity. The third section looks at some of the earlier concepts that contributed to the development of the *Thirteenth Cone*, and deals particularly with the *Thirteenth Cone* as the final goal of the cycles of incarnation. The fourth section concentrates on Yeats's consideration of the *Thirteenth Cone* in his Rapallo diary of 1930, written as he was finishing drafting *A Vision B*, examining how Yeats sought to explore the human experience of the *Thirteenth Cone*.<sup>16</sup> The fifth considers how the different formulations of *A Vision* express different aspects of the divine, positing a hierarchy of divinity and considering the nature of the *Principles* "in the sphere." Though the poetry is referred to throughout, the final section considers further how Yeats's conception of the divine through the *Thirteenth Cone* found expression in his art.

## I

*A Vision B* states clearly that “The ultimate reality...is symbolised as a phaseless sphere” (*AVB* 193) and this “phaseless sphere” or simply “the Sphere” (*AVB* 187) is therefore the true ground of all being, though, as noted, the “instructors...have spent little time upon the sphere” as it is unknowable (*AVB* 193).

The phrase “ultimate reality” may appear distinct from God to many readers but, when Yeats draws attention to AE’s usage of “‘The Spirit,’ as he [AE] calls the ultimate reality” (*CW5* 117; *Ec&I* 417; 1932), both are referring to God, although neither uses the term.<sup>17</sup> In private Yeats could state directly in his letter to “Leo,” “I do not doubt...the existence of God” (*YAI* [1982] 22; 1915), or make God one of the three things upon which he “would found literature” (*Ex* 332; 1930), but he shared with AE a reluctance to use a name freighted with so many preconceptions for each reader. They were not alone among writers of the period in their reservations, and earlier Matthew Arnold has his “men of science” say “we, too would gladly say *God*, if only, the moment one says *God*, you would not pester one with your pretensions of knowing all about him.”<sup>18</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, the Theosophist Franz Hartmann has a Rosicrucian adept say that “there exists nothing in the universe but ‘*God*’; but if this word does not please you, because it has for ages been subject to misconceptions...let us call it the ‘*Real*.’”<sup>19</sup> George Yeats used similarly distancing quotation marks in writing up an account of a sleep in October 1921—taking dictation from her husband, in turn giving his account of what she had said apparently under the control of a communicator—noting that they should say a regular prayer “addressed to ‘God’” (*YVP3* 102), showing that one or both of them wished to indicate some reservation about the word. Indeed, Yeats throughout his writing favors periphrastic epithets for the divine,<sup>20</sup> except when he is referring specifically to the God of conventional religion, and seems to prefer “a substitute for the old symbol God” (*Ex* 325).

This preference for avoiding a name that brings associations has a different kind of support from negative theology, which rejects defining divinity at all except by negation, and has a long mystical tradition that was important in the esoteric systems that Yeats had studied, as well as more orthodox religion, including Judaism and Christianity.<sup>21</sup> Even the automatic script states that, “god has to be seen through darkness as through a cloud or veil” (*YVPI* 407; *YVP3* 328) and the 1930 diary that the “ultimate reality must be all movement, all thought, all perception extinguished, two freedoms *unthinkably, unimaginably* absorbed in one another” (*Ex* 307; emphasis added). At the same time, the phrase “ultimate reality” finds echoes in, for example, the philosophy of Spinoza, Berkeley, Hegel or Fichte, the scientific agnosticism of Herbert Spencer and the ancient texts of Vedanta or Buddhism. Each strand embraces a complex group of influences, but their cumulative effect is that Yeats prefers not to call his apprehension of the divine by the name of “God,” and to conceive that true godhead is so far beyond human comprehension that any understanding we may have is only of inferior manifestations.

Already, however, “the ultimate reality” indicates a conception of the divine that is impersonal and philosophical rather than religious. The Sphere, as its symbol, is readily comprehensible and recognizable as one of perfection and totality, harking back to Parmenides, Empedocles, Plato and Plotinus (to mention only sources cited by Yeats, and only a few of those), while the concept of God as a sphere, whose center is everywhere

and whose circumference is nowhere, can be traced to Hermetic and medieval sources.<sup>22</sup> Traditionally, however, this image has been used only as a metaphor to express only certain aspects of divine nature—perfection or omnipresence—rather than as the dominant vehicle to convey the concept of the divine itself. Although for Yeats it remains no more than a symbol, it is his preferred and almost sole image, except insofar as the Sphere is viewed in its refracted form, the *Thirteenth Cone*.<sup>23</sup>

The “phaseless sphere” denotes a completeness that goes beyond all experience, change and sequence, beyond idea and form. Outside of time, space and consciousness, it comprehends and reconciles all antinomies, in what Nicholas of Cusa called “the coincidence of opposites.”<sup>24</sup> However, “the phaseless sphere... becomes phasal in our thought, Nicholas of Cusa’s undivided reality which human experience divides into opposites” (*AVB* 247),<sup>25</sup> and its “phasal” form is the divided antinomies of, on the one side, humane subjective experience, the thinking mind, and, on the other, all the rest, the spiritual objective.<sup>26</sup> This phasal, fallen form is no longer complete and perfect: “as all things fall into a series of antinomies in human experience [the phaseless sphere] becomes, the moment it is thought of, what I shall presently describe as the thirteenth cone” (*AVB* 193).

The *Thirteenth Cone* is thus a form or view of Sphere, except that humanity can only conceive of it as the *Thirteenth Cone*, so that effectively, even when we think that we are contemplating the Sphere itself, the best we can attain is a view of the *Thirteenth Cone*, therefore in our consideration the two concepts are essentially interchangeable, though it sometimes helps to try to distinguish different aspects. The name encapsulates the illusion, as it is neither a cone, nor is it the thirteenth of anything. On the one hand, “The *Thirteenth Cone* is a sphere because sufficient to itself; but as seen by man it is a cone” (*AVB* 240), “its illusory form,”<sup>27</sup> that is a distortion and a misperception. On the other, it is beyond the series of “twelve cycles of time and space” (*AVB* 210), and may therefore appear to humanity to be the thirteenth: “So we say that the first cycle sent its first soul into the world at the birth of Christ, and that the twelfth will send its last soul immediately before the birth of the New Fountain. Then there will come the first of a new series, the Thirteenth Cycle, which is a Sphere and not a cone” (*CW13* 138; *AVA* 170).<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the symbolism of the number twelve includes the idea of completeness, so that “thirteen” inevitably goes beyond this completeness, or crowns it. Richard Ellmann noted a comment by George Yeats that “12 cones are 12 disciples and 13th is Christ,”<sup>29</sup> and Christ is of course not the thirteenth disciple but above them and includes the types of humanity that they represent.<sup>30</sup>

## II

In Yeats’s presentation of ideas related to the Sphere and the *Thirteenth Cone* in *A Vision B*, he generally gives enough to leave readers as much perplexed as enlightened, and the majority of mentions are little more than glancing references, serving mainly to remind us how little we know. I shall concentrate here on some of the fuller treatments of the *Thirteenth Cone* in *A Vision B*, particularly a paragraph from “The Completed Symbol,” Section XIV (*AVB* 210–11), that in Northrop Frye’s opinion “ought to have been one of the key passages of *A Vision*.”<sup>31</sup> While focusing on the central concepts, I shall also try to pursue some of the wider implications and connections that Yeats’s exposition indicates.

Yeats suggests here that, if one regards “the whole of human life” collectively as a single gyre or cone, this cone has as its antithesis a “contrasting cone as the other half of the antinomy, the ‘spiritual objective’” (AVB 210).<sup>32</sup> This single collective gyre of present humanity is referred to in terms of time, so that its movements are called months, “twelve months or twelve cycles” (AVB 209), and when we are in “the first month” of the humane cone, “we are in the twelfth of the other, when we are in the second in the eleventh of the other, and so on, that month of the other cone which corresponds to ours is always called by my instructors the Thirteenth Cycle or *Thirteenth Cone*, for every month is a cone” (AVB 210).<sup>33</sup> This example of opposing months is in fact one case of the more general pattern, sketched in Yeats’s preceding paragraph (AVB 209–10) but probably stated more clearly in a draft, in terms of the wheel:

In reading what I have written of the Wheel of Birth & death or that of the 28 incarnations, or the wheel of history which I have yet to examine, the reader must always assume that there is a spiritual wheel, [which is] its antithesis & which acts upon it as man upon woman. I have dealt & shall deal only in the most summary way with this other wheel[,] the sphere in its illusory form as the 13th cone[,] that I may keep as much as possible to the concrete & the phenomenal. The two wheels live each others death, die each others life.<sup>34</sup>

The *Thirteenth Cone* is thus the antithesis of whichever cone or wheel refers to humanity, whether of incarnation or of history, “the ‘spiritual objective’” (AVB 210), “spiritual wheel” or “the sphere in its illusory form as the 13th cone,” which Yeats sees in his favorite Heraclitean paradox of reciprocal dying and living (cf. AVB 68)<sup>35</sup> or figures in “the lambs of Faery bleating in November” (AVB 210). It must always be assumed as the automatic complementary counterpart to the humane wheel, acting as man upon woman.<sup>36</sup>

A key question here is whether Yeats saw the *Thirteenth Cone* as truly existent—whether it is simply an “illusory form” of the Sphere or whether it is a reality within the antinomies. In some respects the question is meaningless and in others it is the essence of the whole system: “as all things fall into a series of antinomies in human experience [the Sphere] becomes, the moment it is thought of, what I shall presently describe as the thirteenth cone” (AVB 193). It is the thinking that makes it so, and the illusion is real: “The cones of the *tinctures* mirror reality but are in themselves pursuit and illusion” (AVB 73). In this sense it is very much akin to the illusion of *maya* in Vedantic philosophy: it is true but is not the truth—which is “the ultimate reality” of Brahman alone—but it is not false either. Shankara taught of a man who in half-light sees a snake and is afraid. Light reveals that the snake is a coil of rope: but the fact that it is not a snake does not make it unreal, and though his fear is groundless, it is an authentic emotion.<sup>37</sup> There are therefore aspects of things that are true, though only one real truth. Yeats sees the illusion as ineluctable and essential to the human condition.

As the draft passage indicates, the illusory *Thirteenth Cone* is also a wheel, mirroring and complementing any aspect of the humane wheel. While Yeats writes of the *Thirteenth Cone* in terms of a place or condition where time runs in opposition to ours, “a being racing into the future passes a being racing into the past” (AVB 210),<sup>38</sup> he also conceives of it as the opposite of time. Thus intersecting with our space-time is an opposite world of the *Thirteenth Cone*, anti-time and non-time co-existing and intersecting with our time.

When we try to conceive of non-time we tend to imagine endless time or everlastingness, but more accurately, though still just images, “eternity is not a long time but a *short* time,” or, in terms that Blake might have used, “Eternity is in the glitter on the beetle’s wing.”<sup>39</sup> Eternity perhaps applies more accurately to the Sphere itself, and is indeed a form of synecdoche, for, as eternity is to time, so the Sphere is to universal space-time and phenomenal reality. Certainly, eternity is one of the key concepts at the heart of what humanity can only see as the *Thirteenth Cone*.

In the final sentences of his explanation of the *Thirteenth Cone* on AVB 211, Yeats includes a pair of illustrations, paratactic allusions without explicit connection or clear argument. The first refers to the Hermetic tradition of eternity as expounded in the Latin *Asclepius*: “‘Eternity also,’ says Hermes in the Aeslepius [*sic*] dialogue, ‘though motionless itself, appears to be in motion’” (AVB 211). As is common with Yeats’s glancing references, the omitted context is almost as significant as the quoted material, in this case the *Asclepius*’s complex argument of how time’s motion affects the perception of Eternity, which by inference alludes to how the gyre’s antinomies affect the perception of the Sphere-*Thirteenth Cone*. Indeed it seems likely that Yeats saw it as the pattern for the relationship between the Sphere and the gyres:

Now time, though it is ever in movement possesses a faculty of stability peculiar to itself, in that its return into itself is determined by necessity. And accordingly, though eternity is stable, fixed and motionless, yet since time is mobile and its movement ever goes back into eternity, it results from this that eternity also, though motionless in itself, appears to be in motion, on account of its relationship to time; for eternity enters into time, and it is in time that all movement takes place.<sup>40</sup>

If “gyre” is substituted for “time” and “the Sphere” for “eternity,” the argument is a more explicit version of what Yeats appears to have intended, showing how the *Thirteenth Cone* is the apparently moving aspect of the Sphere, an expression of “its relationship to time” or the gyres. For the Hermetic writer eternity and God are almost synonymous, “The being then, of which I speak,—whether it is to be called God, or eternity, or both, and whether God is in eternity, or eternity in God, or each in the other—this being...is infinite, incomprehensible, immeasurable; it exceeds our powers and is beyond our scrutiny.”<sup>41</sup>

After gnominically quoting the *Hermetica*, Yeats moves without obvious link to Shelley. The Demogorgon of *Prometheus Unbound* is a notoriously indefinable figure, deliberately formless, unsexed and protean, a dark mythic version of the uncertainties that shroud the *Thirteenth Cone*’s symbolic abstraction.<sup>42</sup> A chthonic figure, able to tell “All things thou dar’st demand” (II:4 l. 8), it declares, in answer to Asia’s questions, that God is the creator of all, but it will not identify who or what it means by God, asserting that “the deep truth is imageless” (II:4 l. 116). It tells Jupiter that its own name is “Eternity—demand no direr name” (III:1 l. 52), yet it is Jupiter’s child, as Jupiter was Saturn’s, each overturning the father. In the last act, Demogorgon is seen “as Darkness, / ...rising out o’ Earth” (IV:1 ll. 510–11), but brings with it light, freedom and omens of possibility. Yeats’s comment focuses rather literally on the symbolism of the earth as a sphere,<sup>43</sup> but Demogorgon is also the influx of the new age, and most specifically the imminent “*antithetical* multiform

influx" (*AVB* 302), overturning its progenitor, just as the *primary* influx overturned the previous *antithetical* age. Like the Oceanid Asia, Yeats questions this coming age, but can only reach so far: "The particulars are the work of the *Thirteenth Cone* or cycle which is in every man and called by every man his freedom. Doubtless, for it can do all things and knows all things, it knows what it will do with its own freedom but it has kept the secret" (*AVB* 302). Demogorgon-like it resists giving particulars.

If Demogorgon creates an impenetrable myth of eternity, it also indicates how eternity potentially lies within reality. Indeed reality is not just space-time, but the intersection or marriage of space-time with eternity:

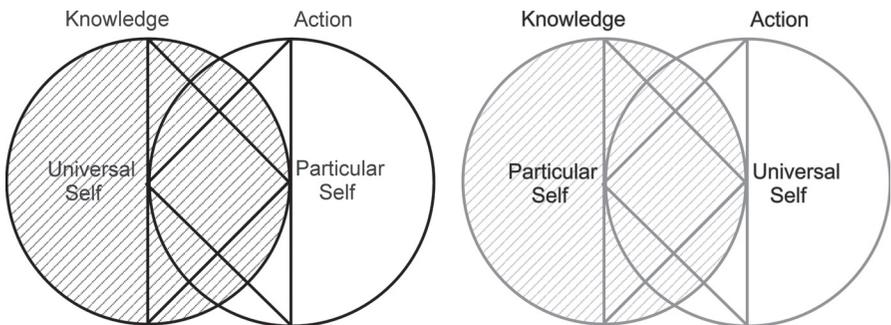
"The stallion Eternity  
Mounted the mare of Time,  
'Gat the foal of the world." ("Tom at Cruachan," *VP* 529; *CWI* 273)

"World" here seems to take on the sense of the Hermetists' "*kosmos*," all or universe, with the *Thirteenth Cone* acting upon the humane cone as male upon female, to produce total reality.

Yeats expresses this geometrically in the interpenetration of the two cones: "our expanding cone seems to cut through its gyre; spiritual influx is from its circumference, animate life from its centre" (*AVB* 211). The image figures two cones, one the cone of space-time-human reality and the other the *Thirteenth Cone*, which intersect—"our expanding cone seems to cut through its gyre"—but the exact mental picture or geometry behind "its circumference" and "its centre" is slightly unclear, because these do not automatically apply to cones, and Yeats probably had in mind a visualization that he planned at one stage to use as part of the introductory exposition of what became "The Principal Symbol."<sup>44</sup>

In this earlier organization, Yeats opens Book I with "Dramatis Personae": first comes the *Daimon*, which "is unique and perfect and has for its symbol a sphere" and the next major symbol is the double vortex, and "there is a gap which I can fill from Plotinus":

he compares God and Man to two spheres which once coincided and now do not. I draw these spheres and insert the double vortex.



[N.B. The diagram on left is the one that appears in the typescript with Yeats's handwriting, but it does not correspond with text, and the one on the right, with "Universal Self" and "Particular Self" transposed, is the corrected version.]

I call the shaded sphere—"God" in his metaphor—knowledge, and the unshaded—his "man"—action; that point where the circumference of the shaded sphere passes through the centre of the unshaded, the Universal Self, and that point where the circumference of the unshaded passes through the centre of the shaded, the Particular Self.<sup>45</sup> Each Self seeks to be united to its entire sphere, and its desire is expressed by a vortex or gyre. Though its gyre always touches the circumference of the sphere and expands with it, till it reaches the greatest width, we represent it for convenience by a straight-sided cone. Each Self identifies itself with the sphere at whose centre it lies and so with all that is opposite to its own nature.<sup>46</sup>

There are several points worth commenting on,<sup>47</sup> but the most important aspect in the present context is the placing of cone, circumference and center within the spherical framework (cf. *AVB* 199–200), as the cone's surface in fact represents a gyre "that always touches the circumference of the sphere" and has its apex at the center of the opposing sphere. Though this precise version was superseded, it is clear that Yeats continued to think in these terms when considering the intersection of the *Thirteenth Cone* with the mundane cone. The center is thus the Subject or Self, and the kernel of desire or appetency that is the driving force of "animate life." The circle at the base of each cone is therefore the full circumference of the sphere, the "Object or limit" of the Subject,<sup>48</sup> so that when the expanding gyre of the divine cone reaches this point, Knowledge, there is "spiritual influx...from its circumference" of the sphere with the contact: "Did she put on his knowledge with his power...?" (*VP* 441; *CWI* 218).

The term "influx" is exclusively associated in *A Vision* with the revelation surrounding the birth of a new religious dispensation, in the next case "the *antithetical* multiform influx" (*AVB* 302). Yeats explicitly links this coming influx with the "rough beast" of "The Second Coming," though using his common technique of juxtaposition without logical connectors so that the exact relationship is obscured:

The approaching *antithetical* influx...will reach its complete systematisation at that moment when...the Great Year comes to its intellectual climax. Something of what I have said it must be, the myth declares...what else it must be no man can say, for always at the critical moment the *Thirteenth Cone*, the sphere, the unique intervenes.

Somewhere in sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds. (*AVB* 263)

The intervention of the spiritual influx is also figured as the irruption of a bird into the human dimension, Leda and the Swan, Mary and the Dove, and, in Yeats's own myth, *Attracta* and the Great Herne, which will be examined in more detail below. Even a lesser moment, such as the conception of "world-transforming Charlemagne," hints at the way that "Eternity is passion" and that, in "their sexual joy," man and woman give voice to

powers outside time, enacting, at least in some cases, a “sacred drama” (“Whence had they Come?” *VP* 560; *CWI* 293).

Though eternity should be understood as the eternal instant, there is a human tendency to treat this as the persistent present, which Yeats figures as the *Record*.

All things are present as an eternal instant to our *Daimon* (or *Ghostly Self* as it is called when it inhabits the sphere), but that instant is of necessity unintelligible to all bound to the antinomies. My instructors have therefore followed tradition by substituting for it a *Record* where the images of all past events remain for ever “thinking the thought and doing the deed.” They are in popular mysticism called “the pictures in the astral light” . . . and what Blake called “the bright sculptures of Los’s Hall.” We may describe them as the *Passionate Body* lifted out of time. (*AVB* 193)<sup>49</sup>

The *Record* is effectively another term for the Great Memory, which Yeats wrote about in “Magic” (*CW4* 25ff; *Ec&I* 28ff; 1900), and for *Anima Mundi*.<sup>50</sup> The *Record* is not the same as the *Thirteenth Cone*, let alone the Sphere, but represents an aspect of them, preserving what has passed into time and moved from present consciousness into the past; as Crazy Jane comments “*All things remain in God*” (“Crazy Jane on God,” *VP* 512; *CWI* 263).<sup>51</sup> In the afterlife too, the *Spirit* relives the life just lived during the *Return*, repeating its events until they are exhausted, “until, at last forgotten by the *Spirit*, they fade into the *Thirteenth Cone*” (*AVB* 227), preserved and absorbed.

However we choose to imagine or understand this preservation of events and ideas, the truth may come “Out of a medium’s mouth / Out of nothing . . . / Out of the forest loam / Out of the dark night where lay / The crowns of Nineveh” (*VP* 439; *CWI* 218). All these provide record of the past, whereas the fuller form of *Daimonic* perception in the “eternal instant” of Sphere-*Thirteenth Cone* also includes time future. However, the relation of the *Record* to time is hazy and it is possible that, while it is timeless, humanity can only comprehend what relates to the past. In contrast, the *Daimon*’s “eternal instant” also contains what has yet to be manifested and has not yet passed into time, and, in Rapallo Notebook C, Yeats speculates “Is not the Daimon in some sense that being which can stretch its memory—both Record & abstract memory—through 28 incarnations & man that being whose memory includes one only.”<sup>52</sup> He represents this poetically through the changeless bird in “the artifice of eternity” singing “Of what is past, or passing, or to come” (*VP* 408; *CWI* 198).<sup>53</sup>

The sphinx-like image of “The Second Coming” arises from *Spiritus Mundi*, the emanation of *Anima Mundi*,<sup>54</sup> but both *Anima* and *Spiritus Mundi* are linked with the Sphere-*Thirteenth Cone*.<sup>55</sup> Both are outside time and partake of aspects of the eternal, and in this case, the timeless or archetypal. In fact for Yeats, past, repeated usage and archetype are closely linked in establishing the potency of a symbol or form. In Blake’s conception, not only are “All things acted on Earth . . . seen in the bright Sculptures of / Los’s Halls,” but also “every Age renews its powers from these Works,” which enshrine the archetypal timeless emotions, myths and narratives.<sup>56</sup> They are thus the forces that maintain continuity, linked to the moods of Yeats’s early works or the divine archetypes that “are always making and unmaking humanity, which is indeed but the trembling of their lips” (*Myth*

275; *M2005* 181). John Aherne is also suggestive, though indefinite, when he notes in his letter to "Mr. Yeats": "I recall what Plato said of memory, and suggest that your automatic script, or whatever it was, may well have been but a process of remembering. I think that Plato symbolised by the word 'memory' a relation to the timeless" (*AVB* 54).

As with the quotation from Blake, the other elaborations contain submerged allusions that feed into Yeats's thinking. He also mentions the "popular mysticism," from which so many of his ideas originated but which he tended to hedge about with more respectable authorities. Some went further than seeing the astral light as the "receptacle of forms, and having therefore 'pictures' therein" (*LTWBY* 280; 1914). The Theosophical writer Franz Hartmann had written that "the thoughts of the Universal Mind" are "stored up in the Astral Light," but, although the "*Astral Light* is the book memory, in which every thought is engraved and every event recorded....Men do not create thought; the ideas existing in the Astral Light flow into their minds,"<sup>57</sup> and for Madame Blavatsky it contained the future as well.<sup>58</sup>

Yeats indicates that the *Passionate Body* was the astral body of Theosophical and more traditional terminology,<sup>59</sup> and it follows that the "astral light" and its pictures may be viewed as a universal astral/*Passionate Body*, no longer bound to time.<sup>60</sup> A whole conception of metaphysical light lay behind his own lucubrations about the *Principles*, finally reduced to the treatment of *AVB* 190–91, where the "*Passionate Body* is in another of its aspects identical with physical light...the creator of all that is sensible" (*AVB* 190), "the present, creation, light, the objects of sense."<sup>61</sup> Therefore the *Passionate Body* lifted out of time is an eternal present.

Any treatment of the ramifications suggested by Yeats's exposition leads into the realm of receding mirrors, but at the core of this treatment, particularly the exposition in Section XIV (*AVB* 209–11), lies the idea of anti-time. The *Thirteenth Cone* runs against that of the phenomenal world, in simple terms the invisible living country where the seasons oppose ours, but more philosophically the motionless eternity that appears to move. Though it always interpenetrates our world, its presence is closer or more significant as the religious gyre moves into the "spiritual objective," when a new dispensation is imminent.

### III

If Yeats never makes good on his promise that "Presently I shall have much to say of the sphere as the final place of rest" (*AVB* 69)—or as anything else—the *Thirteenth Cone* or Cycle certainly originated as the end of the process of reincarnation, though one which Yeats contemplates with little desire for escape:

Many times man lives and dies  
Between his two eternities,  
That of race and that of soul.... (*VP* 637; *CWI* 333)

These eternities are, however, those of seemingly endless time and will have their end, and Yeats certainly sees release from the wheel of rebirth as not only possible but inevitable, though only after a full series of incarnations, paradigmatically twelve rounds of twenty-eight lives, a process "which can be quickened or slackened but cannot be fundamentally

altered" (*VP* 823; *CWI* 658).<sup>62</sup> Although Yeats never spells it out in published writing, he did calculate that this entails some 336 incarnations (including the non-physical ones at Phases 1 and 15), spread over many thousand years.<sup>63</sup> Unlike almost all traditions of reincarnation, the Yeatses' system offers no clear line out of the round of births; salvation is only possible for those who have completed the allotted course and permanent release can only come in due time. The very different man, Frank Pearce Sturm, who longed for *primary* release, thought that Yeats's system offered him a way of calculating "how many incarnations any particular person has already endured" (*LTWBY2* 381), and in theory it does. Yeats himself was said to be at Phase 17 of his sixth cycle, so a little less than halfway through the twelve cycles, while George, repeating Phase 18 of her seventh cycle, was somewhat more advanced.

The idea of a final state, whether the blessed extinction of moksha or nirvana, or some paradise of Elysium or heaven, is part of almost all spiritual traditions. In many respects the *Thirteenth Cone* or Cycle is an equivalent for these, since it is the end of the cycles of rebirth, and it is this aspect that dominates in much of the automatic script, *A Vision A* and into the earlier drafts of *A Vision B*. The inevitability of the full twelve cycles had emerged in an exchange from the automatic script in August 1918 where the import was clear, although muddled slightly by the staccato note form: when they asked "Can the soul by accepting the spiritual objective cease to incarnate before last cycle," they were told "No"; rather it "can only accept in its consciousness in each cycle" and "can only escape when the consciousness of every cycle has [been] accepted" (*YVP2* 26). Though this inevitability is never stated explicitly in *A Vision* itself, it is implicit in the vagueness of the references to release and the injunction that, like a civilization, no soul "can spend what it has not earned":

the love that [the Saint] brings to God at his twenty-seventh phase was found in some past life upon a woman's breast, his loyalty and wisdom were prepared perhaps a thousand years before in serving a bad master, and that is why the Indian minstrel sings God as woman, husband, lover and child. (*AVB* 206)

Once the soul has been born as the Fool of the twelfth cycle, truly "The Child of God" (*CWI3* 93; *AVA* 115; *AVB* 182), it may escape into the *Thirteenth Cone*. The automatic script had stated that "After the 13 incarnation if in all it accepts it becomes equal with God & is free to choose," clarified as "Cycle 13 / final initiation yes" (*YVP2* 27), and as each initiation in the Golden Dawn was both an end and a step towards the next level, this implies that the Thirteenth Cycle is both a goal and part of a continuing process.<sup>64</sup>

This final equality with God is echoed in *A Vision A* in the description of the *Daimon*:

she remains always in the Thirteenth Cycle, [so] cannot accompany man on his wanderings, nor can her tutelage of man be eternal, seeing that after many cycles man also inhabits the Thirteenth Cycle and has in a certain way a greater power than hers. (*CWI3* 182; *AVA* 220–21)<sup>65</sup>

Here Yeats reflects certain Gnostic ideas in which the perfected human is superior to the never-fallen angel.<sup>66</sup>

Even in the earlier drafts for *A Vision B*, Yeats explicitly identifies the *Thirteenth Cone* as beyond incarnation, incorporating general Buddhist beliefs about the enlightened ones who return to incarnation out of supreme compassion: "Those who have finished all the cycles pass into the thirteenth cone for ever at the close of the *purification*; or 'refuse salvation' and are born as embodied messengers of the cone: a Christ or a Buddha."<sup>67</sup> However *A Vision B* itself offers a less clear perspective, stating, as cited earlier, that within the *Thirteenth Cycle/Cone/Sphere* "live all souls that have been set free and every *Daimon* and *Ghostly Self*" (AVB 210–11), raising more questions than it answers.<sup>68</sup> Though in all these contexts the *Thirteenth Cycle* or *Cone* appears to be very much a version of heaven, in which live souls released from the wheel, the *Daimons* and the *Ghostly Selves*,<sup>69</sup> as well as *Teaching Spirits* and *Spirits* of the *Thirteenth Cone*,<sup>70</sup> Yeats states that we must "avoid attributing to them the pure benevolence our exhausted Platonism and Christianity attribute to an angelical being. Our actions, lived in life, or remembered in death, are the food and drink of the *Spirits* of the *Thirteenth Cone*, that which gives them separation and solidity" (AVB 230). These *Spirits* therefore intervene for their own sake, vampire angels who feed vicariously on the drama that can only originate in the complex fury and mire of human life.<sup>71</sup>

Another paradoxical and hard aspect of this interaction is mentioned at the end of "The Soul in Judgment" where Yeats writes of how "the deliverance from birth and death" results from the union of "the *Daimon* of the Living and a *Spirit* of the *Thirteenth Cone*" (AVB 240) a kind of spiritual meeting that is not explained further, but is put in apposition with "the conscious union of the *Daimons* of man and woman," which mirrors the Yeateses' own situation as described in the automatic script (YVP3 291) or more poetically "the intercourse of angels" where "whole is joined to whole" that is described by "Ribh at the Tomb of Baile and Aillinn" (VP 555; CW1 290). What makes these unions hard to accept, however, is that they in turn are the result of the "Cruelty and ignorance" that "constitute evil" (AVB 240), for, though it is possible to find comfort or reassurance in the idea that evil may serve a positive purpose, it is difficult to accept the ethical standing of a system that seems to require evil in some form for the soul's release from the cycle of "birth and death."<sup>72</sup> Indeed in a draft Yeats posits a further paradox: "our final deliverance is not Primary but Antithetical—'the last cycle of man is evil'" implying that the final cycle is not one of advanced enlightenment and benevolence.<sup>73</sup> This cannot be explained away, though evil, cruelty and ignorance do have slightly specialized applications and are clearly linked to the complex material about *Victimage* in general. There is also Yeats's emphasis on viewing life as a drama valued according to the aesthetic of tragedy, where the evil of heroes' falls may lead to some form of catharsis—for others, audience, state, community—and even redemption.<sup>74</sup> However, Yeats does not provide enough detail or consideration of the problem to give any clear explanation.

Though the *Thirteenth Cone* is an earthly view of a spiritual whole, it is also a community or congeries of beings, and this double focus is itself a product of the antinomies which produce "two conceptions, that of reality as a congeries of beings, that of reality as a single being" (Ex 305; 1930). When Yeats writes of the *Thirteenth Cone* as *acting* in some way, for instance *sending* forms (AVB 230n), *calling* spirits "to the care of the newly dead" (AVB 233), *giving* "assistance" and "consent" to them, or *summoning* them (AVB 235), *using* "messengers" (AVB 237), being "conscious of itself" (AVB 239), or when he states that "it can do all things and knows all things" (AVB 302), it operates in this dual aspect

of single being and collective.<sup>75</sup> Although the *Thirteenth Cone* can validly be conceived as one, Yeats's bias is to see it as the congeries and, as elsewhere, he appears to hold firmly to a dictum of Blake's that "God only acts or is in existing beings or men" (*CW5* 22; *Myth* 352)<sup>76</sup>—always allowing for the fact that for Yeats the host of "existing beings" includes a wide range of spiritual entities and that of "existing...men" includes the dead.

At the end of the original opening section of "Swedenborg, Mediums and the Desolate Places,"<sup>77</sup> and again in drafts for *A Vision A*, Yeats coupled this epigram from Blake with another: "God is an abode of spirits" (*CW5* 290),<sup>78</sup> and much of Yeats's treatment of the *Thirteenth Cone* in the afterlife seems to reflect a similar perception. It is indeed the closest that Yeats's system offers to the idea of a personal God who intervenes in the individual life and may respond to prayer or at least wish. The dead lose all trace of former life at or before the *Beatitude* and become purified spirits (see *AVB* 235), entering the *Purification*, when they may "be called by the *Thirteenth Cone* to care for the newly dead" (*AVB* 233) or interact with the minds of the living by "the command of the *Thirteenth Cone*" or with its permission (*AVB* 234). Similarly in the final stage before birth, *Foreknowledge*, they may with "the assistance of the *Thirteenth Cone* affect life" and the world of the living, especially their own world to be, and, "with the consent of the *Thirteenth Cone*" act like Freud's "censor" (*AVB* 235). In all these functions the *Thirteenth Cone* figures as a form of control over the spirits' behavior, an active arbiter or self-executing law. It appears to have some volition and to intervene at an individual level.

Although there is nothing to define it as a single being or congeries, its actions seem more collective and in many ways continue the process embodied in the earlier stages of the afterlife by the *Teaching Spirits* of the *Thirteenth Cone* (see *AVB* 228–30).<sup>79</sup> Yeats does not characterize the process further in this context or give any more than these hints. There is a sense, therefore, in which the afterlife shows the *Thirteenth Cone* as a collective consciousness or a hive mind, at most a divine council rather than a polytheistic pantheon of differentiated godheads. It is natural both that this *antithetical* aspect of deity should be the closest to a personal God and most clearly related to the human, and also that it should not necessarily even be viewed in terms of godhead, and represented rather in the hosting Sidhe, "a timeless and spaceless community of Spirits,"<sup>80</sup> or the multitudinous *Daimons*.

In many ways this reflects the view that Yeats himself proposed in the "Seven Propositions," where reality, implicitly the ultimate reality, is defined as "a timeless & spaceless community of Spirits which perceive each other."<sup>81</sup> In this sense, the *Thirteenth Cone* is both one and many, depending upon how it is viewed, acting on a personal level through *Spirits* of the *Thirteenth Cone*, *Daimons* and other messengers, while present as a single unity in world history or when we conceive of the whole concept. As such it is the universal and particular goal of incarnating spirits, but once they reach it, it may lead them back into the world of animate life.

#### IV

Yeats evidently felt freer to explore possibilities concerning the nature of reality and the divine in the diary of 1930 precisely because it was allowed to be speculative rather than seeking to be authoritative like *A Vision*. Certainly this diary contains some of the most

direct considerations of the *Thirteenth Cone*. It emphasizes in particular how the *Thirteenth Cone* is experienced by humanity, and its place in the individual life as well as in the philosophical construct of the universe.

The role of perception, both active and passive, central to the “Seven Propositions” recurs in the diary. Considering Berkeley’s conception of existence as perception, Yeats translates it into his own terms:

Berkeley in the *Commonplace Book* thought that “we perceive” and are passive whereas God creates in perceiving.<sup>82</sup> He creates what we perceive. I substitute for God the Thirteenth Cone, the Thirteenth Cone therefore creates our perceptions—all the visible world—as held in common by our wheel. (*Ex* 320)

Though this is far from being a simple one-for-one substitution of God by the *Thirteenth Cone*, in this context at least the *Thirteenth Cone* plays for Yeats the same role that God did for Bishop Berkeley, the active creator and preserver of our phenomenal reality, though elsewhere Yeats specifies that it is not phenomenal itself: “all life but that of the unknowable *thirteenth cone* is phenomenal [*sic*].”<sup>83</sup>

In the first edition of *A Vision* Yeats had addressed the same problem of the continuity of perception, but had seen it more in terms of the plurality of spirits, particularly the dead:

Berkeley thought that if his study table remained when he closed his eyes it could only be because it was the thought of a more powerful spirit which he named God, but the mathematician Poincaré considers time and space the work of our ancestors. With the system in my bones I must declare that those ancestors still live and that time and space would vanish if they closed their eyes. (*CW13* 128; *AVA* 158)

The role played by the *Thirteenth Cone* in the 1930 diary is thus the same as that attributed to the dead in *A Vision A*, and in many ways Yeats continued to explore the concept of God or the *Thirteenth Cone* as the abode of spirits, which can be viewed either as a unity or a congeries.

The *Thirteenth Cone* is not only the matrix of “all the visible world—as held in common by our wheel,” the creative power behind all that we perceive as external, but it is also the extreme of objectivity, opposed to us: “The 13th cone is the only thing that is entirely objective & therefore fated, when considered by the antithetical human race. We are who we are because of the assertion of our subjectivity.”<sup>84</sup> If the *Thirteenth Cone* is completely opposed to the humane cone, it is completely beyond human control, intervention or conception. Thus our experience of it, as well as its “objective correlatives,” in T. S. Eliot’s phrase, are in the sublime and the fated:

The 13 Cone is reflected in those parts of external nature uncontrolable by us—sea, sky, growth & so on. As an internal experience the 13th Cone is the spiritual reality [that] transcends experience, but is touched by all at the highest moment. Our thought & our emotions & the acts towards which we are impelled are our

experience of the incarnations of CM, Mask, & BF respectively, but beyond these lie those fated things, that are external perceptions of the 13th Cone. We enter in the *Beatitude* an experience that can only enter our embodied experience when symbolized by all that is most tremendous in nature.<sup>85</sup>

The vast elements and powers of the natural world are beyond any personal *Body of Fate*, and are utterly objective, thus reflecting the spiritual objective.

Although Yeats's poetry very seldom figures the natural sublime, humanity's can approach the *Thirteenth Cone* in life through symbol, the "tremendous in Nature" standing for the sublime beyond Nature, just as Yeats's use of the natural world in his poetry tends always to intimate the supernatural or preternatural.<sup>86</sup> It is perhaps fitting that Wordsworth, one of the poets who best expresses the numinous presence in external nature, is placed at Phase 14,<sup>87</sup> where the direction is still towards Nature though the sensitivity is subjective, whereas Blake, whose vision goes beyond the natural to the mythic, is at Phase 16, where the direction has turned towards God (*AVB* 104). There is also a note of pantheism or panentheism, of the spiritual or divine dimension within all reality, when Yeats observes that since "the 13th Cone, enters in some measure into all *Spirits* we must then expect some image of it in all things."<sup>88</sup> This persists into *A Vision B* on a more personal level: "the *Thirteenth Cone* or cycle which is in every man and called by every man his freedom" (*AVB* 302), which also recalls Jesus's teaching that "the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21; cf. *YVP* 40 & 103).

While recognizing that "we must expect some image" of the *Thirteenth Cone* "in all things," Yeats still sees it most clearly in Blake's "portions of eternity,"<sup>89</sup> "in those things which Blake called in Heaven & Hell too great for the eye of man," singling out storm, the starlit sky, the abundance of spring, but also "war in so far as war exceeds mans purpose—'the destructive sword'—The Beatific Vision, the *Beatitude*, gods love though still in his wrath also."<sup>90</sup> Yeats's list finds eternity in vast nature, irrational violence, and private communion with God: all are beyond the scope of human sense and remain irreconcilably other to humanity in their "terrible beauty" (*VP* 392; *CW* 182).<sup>91</sup>

The personal experience of the *Thirteenth Cone* is not fixed to any determined incarnation, though it becomes far more possible in the later phases of the wheel, "the spiritual objectivity, or spiritual *primary*," where "the *Faculties* 'wear thin,'" and "the *Principles*, which are...a sphere, shine through" (*AVB* 89). It is perhaps more readily experienced therefore by the *primary* saint, for whom "the total life has suddenly displayed its source" (*CW* 13 92; *AVA* 113; *AVB* 180), yet the experience is potentially part of every life, since each includes multiple cycles where the *Principles* potentially shine through in their final phases. For Yeats himself such moments include the blazing openness of "Vacillation" IV or the experience at Glendalough when "Through intricate motions ran / Stream and gliding sun / And all my heart seemed gay," the eternal instant that flashed in "the gleam / That pierced my body through" and "made me live like these that seem / Self-born, born anew" (*VP* 506–7; *CW* 1 259).<sup>92</sup>

Within the individual life, the experience of the *Thirteenth Cone* is linked particularly to the two stages mentioned: the *Beatific Vision* and the *Beatitude*. Both terms draw on the religious language of the human perception of the transcendent but, while the afterlife *Beatitude* represents a form of merging with the whole, a *primary* form of union,

the *Beatific Vision* is a secular, humanist and sexual, *antithetical* state.<sup>93</sup> The two strands meet in the sacrament of marriage, used a symbol for both states. As the *Beatitude* in the afterlife is also called the *Marriage* (AVB 232), its embodied, living counterpart is found in the “marriage bed” which “is the symbol of the solved antinomy” (AVB 52), “the natural union of man and woman” which “has a kind of sacredness” as “a symbol of that eternal instant where the antinomy is resolved” (AVB 214): “That stillness... / Where his heart my heart did seem / And both adrift on the miraculous stream / Where... / The Zodiac is changed into a sphere” (“Chosen,” VP 535; CWI 278). This moment where the two hearts meet and the whirling zodiac becomes the sphere is also adumbrated in the near perfect union of Solomon and Sheba, where the cock “that crowed out eternity / Thought to have crowed it in again” (“Solomon and the Witch,” VP 388; CWI 179).

These stages fall at the extremes of the cycle of an individual life, the points in the wheel of human incarnation and afterlife where the gyre contacts the circumference (cf. AVB 198–200). After death, the *Beatitude* is seen as a brief culmination, symbolic Phase 1 in the circle of the *Principles*, the soul’s round of life in the body and out of it, and the *Beatific Vision* is its balancing Phase 15, Sun in Moon as opposed to the *Beatitude’s* Moon in Sun.<sup>94</sup> The *Beatitude* is the state of the afterlife where the soul comes the closest to the spiritual reality, “for a short time ‘out of space and time,’ and every other abstraction, and is said not to move a gyre but in a sphere, being as it were present everywhere at once” (CW13 193; AVA 235), and it is the “internal experience” of the *Thirteenth Cone*, “the spiritual reality” that “transcends experience, but is touched by all at the highest moment.”<sup>95</sup> None of this description was, however, included in *A Vision B*, where this central state and stage of the cycle is given the minimum of treatment, and characterized as when “good and evil vanish into the whole” (AVB 232).

If the *Beatitude* was scanted in *A Vision B*, the *Beatific Vision* was completely omitted. Yeats had regretted in *A Vision A* that he had written “nothing about the Beatific Vision, little of sexual love” (CW13 lv; AVA xii), yet he removed what little there had been when he rewrote *A Vision B*.<sup>96</sup> The treatment in *A Vision A* is enigmatic, melding the influx of the next Master, with the dead, sexual love and a Blakean transformation of the *Faculties* from Desire, Cruelty, Service and Domination to Wisdom, Truth, Love and Beauty (CW13 140; AVA 172). What exactly this transformation means is unclear, though the terms do imply a form of redemptive restoration, but it seems a matter of mythic dimensions rather than human experience, and certainly not the personal terms from which it arose in the automatic script nor fully in keeping with the general style of *A Vision*.<sup>97</sup> It does involve the only mention of the *Thirteenth Cone* as such in *A Vision A*, when Yeats writes about the first and second *Critical Moments* leading up to the *Beatific Vision*, stating that passionate sexual love during these “three forms of crisis” comes “under the sway of the thirteenth cone. That is to say there is harmonisation or the substitution of the sphere for the cone” (CW13 140; cf. AVA 172).<sup>98</sup> “Harmonisation” is further defined in *A Vision A* as “the recognition by Lunar man of the Solar spiritual opposite that is called faith, and it inaugurates religious emotional and philosophical experience” (CW13 140; AVA 172), which, reduced to more banal equivalents, is to say that it is the subjective human’s acceptance of the spiritual objective and is called faith—hardly a controversial experience of the divine.

A fragment from a draft of *A Vision B* gives further insight into this harmonization in terms of balance with the *Principles*, considering how a Swedenborg, for instance, who is:

conscious of the Wheel of the *Principles* and that of the *Faculties* in their mutual relations, is at the same instant awake and asleep, alive and dead. He expresses through a system of images a harmony of related aims, and we should discover in this system, in this Unity of Being, not the sphere's messengers but the sphere itself, that which only contradiction can express not "the lone tower of the absolute self" but its shattering, "the absolute self" set free, that unknown reality painted or sung by the monks of Zen.<sup>99</sup>

The "harmony of related aims" that expresses the Sphere is Nicholas of Cusa's "coincidence of opposites," a marriage of *Principles* and *Faculties*, unconscious and conscious, sleeping and waking mind, the dead and the living state, a unity of *primary* and *antithetical*: "I hail the superhuman; / I call it death-in-life and life-in-death" (VP 497; CW1 252). The implication is that "a harmony of related aims," whether the *Faculties* or *Principles* themselves or expressions of them, are realized in a "system of images" which achieves a form of Unity of Being,<sup>100</sup> which expresses not self but pure being, the unknown, ultimate reality. Yeats indicates that Zen art has such systems of images, which express satori through unified contradiction, where all is true, and the absolute self is freed from its isolation into the wholeness of the absolute as Sphere.<sup>101</sup> It is possible that he even hoped to achieve something similar in his own system, with its "arbitrary, harsh, difficult symbolism" of the kind that "has almost always accompanied expression that unites the sleeping and waking mind" (AVB 23).

As opposed to harmonization, *Beatitude* and *Beatific Vision* when viewed in terms of the *Principles* are special moments of union. In *Beatitude*, *Celestial Body* is united in *Spirit*, "pure mind, containing within itself pure truth" (AVB 188–89) and is "that reality we discover in thought: a single spaceless and timeless being[,] all others its creation and endowed with reflected limited life," while its opposite, *Spirit* in *Celestial Body*, is identified with *Beatific Vision* and "that reality which supports and precedes phenomena; a community of timeless and spaceless autonomous beings, each being unique, or a species in itself, a complete multiplicity."<sup>102</sup> The diary of 1930 notes that when the *Celestial Body* "is unified in" the *Spirit*, the soul approaches the *Thirteenth Cone* internally and, when *Spirit* is absorbed into *Celestial Body*, it gains the strongest perception of the *Thirteenth Cone* "as fated Nature," approaching it externally.<sup>103</sup>

The table below summarizes the two states under the headings solar and lunar, though *primary* and *antithetical* or One and Many would serve as well:

solar	lunar
Phase 1	Phase 15
Beatitude	Beatific Vision
internal experience of <i>Thirteenth Cone</i>	external experience of <i>Thirteenth Cone</i>
<i>Celestial Body</i> in <i>Spirit</i>	<i>Spirit</i> in <i>Celestial Body</i>
thought	phenomena
single being	congeries of beings
"it is because it is true"	"it is true because it is" <sup>104</sup>

Almost none of this dichotomy was used in *A Vision B* itself, probably because Yeats recognized that he was creating a form of symmetry that was not borne out in his documents, but the processes of musing and drafting left their traces and informed his approach to the question of spiritual experience and the *Thirteenth Cone*.

## V

It may seem paradoxical that Yeats the poet who is if anything polytheistic in his sympathies should apparently enshrine such a monolithic and rebarbative symbolism for divinity as the Sphere-*Thirteenth Cone*, but neither the absolute Sphere nor even the *Thirteenth Cone* is the same as the God of monotheism, which is as much an expression of the antinomies as the plural deities of ancient Irish or Greek religion. *A Vision* in fact offers some five distinct views of the divine, at the very least. First, beyond all, comes the Sphere. When that Sphere “falls in human consciousness...into a series of antinomies” (*AVB* 187), the first of that series is the antinomy of the humane wheel and the spiritual wheel, where duality enters, “for in 13th Cone [God] divides into two” (*YVP3* 102), including good and evil.<sup>105</sup> There may be a unified version of this stage, out of time, dual and differentiated but united: “two worlds lying one within another—nothing exterior, nothing interior, Sun in Moon and Moon in Sun—a single being like man and woman in Plato’s Myth,” but as soon as this enters time there is “then a separation and a whirling for countless ages” (*CWI3* 121; *AVA* 149).<sup>106</sup> This united, resolved antinomy is a second, potentially creative aspect of the Sphere, dual and maybe phasal, embracing both *Thirteenth Cone* and humane cone, spiritual and mundane wheels. When this divides truly, the humane and mundane is set against the spiritual wheel and the *Thirteenth Cone*, which is the third, illusory form of the divine and the one that we can perceive. Next, within the cone that encompasses the whole of human experience, another element in the “series of antinomies” is an antinomy within human thought comprised of “two conceptions, that of reality as a congeries of beings, that of reality as a single being” (*Ex* 305), or, to reverse the order, a solitary *primary* God and an *antithetical* multitude of gods, the fourth and fifth aspects of divinity. Beyond these, but still related to these earlier concepts, are various views of the *Daimons* and the *Principles*, wherein the divine is brought even closer to the embrace of humanity, even literally:

So closely do all the bonds resemble each other that in the most ascetic schools of India the novice tortured by his passion will pray to the God to come to him as a woman and have with him sexual intercourse; nor is the symbol subjective, for in the morning his pillow will be saturated with temple incense, his breast yellow with the saffron dust of some temple offering. Such experience is said, however, to wear itself out swiftly, giving place to the supernatural union. (*AVB* 239–40)

Love for the god can be expressed *antithetically*, that is in human terms, through sexual desire, since “the opposite sex is nature chosen and fated” (*AVB* 88; cf. *CWI3* 52; *AVA* 61). Philosophical Hinduism unifies its polytheism’s diversity, so the ascetic’s devotion to one god can lead to the One God of all, and “supernatural union,” but popular Hin-

duism celebrates the diversity of the gods' aspects. Though the manifestations of deity have a clear hierarchy, the similarities of the bonds also create a ladder for ascent, and the attempted union with the divine at the lower level leads, for those so attuned, to the higher levels. For such, "Unity with God" is the gift of the soul in *primary* incarnation, while the *antithetical* soul must look to "Unity of Being, the unity of man not of God, and therefore of the *antithetical tincture*" (AVB 258).

If the system's true deity is a totality which comprehends all, what is referred to as "God" throughout *A Vision* is a deity of religion, associated largely with the *primary Tincture*, particularly the last quarter between Phase 22 and the supernatural Phase 1, where awareness of God and openness to him are possible, after "The Emotion of Sanctity" comes at Phase 22 (AVB 181; CW13 92; AVA 114). This is especially the God of monotheism, which is first and foremost Christianity in Yeats's thinking, but includes the other Abrahamic religions, Judaism and Islam, as well as the more abstract conceptions of Buddhism, philosophical Hinduism and Vedanta, and the philosophical paganism of Plato, who "thinks all things into Unity and is the 'First Christian'" (AVB 262–63). The gods of the Hindu pantheon offer a more *antithetical* expression of the divine in terms of human selfhood—"The Indian submits to a god, but that god is himself—every self" (LMR 21; 5 October [1934])<sup>107</sup>—but their system can also embrace the ascetic yogis and devotees of Shiva of the last *primary* quarter.

Ultimately, however, and despite Yeats's personal sympathies, the *primary* has primacy. If "the greater circle is always *primary* in relation to that which turns more quickly and within" (CW13 121; AVA 149), the greatest circles are inevitably in some respects *primary*. The Sphere may transcend all antinomy as the mutual annihilation of both *Tinctures* and the unimaginable union of God and man (*Ex* 307), but it is One, and "in the *primary* we are one, & all are one before they are many."<sup>108</sup> From the other side, the *primary* has more affinity with the absolute reality and all the cycles of incarnation must reach conclusion in Phase 1, complete *primary Tincture*. Considering how those more evolved souls "of later cycles" might experience the periods of the end of the cycle, as the historical phases move "from the physical to the spiritual objective," Yeats notes that they face the prospect of "complete absorption in God," going so far as to acknowledge that, no longer some *primary* Nobodaddy (*WWB3* 91), in this context "God must be understood as the Sphere, a spirit no longer separate or phasal."<sup>109</sup>

At the end of Book III, "The Soul in Judgment," the Sphere is endowed with a kind of thought, when Yeats writes of how "It becomes even conscious of itself as" being seen as the *Thirteenth Cone*, and its duality as Sphere-Cone is compared to "some great dancer, the perfect flower of modern culture, dancing some primitive dance and conscious of his or her own life and of the dance" (AVB 240). If the figuring of reality or the Absolute as the Sphere rejects all but the barest symbolism, Yeats's images here verge on the mythical, as the simile of the dancer embodies allusions to essential being—the dancer's life—and process—the movements of the dance—which both meet in the dancer's body and the dance itself.<sup>110</sup> The concept of the modern person dancing a primitive dance adds a further dimension, implying a distance and that there are many other possible dances available and ways of seeing the dance, though only one is seen for the moment.<sup>111</sup> Yeats continues in mythic mode: "There is a mediaeval story of a man persecuted by his Guardian Angel because it was jealous of his sweetheart, and such

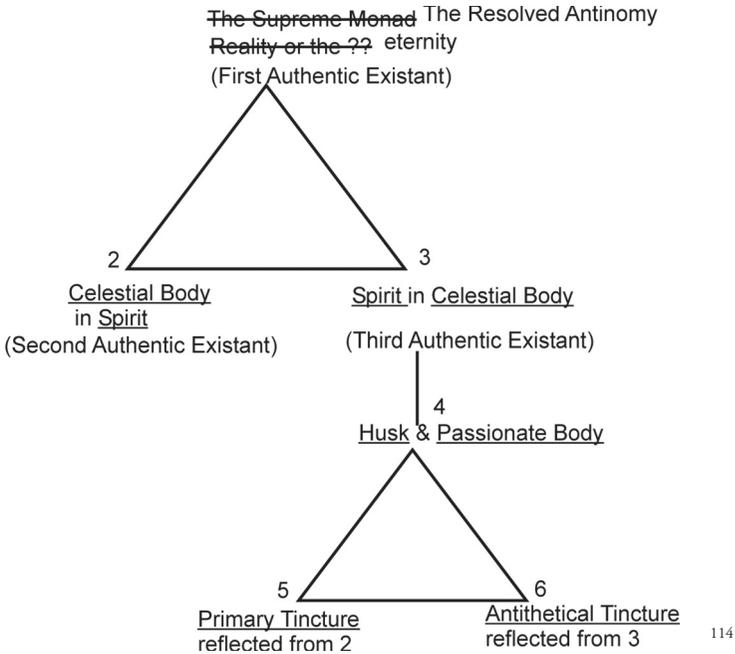
stories seem closer to reality than our abstract theology," though it is unclear whether this applies specifically to the *Daimon*, the subject of much of the preceding material, or the Sphere-*Thirteenth Cone*, the subject of all the surrounding material. The latter seems more logical but also harder to conceive, yet Yeats continues that "All imaginable relations may arise between a man and his God," implying that the Sphere-*Thirteenth Cone* is indeed God and that humanity can relate to it in multifarious ways.

Yeats's conception of levels of divine manifestation is never formalized into anything approaching Neo-Platonic or cabalistic emanations, but each level of deity imperfectly reflects that above and descends further into the antinomies. However, he had used Plotinus and his hypostases as a way of understanding his concepts of God from the first, even if his attributions and structure do some violence to Plotinus's actual ideas. In *A Vision A*, "the Soul of the World, the Intellectual Principle and the One" had been identified with the *Thirteenth*, *Fourteenth*, and *Fifteenth Cycles*, as well as with the *Principles* (CW13 143; AVA 176), and these cycles with the afterlife's *Beatitude*, *Going Forth* and *Foreknowing*, and then "Holy Ghost, Son and Father" in turn (CW13 194; AVA 236). These three cycles are not only stages beyond the human wheels of incarnation but also beings. Although the identification with the Christian Trinity is perhaps as much a reflex of Yeats's Golden Dawn training in seeking out elaborate chains of correspondence as a genuine identity, it does indicate their exalted status and divine equivalence.

In *A Vision B*, the Plotinian correspondences are applied to "the *Four Principles* in the sphere" (AVB 193) and it is clear that he conceived of the *Principles*, "in the sphere" at least, as microcosmic forms of Plotinus's divine hypostases.<sup>112</sup> *Celestial Body* and *Spirit* are identified with the "First Authentic Existant," the One, and the "Second Authentic Existant," the Intellectual Principle, respectively. However, the place of the "Third Authentic Existant or soul of the world (the Holy Ghost in Christianity)" is occupied by "the discarnate *Daimons*, or *Ghostly Selves*," while the other two *Principles* (*Passionate Body* and *Husk*) are only included indirectly as reflections of this condition. In part this is an attempt to square traditional threefold divisions with his own fourfold one, and in part it points to the fact that *Passionate Body* and *Husk* are evanescent *Principles*, which are important for incarnate life but should then be shed during the afterlife (AVB 188), and so have no real place "in the sphere" except as reflections of *Daimonic* hunger (AVB 189).<sup>113</sup> By retaining the identification with "the Holy Ghost of Christianity," Yeats intimates the way in which the microcosm and macrocosm are intimately connected: the Trinity is no enskied or distant deity, but an integral aspect of man's constitution.

The identification of individual *Principles* superseded an earlier attempt to view the *Principles* in Plotinian terms that in many ways clarifies Yeats's thinking more.

If I would arrange *Principles & Faculties* into such a diagram as comes naturally to the students of Plotinus I arrange them thus



Here the One is identified with the unified or resolved antinomy, specifically the second stage identified above.<sup>115</sup> The *Thirteenth Cone* is seen here in its unified form, whereas the second and third hypostases show the dualism of single being and congeries (*Ex* 305). As we have seen already, *Celestial Body in Spirit* expresses the solar, *primary* or unified reality that approaches the *Thirteenth Cone* from within, whereas *Spirit in Celestial Body* expresses the lunar, *antithetical* or multitudinous reality that approaches the *Thirteenth Cone* from without. Both “the Many and the One are equally autonomous”<sup>116</sup> below “The Resolved Antinomy,” though the unified view is inevitably placed first. The stages here therefore mirror the stages of the divine outlined above, with the first three forms condensed into the Supreme Monad, Reality, Resolved Antinomy or eternity—the Sphere as *Thirteenth Cone*—and humanity’s two views of Reality as a unified and as multitude making up the three hypostases.

Yeats later corrected himself, stating that: “The resolved antinomy appears not in a lofty source but in the whirlpool’s motionless centre, or beyond its edge” (*AVB* 195). Just as the Cabalists’ Tree of Life is conventionally and most conveniently shown as a vertically arranged hierarchy, it is also perhaps more truly shown by concentric rings, with the highest point either at the center creating outwards or beyond the edge embracing all. Similarly, the resolved antinomy lies at motionless center, eternity, and at the circumference of spiritual influx.

## VI

Yeats had early absorbed the idea that any attempts to figure the divine in mortal thoughts and language involve inevitable distortion, writing in “The Indian upon God” of how the moorfowl revere “*an undying moorfowl*,” the lotus conceives of God as hanging “*on a*

stalk," while to the roebuck "He is a gentle roebuck," and to the peafowl "He is a monstrous peacock" (VP 76–77; CWI 11–12).<sup>117</sup> Human anthropomorphism is as understandable and as risible as any of these, and Yeats responds most readily to the anthropomorphism of the *antithetical* aspect of the numinous, feeling that he can achieve his intention in "The Hosting of the Sidhe," "O sweet everlasting voices," and those lines about "The lonely, majestic multitude" (Ex 305). In contrast, "Again and again with remorse, a sense of defeat, I have failed when I would write of God, written coldly and conventionally" (Ex 305). It is not surprising therefore that Yeats did not seek to repeat failure when expressing his ideas about the *Thirteenth Cone* and Sphere, and as with most of the ideas of *A Vision* they are usually clothed in metaphor and conventional language. Even here, however, he also confronts the problem of treating ultimate reality in image: "I knew a man once who, seeking for an image of the Absolute, saw one persistent image, a slug, as though it were suggested to him that Being which is beyond human comprehension is mirrored in the least organised forms of life" (AVB 284; cf. CWI3 162; AVA 195).<sup>118</sup> One of the ways around this problem is to figure the Absolute in a state, expressed through images of ecstasy and completion, such as the perfect sexual union of Solomon and Sheba or "Chosen," referred to already, the conflagration of souls mentioned in "Supernatural Songs" or the unified extinction of "There."

Full anthropomorphism may in some ways be preferable to the insidious version that affects all human thought about the divine. True deity lies beyond whatever (mis-) conceptions are imposed by the limitations of consciousness or partiality, and writing of the conception as a sphere and the misconception as a cone at least underlines the main point that we have no idea and no language for the divine. Godhead can only be talked of negatively and approached by the negative way of the mystic, expressed early on by Paul Ruttledge, the Tolstoyan mystic of *Where There is Nothing*, who finds that "Where there is nothing, there is God" (VPI 1140) and more violently by Martin in *The Unicorn from the Stars* (VPI 709). Similarly the mystic saint "Aengus the Lover of God" has "found the nothing that is God" (M2005 125; *Myth* 190; VSR 54).

Ribh, the main voice of "Supernatural Songs," a Christian in some Irish-Coptic tradition of Yeats's fancy (VP 837–38 & 857; CWI 679 & 680), expresses both metaphorical anthropomorphism and negative theology. He denounces Patrick for his "masculine Trinity" that goes against nature, seeing that "Natural and supernatural with the self-same ring are wed" (VP 556; CWI 290), implying that we understand godhead by analogy with creation. He also, however, seeks to use hatred to "turn / From every thought of God mankind has had" (VP 558; CWI 292) stripping away the trivial human notions to "the desolation of reality" (VP 563; CWI 295), for "Thought is a garment and the soul's a bride / That cannot in that trash and tinsel hide" (VP 558; CWI 292). By destroying false thoughts, therefore, "Hatred of God may bring the soul to God" (VP 558; CWI 292), for it is only by hating "all ideas concerning God that we possess" that "absorption in God" is possible, as the communicator had originally said (IY 283; cited NC 355).<sup>119</sup>

"There" (VP 557; CWI 291) expresses succinctly the end of all movement and desire, bringing the barrel-hoops of all the separate gyres into the Sphere, with the apocalyptic fall of the planets "in the Sun" recalling the description of "the soul's journey" in "All Souls' Night,"

How it is whirled about,  
 Wherever the orbit of the moon can reach,  
 Until it plunge into the sun;  
 And there, free and yet fast,  
 Being both Chance and Choice,  
 Forget its broken toys  
 And sink into its own delight at last. (*VP* 472–73; *CW1* 233)

These states are both the end of all cycles, the first in cosmic terms and the second in more personal. Though the sun is treated here as the center of the solar system, it is also symbolically the objective aspect of reality, the *primary*, spiritual unity, opposed to the whirling, subjective, lunar gyres of *antithetical* multiplicity.

Chance and Choice express the fundamental antinomy: “one can think about the world and about man, or anything else until all has vanished but these two things, for they are the first cause of the animate and inanimate world,” as Yeats has Aherne’s record of what Robartes heard from the Arab devotee of Kusta ben Luki [*sic*] in the notes to *Calvary*, and “In God alone, indeed, can they be united, yet each be perfect and without limit or hindrance” (*VPI* 790; *CW2* 697). The union of Chance and Choice is therefore the resolution of the antinomies that can only occur in the Sphere, as noted in the preternatural sympathy of “Solomon and the Witch” (*VP* 387–89; *CW1* 179–80).

The God of Christ in *Calvary* is not however the God of Judas or the dice-throwers, nor has he appeared to the birds, all representatives of the *antithetical* order, and is therefore only a partial, *primary* expression of godhead. Yet, at the same time, Christ is an expression of the *Thirteenth Cone*, the Sphere, and the miraculous irruption of the spiritual dimension into the world. This is what the beating heart of the risen Christ forces the Syrian of *The Resurrection* to recognize as the irrational: “What if there is always something that lies outside knowledge, outside order? What if the moment when knowledge and order seem complete that something appears?” (*VPI* 925; *CW2* 490). The Greek acknowledges it through another reconciliation of opposites, a version of Yeats’s favorite apophthegm: “God and man die each other’s life, live each other’s death” (*VPI* 931; *CW2* 492).

In the play’s notes, Yeats describes the phantom’s beating heart as “the terror of the supernatural” and “the sense of spiritual reality” that comes with “some violent shock” (*VPI* 935; *CW2* 726). This strange combination is also at the heart of *The Herne’s Egg*, where the Great Herne is possibly the closest that Yeats comes to a symbol for the *Thirteenth Cone*. The Great Herne never appears, and the words of his priestess Attracta sound like mad delusion to Congal and his men, yet for her “There is no reality but the Great Herne” (*VPI* 1016; *CW2* 513). In the eyes of Congal, he and his men rape Attracta; in her eyes, the Great Herne came to her and made her his bride. Similarly, if the priestess is doing “his will,” then even her servant Corney can be “his instrument or himself,” acting, as in Blake’s dictum, in existing beings or men:

I lay with the Great Herne, and he,  
 Being all a spirit, but begot  
 His image in the mirror of my spirit,

Being all sufficient to himself  
 Begot himself.... (VP 1039–40; CW2 534)

The Great Herne is a fabulous bird like the Persian simurg, an expression of the soul or godhead like the hamsa of Hinduism, and Attracta's relationship to him is comparable to both Leda's with the swan and Mary's with the dove, both of which represent the irruption of the divine into the world of history.<sup>120</sup>

The "artifice of eternity" of Yeats's "holy city of Byzantium" (VP 408; CW1 197) represents the "harmonization" of the wheels of the *Faculties* and *Principles*, "a harmony of related aims" in a form of Unity of Being that expresses the Sphere.<sup>121</sup> Its union of living and death states in "death-in-life and life-in-death" (VP 497; CW1 252) was not for Yeats the nightmare of Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" but a superhuman marriage of spirit life and earthly life. In general, however, Yeats seeks a more personal form of Unity of Being and recognizes himself as a man "who has thought more of the love of woman than of the love of God," as he has Owen Aherne describe him (CW13 lxii; AVA xxi):

Mr Yeats has intellectual belief but he is entirely without moral faith, without that sense, which should come to a man with terror and joy, of a Divine Presence, and though he may seek, and may have always sought it, I am certain that he will not find it in this life. (CW13 lxiii; AVA xxi–xxii)

The last three words are key: after further incarnations the soul that was Yeats will arrive at Phase 22 and "the 'Emotion of Sanctity,'" becoming "aware of something which the intellect cannot grasp, and this something is a supersensual environment of the soul" (CW13 92; AVA 114; AVB 181). He recognizes that even now "heart might find relief / Did I become a Christian man" (VP 503; CW1 256) but realizes that he also plays "a predestined part," and that, for those who fall on the *antithetical* half of the wheel, trying to find experience of the divine as taught by religion goes against their nature and is largely doomed to failure. He may intellectually grasp the idea of sanctity and respond to a mystic such as Von Hügel, but ultimately they are not kin: "Homer is my example and his unchristened heart" (VP 503; CW1 257), singing the loves, wars and wanderings of man.

Yeats's God of ultimate reality therefore exists as the ineffable Sphere. Although its active aspect, the inscrutable *Thirteenth Cone*, intersects with and impinges upon our world, Yeats himself feels unqualified to comprehend it. If the Sphere is the Eternity of Hermes Trismegistus, the motionless, timeless, spaceless all, which, as the *Thirteenth Cone*, yet appears to be in motion, he rather apprehends eternity in the very human terms of the soul coming "into possession of itself for ever in one single moment" (AVB 139; CW13 61; AVA 73).<sup>122</sup> Though it is the goal of all the cycles, for him it is not yet an end that he looks forward to with any enthusiasm, though he can appreciate the presence of sublimity that intimates it. He recognizes that others may achieve a clearer and purer understanding but that he will only be able to experience the *Thirteenth Cone* subjectively and in drama. His concern is not the great causes at the beginning and end of creation but humanity and "what we were a little before conception, what we shall be a little after burial" (AVB 223).

## Notes

- 1 Yeats's nomenclature varies, as does his use of capitals and italics. Thirteenth Cycle (the main term in *AVA* and without italics) is the most logical, since it denotes the cycle beyond the "twelve cycles of time and space" (*AVB* 210), but possibly limits the term to this context. Since a cycle can be seen as a gyre or cone, the *Thirteenth Cone* (the most common term in *AVB* and usually italicized) follows and broadens the application slightly. The Thirteenth Cycle of *AVA* is a far less developed concept than its counterpart in *AVB* (as discussed later in the text). To this pair Yeats then adds a single reference to a Thirteenth Sphere, conflating "the phaseless sphere" with these cyclical, gyring forms, and in doing so probably clouds rather than clarifies the issue. "Sphere" also appears both with an initial capital and without. I use capitalized forms throughout when referring to Yeats's special terms and follow Yeats's usual practice in italicizing *Thirteenth Cone*, but not Thirteenth Cycle.
- 2 Graham Hough summarizes, not entirely accurately, that "we are at a loss to know whether it is a locality, a historical period, an undifferentiated slice of time, a state of affairs or a supernatural force," *The Mystery Religion of W. B. Yeats* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984), 113; hereafter *MRWBY*.
- 3 In *A Vision A* the term "thirteenth cone" occurs only once (*CW13* 140; *AVA* 172), "Thirteenth Cycle" in six places (*CW13* 138, 143, 182, 189, 191, 194; *AVA* 170, 176, 220, 229, 231, 236; in some cases together with Fourteenth and Fifteenth Cycles and in one place twice) and by allusion to "a spiritual cycle" in one other (*CW13* 195; *AVA* 236). The "sphere" is referred to some eight times, though the usage is not always clear, since there is no capitalization and it is not distinguished from other references (*CW13* 107, 109, 113, 138, 140, 142, 143, 193; *AVA* 133, 135, 139, 170, 172, 176; 235). By comparison the *Thirteenth Cone* is mentioned some nine times in *A Vision B* (*AVB* 193, 199–200, 210–11, 227, 233–34, 235 in two separate sections, 263, 302) and in the phrase "messengers" or "*Spirits of the Thirteenth Cone*" in a further four places (*AVB* 228, 229–30, 237, 239–40), while "the Sphere" (with and without capital letter) occurs in eight places (*AVB* 69, 73, 89, 187, 193, 193–94, 247, 263).
- 4 Ellmann notes that "the embodiment of divinity in so unprepossessing a term as Thirteenth Cycle stood in ironic and urbane contrast to Yeats's claims for the cycle's unlimited powers" (*The Identity of Yeats* [1954; 2nd ed. London: Faber & Faber, 1964], 159; *IY* hereafter), and he also claims that it is the "system's anti-self. All the determinism or quasi-determinism of *A Vision* is abruptly confronted with the Thirteenth Cycle which is able to alter everything, and suddenly free will, liberty and deity pour back into the universe" (*Yeats: The Man and the Masks* [2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979], 286). Though there is much in Ellmann's characterizations, some subsequent critics have taken his summaries as sufficiently authoritative that they repeat Ellmann rather than looking at Yeats.
- 5 Graham Hough demurs: "Ellmann is persuaded that the Thirteenth Sphere or Cycle is Yeats's equivalent for God; but though the language used of it at the end of *A Vision* is exalted I do not think it reaches as far as that; Fate or Fortune perhaps, but not God" (*MRWBY* 117). To Northrop Frye, "it is...impossible that the 'One' could be anything but Man, or something identical or identifiable with man," so that "The Thirteenth Cone...represents the dialectical element in symbolism, where man is directly confronted by the greater form of himself which challenges him to identify himself with it," see "The Rising of the Moon," *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society* (Bloomington, IN, & London: Indiana University Press, 1976), 273. Frye is also clear that "Yeats's instructors were obviously devils. That is, all they knew was the vision of life as hell," (*ibid.*, xii). Harold Bloom finds the *Thirteenth Cone* "a happily Urizenic name for God," but focuses on its "immediate meaning" for consideration of the individual, which is "man's freedom, or all of freedom that Yeats desires, anyway," *Yeats* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 274.
- 6 Virginia Moore notes that "In a 1930 diary Yeats had written: 'I substitute for God the Thirteenth Cone.' Can this God possibly be called Christian?" and answers "Yes" because Yeats identifies it with Plotinian hypostases in *A Vision A*; see *The Unicorn: William Butler Yeats' Search for Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 367.
- 7 Morton Irving Seiden casts the net wide, finding that "Yeats' Thirteenth Sphere, if less attractive or personal than either Jehovah or Christ, has not a few traits in common with each," while noting it may appear closer "to Blake's God, to Madame Blavatsky's God, to the Hindu's One or Nirvana, and to the Kabbalist's Ain Soph Aur," though only superficially; see *William Butler Yeats: The Poet as Mythmaker 1865–1939* (Ann Arbor: Michigan State University Press, 1962), 121.
- 8 Ron Heisler's essay "Yeats and the Thirteenth Æon" (*YAL3* [1999] 241–252), which incidentally provides a useful survey of criticism, ultimately concentrates on a single Gnostic parallel and possible source, without

really illuminating Yeats's construct or meaning.

- 9 James Olney examines Yeats in terms of ancient Greek philosophy, and at one point sketches a genealogy of the antinomies similar to one I outline in Section V, see *The Rhizome and the Flower: The Perennial Philosophy—Yeats and Jung* (Berkeley & L.A.: University of California Press, 1980), 224. However, he complicates and ultimately confuses his consideration by bringing in too many external parallels, without really presenting the implications as regards Yeats. Drawing parallels between Yeats and other systems can certainly be illuminating, but must be done with the greatest of care so as not to distort Yeats's ideas to those of his forebears, not to distract too far from Yeats's ideas themselves, and not to minimize their often marked change over time. Olney perceptively picks up on *Per Amica Silentia Lunae's* treatment of the "passionate dead" who "live again those passionate moments, not knowing that they are dead" (ibid., 223) equating these with classical "*daimones*," but muddying the differences between *Per Amica* and *A Vision*, and seeming to ignore the *Daimon's* evolution in Yeats's thought. Elsewhere he seems to conflate disparate elements, writing of "Yeats's Thirteenth Cone or Sphere, the realm of the *daimones* and the great, exemplary dead" in A. D. Moody (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5.
- 10 Terence Brown judges that the "concept seems incorporated into the system as a means of subverting at last its overall determinism, rather than as the desirable goal of all human striving," *The Life of W. B. Yeats: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 309, while Barbara L. Croft thinks that it is "perhaps too little and too late to give the system a genuine balance of freedom and determined necessity," see "*Stylistic Arrangements*": *A Study of William Butler Yeats's 'A Vision'* (Lewisburg, PA: Associated University Presses, 1987), 160. Croft's approach is largely Ellmann's, and for her the *Thirteenth Cone* "both defeats and extends the system, and in its lack of resolution, injects the artistic and human tension into the work. Yeats specifically identifies this cycle as man's "freedom," but he also insists that it is "secret" (AVB 302), so the Thirteenth Cycle...remains essentially a mystery," ibid., 38.
- 11 Helen Vendler focuses on the concept of the "spiritual objective" (AVB 210), though with an idiosyncratic aesthetic emphasis, considering it "the locus of all Masks, if we like, 'the antithesis to our thesis'" that "can as well be described as the ideal, in the best sense a figment of our imagination," but one lying "somewhere in the mental realm...a goal, not a product," *Yeats's "Vision" and the Later Plays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 68. Jefferson Holdridge similarly sees "the Thirteenth Cone, God-like mystical locus of the 'Mass' [sic]," in *Those Mingled Seas: The Poetry of W. B. Yeats, the Beautiful and the Sublime* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2000), 109, though it is not clear if this is a misprint for Vendler's Masks or an unexplained reference to Michael Robartes's "general mass, call it Nature, God, the Matrix, the Unconscious, what you will" (YO 221).
- 12 For Hazard Adams, antithesis is key: "There is an antinomy in the Thirteenth Cone's relation to life or in our capacity to think of it," *The Book of Yeats's Vision* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 116, but he does little to clarify any details of this antinomy and its aspects. Adams's treatment is diffuse, partly because he follows the structure of Yeats's presentation in AVB. He avoids mention of the divine and worries at the concept of the *Thirteenth Cone* and Sphere rather than really addressing it (see 117–20). He continues (from the comment cited) rather vaguely, that: "the Thirteenth Cone seems to have powers of intervention in and command over both life and death. It is either both primary and antithetical simultaneously or entirely transcendent of this opposition. There is certainly a give and take not just between the two worlds of life and death, one primary and the other antithetical, but also between the Thirteenth Cone and both of these worlds, seen as one," (ibid., 116).
- 13 Colin McDowell's "'The Completed Symbol': *Daimonic* Existence and the Great Wheel in *A Vision* (1937)" (YA6 [1988] 193–208) engages with the concept at an active and imaginative level and his Yeatsian "thought experiment" is entirely appropriate to "a symbol" that Yeats had turned over in his "mind, exploring all its details, defining and again defining its elements," much as he had when he "meditated under the direction of the Cabalists" (AVB 301), though it is probably not the basis of Yeats's own thinking.
- 14 I would like to thank Gráinne Yeats for giving permission through A. P. Watt Ltd. to quote from unpublished manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland.
- 15 I am entirely in agreement with Colin McDowell that whatever other materials may be available or used, "*A Vision B* must still be judged on profundity and internal consistency," "Yeats's 'Vision' Papers: First Impressions," YAI1 (1995) 157.
- 16 Part of this diary was published as *Pages from a Diary Written in 1930* (Dundrum: Cuala Press, 1944) included in *Explorations* 287–340, but much remained unpublished and the original diary is in the National

- Library of Ireland (MS 30,354).
- 17 Always lower case, it is a late usage and this is the phrase's first appearance in print, though Yeats had probably come across it while reading for the revision of *A Vision* (largely finished in 1931; see *AVB* 187 & 193) and certainly used it earlier, see *Pages from a Diary Written in 1930*, Ex 295, 307, 310. See also "Prometheus Unbound" (*CW5* 118; *E&I* 419) and "Introduction to *Aphorisms of Yoga*" (*CW5* 179), *On the Boiler* (*CW5* 432 n63; Ex 430n).
  - 18 *St Paul and Protestantism* (1870), in *The Works of Matthew Arnold*, 15 vols., (London: Macmillan, 1904), 9:9. Arnold's periphrasis for God is even vaguer than Yeats's: "That stream of tendency by which all things strive to fulfill the law of their being," which science might also "call God."
  - 19 Franz Hartmann, *An Adventure Among the Rosicrucians* (Boston: Occult Publishing Co., 1887), 146.
  - 20 Commenting on the early poetry, Ellmann notes that "God is referred to as the 'Eternal Darkness,' 'the Supreme Enchanter'...the 'Ineffable Name,' 'the Light of Lights,' the 'Master of the still stars and the flaming door'" (*IY* 53), to which could be added a litany of other titles from later writings.
  - 21 This thread is present in Theosophy, Boehmist theosophy, Cabala, Vedanta, as well as the works of philosophers and mystics that Yeats found congenial, such as the Neo-Platonists, including Plotinus on the One. Negative or "apophatic" theology has sometimes been regarded with distrust in orthodox Christianity, but is found, for example, in the writings of pseudo-Dionysius Areopagus, John Scotus Eriugena, Nicholas of Cusa and St John of the Cross. Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides) also famously expounds a Jewish form of negative theology in *The Guide for the Perplexed*.
  - 22 Yeats had used the formulation in "In the Serpent's Mouth" (1906), see *CW4* 443 headnote and n1. The formulation varies between "circle" and "sphere," although its oldest form appears to be as a sphere in a Hermetic text: "*Deus est sphaera infinita, cuius centrum ubique, circumferentia nusquam*," "God is an infinite sphere, whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere" (*Liber XXIV philosophorum*; see Françoise Hudry ed., *Le livre des XXIV philosophes*, [Grenoble: Millon, 1989] in Latin and French). It is unlikely that Yeats knew this source but, given the formulation's many occurrences, it is very hard to know where he might first have come across it: see, for instance, Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* 2 vols. (London: Theosophical Publishing Co., 1888), 1:65. D. Mahnke's survey of the figure, *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt, Beiträge zur Genealogie der mathematischen Mystik* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1937), locates the chief source in Plotinus (215ff.) with roots in pre-Socratic thought.
  - 23 Occasionally the two geometrical tropes are described through secondary images, as in the series of comparisons at the end of Book III, "The Soul in Judgment," examined below 176–78.
  - 24 Yeats apparently only discovered Nicholas of Cusa (also Nicholas Cusanus; ca.1400–1464) in 1931, writing to Mario Rossi in October 1931 to thank him for his "long and valuable quotations from Nicolas of Cusa" and referring to W. H. Johnston's translation of Ludwig Fischer's *Die natürliche Ordnung unseres Denkens* (L 783–84); see *The Structure of Thought: A Survey of Natural Philosophy* (German 1927; London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), especially 202–6.
  - 25 This passage appears in draft in almost identical form without the reference to Cusanus (NLI 30,840 and 30,841), implying that he inserted it later. The typescript entitled "Genealogical Tree of Revolution" (NLI 30,280; see Jeffares, *W. B. Yeats: Man and Poet* [1949; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1996], Appendix, 325) also posits Cusanus as the originator of the antinomies.
  - 26 Rosemary Puglia Ritvo writes of a phasal sphere, which she attributes to the *Principles* ("A Vision B: The Plotinian Metaphysical Basis," *Review of English Studies* 26, no. 101 [1975]: 34–46 at 37 n2), but the appeal to Cusa indicates that the duality implies the gyres more broadly.
  - 27 See NLI 30,757, quoted more fully below.
  - 28 Yeats's full meaning here is hard to fathom and not immediately relevant to the point being made. The concept of souls from a Thirteenth Cycle initiating the new dispensation is bound up with ideas that were rejected by the time of *AVB*, or at least omitted, along with most of this section entitled "The Three Fountains and the Cycles of Embodiment" (*CW13* 137–38; *AVA* 169–70).  
As with the hour hand of the clock passing twelve, the thirteenth in this series is the start of a new era. However, it is not a whole new circle, as in *A Vision* A Yeats appears to have envisaged only three cycles beyond the twelfth, "The 13th, 14th and 15th cycles," all of which "are described as Spheres" and said to correspond with Plotinus's hypostases (*AVA* 176) and the persons of the Christian Trinity (*AVA* 236). These later cycles, as well as the whole construct outlined here, were all rejected in *AVB* and in certain respects seem to have been subsumed into the *Principles* in *AVB*, see Neil Mann, "A Vision: Ideas of God and Man," *YA8* (1990) 157–175, at 162–66.
  - 29 "Gaspung on the Strand": Richard Ellmann's *W. B. Yeats Notebook*, ed. W. Gould, *YA16* (2005) 279–

- 361; notes on interview with George Yeats, 17 January 1947, 318. Cf. *IY* 159, where Ellmann verges on Christianizing the *Thirteenth Cone*. GY's comment does not indicate that the *Thirteenth Cone* is Christ in any more substantial way, or that its "deliverance" has anything to do with Christian salvation.
- 30 The twelve disciples themselves share the symbolic number with the months of the year, the signs of the zodiac or the tribes of Israel, and the thirteenth is that which subsumes them all, the year itself, the sphere of the heavens or the patriarch Jacob, named Israel, father of the tribes. Since the twelve cycles are linked to the months of the Great Year of the Ancients, and the twelve months of the actual year derive from the twelve complete lunations in a solar year, the twelvefold symbolism is an appropriately soli-lunar artifact.
- 31 "The Rising of the Moon," *Spiritus Mundi*, 271.
- 32 The term "spiritual objective" is perhaps deliberately ambiguous, containing the meaning of "objective" as "goal," but its main significance stands in contrast to the "humane subjective."
- 33 The footnote indicates that Yeats is aware that being too precise about the opposition causes problems. Following the numbering of the months the opposition becomes less striking midway, as the sixth month of the humane cone is the seventh of the spiritual objective, the humane seventh is the spiritual sixth, and so on. This is not therefore an "antithesis of the seasons" since the crossing points 12–1 and 1–12, and 6–7, 7–6 are logically the same seasons, though if Irish lambs are normally born in February and Faery lambs in November, this shows the 11–2 correspondence Yeats indicates. The fact that the sum of the two complementary months is always 13 may be a further rationale for the spiritual cone's name, although it is not its origin. The automatic script shows *Daimons* representing paired cycles summing 13 to be responsible for the Masters or avatars: see *YVP1* 459, 467; *YVP3* 65, 262, 336–37.
- 34 NLI 30,757, unnumbered loose pages, drafts for *AVB*, "The Completed Symbol"; cf. *AVB* 209–10. A slightly more condensed version opens the section numbered 17 in the typescripts NLI 36,272/12, and 36,272/22 (p. 34), substantially the same until: "the reader must assume that there is always another wheel, that of the *thirteenth cone*, its antithesis, which acts upon it as man upon woman."
- 35 «ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοί ἀθάνατοι. ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθεωῶτες», Herakleitos 22 B 62, in Hermann Diels, ed. Walther Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 3 vols. (1903; 11<sup>th</sup> ed., Zürich & Berlin: Wiedmannsche Verlag, 1964), 1:164. John Burnet translates this as, "Mortals are immortals and immortals are mortals, the one living the other's death and dying the other's life," in *Early Greek Philosophy* (London & Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1892 [WBGYL 316; YL 308]), 138.
- 36 This sexual metaphor is also seen in the *Daimon's* relationship to the human (see *CW13* 24ff.; *AVA* 26ff.)—although Yeats underplayed this aspect of the system in *AVB*—and indicates the *Daimonic* dimension of the *Thirteenth Cone* (see below; and see Haswell, "The Sexual Dynamic of W. B. Yeats's *A Vision*" *YACTS12* [1996] 102–18). When Yeats writes "All these symbols can be thought of as the symbols of the relations of men and women and of the birth of children" (*AVB* 211) in the following section, it is unclear whether "these" refers to the symbols related to the *Thirteenth Cone* and eternity, or to those outlined throughout the preceding fourteen sections of "The Completed Symbol." The subsequent material certainly deals with the Great Year and with ideas of influx and impregnation (see Gibson "Timeless and Spaceless," at 118–19). However, whether there are any precise implications in the *Thirteenth Cone's* acting as man upon humanity's woman is unclear.
- 37 Shankara (788 CE–820 CE), the founder of *advaita* or non-dualism, reused the parable frequently, but it appears in *The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom*, translated by Charles Johnston (1925; Covina, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1946) vs. 110, 387 and 569 (pp. 22, 63, 88). See also the translation by Mohini M. Charterji [*sic*] in *The Theosophist*, 1885–87, whose verse numbering differs. *Adhyasa*, usually translated as error, etymologically indicates casting over or superimposing: the rope is seen but attributes are superimposed so that it is falsely interpreted, giving it an illusory appearance in the mind. Cf. also three views of reality in *TSMC* 67–69.
- 38 This image was also, and probably earlier, applied to the *Daimon* in a rejected poem; see Neil Mann, "Images: Unpublished Tableaux of Opposition," *YA9* (1992) 313–20.
- 39 Joseph Hone, *W. B. Yeats, 1865–1939* (London: Macmillan, 1942), 327; cit. *NC* 249.
- 40 "Asclepius III," 31, tr. Walter Scott, *Hermetica: The ancient Greek and Latin writings which contain religious or philosophic teachings ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924–36 [WBGYL 889; YL 881]) 1: 351–53. The *Asclepius* also makes a distinction between cyclical time, which "is infinite, and is thought to be eternal," and true eternity, which is fixed: "God and eternity then are the first principles of all things which exist," whereas the Kosmos, or Universe, partakes of "a secondary sort of eternity" of movement: *Hermetica*, 1:353. The concept of Time as the "moving likeness of Eternity"

goes back to Plato's *Timaeus* (37c–38c).

- 41 *Hermetica*, 1:353. The full text of the *Asclepius* exists only in a Latin translation, unlike the majority of the Corpus, which is in Greek, and the Latin word “*aeternitas*” translates the Hermetic term “*aiōn*” or “*aeon*.”
- 42 See Yeats's own essay “*Prometheus Unbound*”: “What does Shelley mean by Demogorgon?” and “Demogorgon made his plot incoherent, its interpretation impossible” (*CW5* 118 & 119; *E&I* 419 & 420).
- 43 The essay “*Prometheus Unbound*” was written in 1932 after he had finished drafting most of *A Vision B* (though before “The End of the Cycle,” dated “1934–1936” [*AVB* 302]) and there he notes: “It lives in the centre of the earth, the sphere of Parmenides perhaps” (*CW5* 118; *E&I* 419).
- 44 See NLI 36,272/18/1(a), (c1) and (c2) (“*Dramatis Personae*”), and the later version 36,272/13 (“*Principal Symbols*”). “*Dramatis Personae*” in turn follows important elements from NLI 13,579 (Rapallo Notebook B).
- 45 This is the opposite from what the MS diagram actually shows, and the subsequent development of the discussion shows that the text is correct and the sketch misplaces the two Selves.
- 46 NLI 36,272/18/1/a, p. 3.
- 47 These include the way in which Yeats treats the spheres of *Daimon*, God and knowledge as so readily interchangeable (recalling the way Aries and Taurus become Mars and Venus and then become Buddha or Christ [*AVB* 207–8], see McDowell, “Heraldic Supporters’: Minor Symbolism and the Integrity of *A Vision*,” *YA10* [1993] 207–217). Another is that at this stage Yeats planned to introduce the *Principles* first, *Husk* and *Passionate Body* represented in the cone of Action and Particular Self, *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* represented in the cone of Knowledge and Universal Self.
- 48 NLI 36,272/18/1/a, p. 9.
- 49 Barbara L. Croft notes that: “in order to get at this nebulous definition of the Record, one must, in one short paragraph, wade through three equally precise terms (*Daimon*, *Ghostly Self*, *Passionate Body*), three more general terms of the system (*sphere*, *antinomies*, *Thirteenth Cone*), four major philosophical considerations (reality, the one and the many, eternal instant, time), and three quotations,” “*Stylistic Arrangements*,” 91.
- 50 The *Record* hardly figures in *A Vision B* (its only other mention is *AVB* 229), unlike *A Vision A* (*CW13* 183; 184; 185; 188; 189; 191; 201–02; 205–06; cf. *AVA* 221; 222; 224; 227; 229; 231; 245; 250–51), where it is never defined, probably indicating that Yeats expected this volume's more esoterically minded readership to recognize it as the Theosophists' “akashic record” or “records”: “The Akashic Records are the original photographs, so to speak, of everything that has happened since the world began, reflections of which are projected upon the astral light, where they can be seen by clairvoyants and psychometrists,” “The Past, Present, and Future of Theosophy” III, in *Borderland: A Quarterly Review and Index*, ed. W. T. Stead, (London: 1897) 4:403. Paul and Harper note that: “Discovered as a term late in the psychical research for *AVA*, ‘Record’ virtually replaces ‘Anima Mundi,’ the focal point of the first recorded questions in the A[utomatic] S[cript]” (*CW13* 336 n92; and see also *CVA* notes 81–82). The two terms may not always mean exactly the same (see *CW13* 201–2; *AVA* 245) but both are related to the “memory of nature” (cf. C. W. Leadbeater, “Devachan,” *Lucifer* 17 [February 1896]: 469).
- In drafts Yeats makes a distinction from any literal memory, “for what comes into memory does so voluntarily or by association and in a context not its own and is always abstract” and the “image” called up “however like the old is a new creation. The *Record* on the other hand contains the actual event in its own context” (NLI 36,272/18/1/a, p. 14).
- 51 See also the opening of “The Soul in Judgment” where Yeats sets “metropolitan poet” against “singing girl”: Paul Valéry's rejoicing that “human life must pass” against a memory of Iseult Gonne dancing on the beach in Normandy, saying “O Lord, let something remain” (*AVB* 220).
- 52 NLI 30,580, penultimate page.
- 53 Benjamin Jowett notes that in Plato's *Timaeus*, “Time is conceived...to be only the shadow or image of eternity which ever is and never has been or will be, but is described in a figure only as past or future” *The Dialogues* (5 vols. [3rd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892; cf. *WBGYL* 1598; *YL* 1586]) 3: 396.
- 54 *Spiritus Mundi* and *Anima Mundi* are closely linked but not identical; Ann Saddlemyer recalls George Yeats quizzing her “on the distinction between ‘*Spiritus Mundi*’ and ‘*Anima Mundi*’; my stumbling explanation must have been satisfactory, for she offered me the ‘magic’ books” (*BG* 628). Although in esoteric usage “spirit” is normally regarded as higher in the hierarchy than “soul” (see Mann, “Everywhere that antinomy,” 19 n17 in this volume), Yeats was probably thinking of the Neo-Platonic scheme outlined by Ficino or Agrippa, where *nous* or *intellectus* is the higher principle. In Marsilio Ficino's *De vita coelitus comparanda*

(*De triplici vita*, 1489), elaborated from Plotinus, *anima* or soul (both individual and universal) is seen as intermediate between intellect and body, and *spiritus*, spirit or breath, is seen as the linking force between soul and body (see ch. 26). Further, “just as our soul is brought to bear on our members through the spirit, so the force of the World-soul is spread under the World-soul through all things through the quintessence, which is active everywhere, as the spirit inside the World’s Body...”; in ch. 1 of Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark, *Three Books on Life: A Critical Edition and Translation with Introduction and Notes* (Binghamton, NY: 1989; Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies in conjunction with the Renaissance Society of America, 1998), 247. Henry Cornelius Agrippa follows this in *De occulta philosophia libri tres* (1509–10, published 1531–33), see “Of the Spirit of the World, what it is, and how by way of *medium* it unites occult Vertues to their subjects,” (bk 1, ch. 14), trans. J. F., *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, (Moule: London, 1651), 32.

Yeats had originally titled the second section of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* “*Spiritus Mundi*” and changed it to “*Anima Mundi*” following Henry More’s usage, but he distinguishes between the soul and its vehicle: “The vehicle of the human soul is what used to be called the animal spirits” which are in turn but “a condensation of the vehicle of *Anima Mundi*,” presumably its *spiritus* (CW5 20–21; *Myth* 350). However, the vehicle may be the more active form, just as “Los... is the Vehicular Form of strong Urthona” (*Jerusalem*, plate 53; *WWB3* [311]).

- 55 In the Card File C14: “Purple = for the living *Anima Mundi* & for Spirits 13 Cycle which is their *anima mundi*. One *anima mundi* seems to include *all that not fate*” (*YVP3* 254).
- 56 *Jerusalem*, Plate 16, ll. 61–62 (*WWB3* [274]). The phrase “thinking the thought and doing the deed” is also juxtaposed with this quotation from Blake in “Magic” VI (*CW4* 37; *E&I* 46–47) and attributed to “I think an Indian writer” (*NLI* 36,272/11a, p. 30).
- 57 *Magic White and Black or The Science of Finite and Infinite Life containing Practical Hints for Students of Occultism* (London: George Redway, 1886), 150–51.
- 58 *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Bouton; London: Quaritch, 1877), 1:178.
- 59 Letter to Iseult Gonne: “Our last teaching has been on the relation between the passionate body (astral body) and the celestial body after death” (9 February 1918, *NLI* 30,563, cited *BG* 151).
- 60 A. E. Waite had informed him in 1914 that “So far as my studies can tell you, the theory of the Astral Light as a receptacle of form, and having ‘pictures’ therein, was first originated by Éliphas Lévi, after the year 1860” (*LTWBYI* 280). Yeats uses this information and traces earlier versions of the idea in Agrippa and More in a note to *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* (CW5 270–72). See also the diary of 1930, *Ex* 329–332.
- 61 Visible light is identified with *Husk* and physical light is the light of the body, even astral light, definitely not the light of physicists. See Gibson, “Timeless and Spaceless,” 107–115, in this volume.
- 62 There may be possibilities of skipping an incarnation (*YVP2* 26–28 and *YVP4* 107 give different groups of phases that cannot be missed) and there are certainly instances when “the being may return up to four times” to the same phase “before it can pass on” (*AVB* 86).
- 63 In the following draft he failed to hit on the exact number but found the right area on his third attempt: “In a typical man, unfallen man if you will the incarnations in a single cycle were exactly twenty eight, & one symbolical month of the moon & as the sun moves during that time through one sign & the whole of the present phase of human life is considered to make up a single year typical man would be reborn ~~1000~~ ~~1536~~ 326 times” (*YVP4* 127).
- 64 Rather surprisingly, at this point in the automatic script the next questions go off on a completely different and minor detail, apparently indicating that Yeats felt satisfied with the extent of the answer received. The idea is incorporated more recognizably in *AVA*, though Yeats seems to have been unsure whether there were actually one or three stages of initiation, which would be possible once the soul had reached ripeness: “Were the *Spirit* strong enough, or were its human cycles finished, it would remain, as in the *Beatitude*, permanently united to its *Ghostly Self*, or would, after two more states, be reborn into a spiritual cycle where the movement of the gyre is opposite to that in our cycles, and incomprehensible to us” (*CW13* 195; *AVA* 236). The first alternative hints at a possible straight line out of the wheel, the *Spirit* having the strength not to move towards human rebirth. The second alternative, coming at the natural completion of the twelve cycles, sees the soul united to its “permanent self” (*CW13* 183; *AVA* 221; see n68 for consideration of the *Ghostly Self*). And the third alternative (which could also be simply further description of the second) sees the soul reborn into a spiritual cycle—the two more states seem to allude to the triad of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Cycles, referred to elsewhere in *AVA* (*CW13* 143; *AVA* 176), since

“the *Beatitude* and the two states that follow [termed the *Going Forth* and the *Foreknowing*, equivalent to *AVB's Purification* and *Foreknowledge*] correspond to the 13th, 14th and 15th Cycles which correspond in their turn to Holy Ghost, Son and Father” (CW13 194; AVA 236); see n28. The situation in *AVB* removes all sense of the *Thirteenth Cycle/Cone* as a stage, viewing it more as a state and, as the distorted view of the Sphere, there are no subsequent cycles to consider.

- 65 Since *Daimon* and human are of opposite sexes, in *AVA* Yeats posits the human as male and the *Daimon* as female, whereas in *AVB* he adopts a sexless “it” for the *Daimon* and implies that his readers are both men and women. Paradoxically, the less sexist language removes an important element of the symbiosis between human and *Daimon*.
- 66 The draft of Book I, “Principal Symbols,” develops this further: the *Daimon* “is a unique unity but not self-sufficient for I judge from a saying of my teachers that it is ‘less powerful than man because it knows only one, and man many’ that it is the unity of man’s multitude” (NLI 36,272/13, p. 1).
- 67 “Notes upon the Life after Death,” NLI 36,272/12, corrected TS, p. 29; cf. NLI 36,272/22, p. 29.
- 68 Not the least of these questions is the distinction between *Ghostly Self* and *Daimon*, and there is no simple answer. In the automatic script of 23 March 1919, Thomas answered Yeats’s question “Is daimon the ghostly self?” “Yes,” and told him that his *Daimon* was part of him, beyond the “13th cycle” (YVP2 210–11). A script from 15 April 1919 implies that the *Ghostly Self* corresponds to the *Daimon's Principle of Spirit*: “Daimon consists of c[elestial] b[ody] & p[assionat]e b[ody] only not of spirit” and “As Daimon has no spirit in what lies his power of choice?”—“The ghostly self or soul has complete free will” (YVP2 251–52), summarized as “Daimon is CB and PB alone & in these is no intellect (Ghostly Self has intellect)” (YVP3 291). Five months later, Yeats was told “You must get to understand *Fixed idea & Ghostly Self*” (YVP2 423; 13 September 1919) and, whether or not he did, he was again asking “what was distinction between Daimon & Ghostly Self” in August 1920, to be told that the *Daimon* was born with the new soul at the beginning of all cycles (Phase 2 of the first cycle) “but not Ghostly Self” (YVP3 39), presumably already existent. A few days earlier, they had been told that “The Daimon cannot exist apart from the 4 Faculties, whereas the Ghostly self is in a sphere” (YVP3 34), implying that the *Daimon* is an incarnate counterpart of the *Ghostly Self*.

In *AVA*, therefore, Yeats distinguishes the *Ghostly Self* from the *Daimon*: “the *Ghostly Self*, by which the creators of this system mean the permanent self, that which in the individual may correspond to the fixed circle of the figure, neither Man nor *Daimon*, before the whirling of the Solar and Lunar cones. It is the source of that which is unique in every man, understanding by unique that which is one and so cannot be analysed into anything else” (CW13 183; AVA 221). During the *Beatitude* comes “the momentary union of the *Spirit* and the *Celestial Body* with the *Ghostly Self*” (CW13 194; AVA 235), at which stage the *Spirit* passes all memories into the *Ghostly Self* (CW13 195; AVA 236; cf. YVP3 39). The *Spirit* will be “permanently united to its *Ghostly Self*” (CW13 195; AVA 236) once the cycles of incarnation are finished, while in contrast human and *Daimon* “are united for twelve cycles, and are then set free from one another” (CW13 182; AVA 221).

Yeats’s thinking developed during revision, and he generally came to see the *Ghostly Self* in terms of the “discarnate *Daimon*.” An early typescript shows an adaptation of *AVA's* three supernatural cycles (see n28 and n64): “The 13th cone or sphere is divided into three concentric spheres of which the innermost is, I conclude, the One, the second that which sees the One – the Platinus’ intellectual principle, and the third that of the multitudinous archetypal being, Platinus’ Soul.... Because they inhabit this third sphere, that in the ‘daimon’ which does not incarnate and remains always apart from the four faculties, is sometimes called the *Ghostly Self* to distinguish it from that in the *Daimon* which is merged in the faculties. This *Ghostly Self* appears to us to be in perpetual conflict or union... with man, whether individual man or mankind symbolised by the entire cone of 12 cycles... Yet it is only so in seeming, for it is not phasal or moveable in any way...” (NLI 36,272/24, pp. 8–9). Here the key is the phrase “that in the *Daimon*,” distinguishing two aspects of the same entity, one of which has much in common with the *Thirteenth Cone* itself. As his understanding of the *Principles* developed, Yeats related *Daimon* and *Ghostly Self* more often to the *Principles* (cf. *AVB* 193–94). A series of drafts for *AVB* 194 shows Yeats moving from “*Spirit* in *Celestial Body* is sometimes called the *Ghostly Self*,” then substituting the first term with “*Spirit* in the Sphere,” before settling on “The Discarnate *Daimon* is sometimes called the *Ghostly Self* because being individual and particular it belongs to the Third Authentic Existant, the third person of the Christian Trinity” (NLI 36,272/16). The final version is less clear: “I identify... the discarnate *Daimons*, or *Ghostly Selves*, with [Plotinus’s] Third Authentic Existant” (*AVB* 194). It is unclear if he regarded these changes as corrections or shifts of emphasis between equivalents, though they seem more the latter.

In the drafts of *AVB* 194, Yeats writes of “a fourth condition which is the Third Authentic Existant reflected into sensation & discursive reason, & this condition I compare to the ghostly self reflected into *Husk & Passionate body* or the *daimon*” (NLI 36,272/16), and elsewhere that the “ghostly selves are the *Passionate Body* as a part of the sphere,” existing as the soul’s “goal, concrete, personal unique” and the archetype from which “the ‘new’ *Passionate Body* must be formed” before each new life (NLI 30,757).

The Diary of 1930 implicitly compares and contrasts incarnate *Daimon* and discarnate: “Incarnate Daimon or true daimon presents those states & persons necessary to the man. Ghostly Self those spiritual states necessary to the man” (NLI 30,354 p. 15) and “A Packet for Ezra Pound” comments that “reality itself is found by the Daimon in...the Ghostly Self” (*AVB* 22).

The same draft of *AVB* 194 contains the comment that “*Daimon & ghostly self* are however one & only seem to be different” (NLI 36,272/16) which is perhaps the key or the cop-out: they are reflections of each other. In the end, Yeats was struggling with terms and formulations that were not entirely his own and try as he might to pin them down to a conception that he understood, the instructors did not give enough information or confirmation for him to feel fully confident about these essential concepts.

- 69 This pairing is tautologous if the *Daimon* is called the *Ghostly Self* “when it inhabits the sphere” (*AVB* 193), but if the *Daimon* is always in the Sphere then there is no real reason for a distinction. However, the distinction underlines Yeats’s continued uncertainty about the *Ghostly Self*.
- 70 “*Teaching Spirits* are *Spirits* of the *Thirteenth Cone*, or their representatives who may be chosen from any state” (*AVB* 228), thus some *Teaching Spirits* are not within the Sphere/*Thirteenth Cone*.
- 71 This distinction had emerged in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, where Yeats had noted, “There are two realities, the terrestrial and the condition of fire. All power is from the terrestrial condition, for there all opposites meet and there only is the extreme of choice possible, full freedom. And there the heterogeneous is, and evil, for evil is the strain one upon another of opposites, but in the condition of fire is all music and all rest” (*CW* 5 25; *Myth* 356–57). The *Daimon* relies upon the human to bring disparate and heterogeneous material, since “it does not perceive, as does the human mind of man, object following object in a narrow stream, but all at once[,] &...it does not perceive objects as separated in time & space, but arranged alone as it were in the order of their kinship with itself, those most akin the nearest,” so that it finds access to difference through its human counterpart (NLI 30,359, leather notebook ca.1927).
- 72 As Harold Bloom comments: “It is not without considerable revulsion, or at least skepticism, that most readers (I trust, perhaps naively) could entertain such a doctrine, for Yeats is not persuasively redefining cruelty and ignorance” (*Yeats*, 178). In *AVA* “it is said that while still living we receive joy from those we have served—choosing tragedy they abandon to us this cast-off joy?—whereas we receive from those we have wronged, ecstasy, described as the only perfected love and as emotion born when we love that which we hate knowing that it is fated” (*CW* 13 193–94; *AVA* 235).
- 73 NLI 36,272/22, p. 11; probably drafts for “Michael Robartes Foretells” (*YO* 219–24) or similar teachings.
- 74 In considering the nature of the Frustrators and Teaching Spirits in the *Thirteenth Cone*, Yeats raises another definition of evil: “both sort are from God for in 13th Cone He divides into two. Human souls on reaching 13th Cone are first absolute good & then absolute evil. I asked if I might interpret absolute Evil to be Absolute Power & he said ‘yes’—The Frustrators were once human. All were once human” (*YVP* 3 102).
- 75 In some ways the closest parallel would be the conventional conception of Heaven, where in Catholic theology saints and angels mediate contact with God and intercede; only “the good, unlearned books say that He who keeps the distant stars within his fold comes without intermediary” (*CW* 5 11; *Myth* 335).
- 76 Blake’s original actually reads “and” for the first “or”: “God only Acts & Is, in existing beings or Men,” *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), Plate 16 (*WWB* 3 [126]).
- 77 Dated October 1914, this essay represents ideas prior to *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, let alone *A Vision*. This introductory section may have been dropped because Lady Gregory disagreed with Yeats’s opinion concerning the Sidhe—“for the most part they are the dead” (*CW* 5 289)—as her copy of the typescript underlines this comment and has “No” in the margin (Berg Collection, New York Public Library).
- 78 The draft is a typescript entitled “Historical Cone | The Equinoctial Points” (NLI 36,266/7, p. 23), which identifies the quotation as “said” by Villiers de l’Isle Adam. I have not been able to find a direct source, but Villiers uses a quotation from Nicholas Malebranche as an epigraph in *L’Eve future* (Paris: Brunhoff, 1886): “*Dieu est le lieu des esprits, comme l’espace est celui des corps*” (p. 158). This is given in one translation as: “God is the abode of spirits, as space is the abode of bodies. He is to the soul what light is to the eye,” Alfred Weber, tr. Frank Thilly, *The History of Philosophy* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1896).

In this draft, the sentence that follows gives a vision of this abode, a rougher version of that quoted

- by Ellmann (*IY* 166), as the expression shows signs of dictation or a typist's problems with Yeats's handwriting: "As all whirling as an end and unity of being perfectly tamed they are all happiness, all beauty, all thought, things, images come to their entire fullness to such a multiplicity of form that they are in our eyes without form, they do what they please all whirling at an end, daimons and men reconciled and no longer figures opposing one another in daimonic dance and it is they who create genius in its most radical form and change the direction of history. Besides these orders of spirits which all act without intermediaries there are beings[,] arcons, who act upon events, so that we may accept the domination of our own daimons" (pp. 23–24; see note 100 below).
- 79 These *Spirits* supply the soul reliving its life's experience with a substitute for emotion, since emotion comes from the *Passionate Body* and *Husk* which have "disappeared"; acting as *Passionate Body* therefore, they supply the soul with "supersensual emotion and imagery" (*AVB* 228), supplying *Daimonic* sensation in place of earthly. Indeed, when Yeats imagines "the *Four Principles* in the sphere" (*AVB* 193), the place of the "Third Authentic Existant" corresponds in the text with "the discarnate *Daimons*, or *Ghostly Selves*" and in the diagram with the *Passionate Body* (see above n68). If the dead supply the imagery of the dreams of the living, it may be that the imagery for the dead comes from the *Teaching Spirits* or discarnate *Daimons*, the more *primary* level supplying the more *antithetical*.
- 80 See "Seven Propositions" (*IY* 236), cited in "Everywhere that antinomy," 8–9.
- 81 NLI 13,581, a notebook Yeats used for drafting and known as "Rapallo Notebook D," contains two drafts, probably from the late summer of 1929; see my essay in this volume "Everywhere that antinomy," 8–9, 19 n21 and n24. See also [www.YeatsVision.com/7Propositions.html](http://www.YeatsVision.com/7Propositions.html) (consulted Apr 2010). Cancelled material uses the traditional image of God as a circle, and indicates the spirits' closeness to a multiform divinity: "Reality is a timeless and spaceless community of spirits Each of whom is different from the others is the center of a circle whose circumferences passes through all other spirit spirits, it is subject & they its object which perceive each other."
- 82 One of the earliest formulations in *The Commonplace Book* is "Existence is percipi or percipere" ("Existence is to be perceived or to perceive"), see ed. A. C. Fraser, *The Works of George Berkeley*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), 1:10; a marginal comment adds "or velle, i.e. agere" (*to wish to* i.e. *to do*). Cf. *Berkeley's Commonplace Book*, ed. G. A. Johnston (London: Faber and Faber, 1930 [*WBGYL* 160; *YL* 159]).
- 83 NLI 36,272/22, p. 36.
- 84 NLI 30,354 [p. 19].
- 85 NLI 30,354 [pp. 17–18].
- 86 Abraham Heschel in *Man is not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1951) places man's primal recognition of God in "awareness of grandeur" and "sense of the ineffable" (3–4). Talking to Jacob Needleman, while he was translating "a particular Hasidic text," he "quoted something he had just translated: 'God is not nice. He is not an uncle. God is an earthquake,'" Needleman, *The New Religions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1970), 6.
- 87 Wordsworth is not included in the heading, but is mentioned as one of "the poets...who are of this phase" (*AVB* 134; *CW13* 57–58; *AVA* 68).
- 88 NLI 30,354, [p. 19].
- 89 "The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword, are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man," *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), Plate 8 (*WWB3* [118]).
- 90 NLI 30,354 [pp. 19–20]. A journal entry from January 1929, cited by Ellmann, notes how "Blake denounced both nature and God considered external like Nature as mystery" and that "the passage from potential to actual man can only come in terror. 'I have been always an insect in the roots of the grass'—my form of it perhaps" (*IY* 239).
- 91 This might be a cultural artifact rather than an absolute expression. In 1906, Yeats had felt that the ordered vision of Spenser had given way to a Romantic sensibility, "to the religion of the wilderness—the only religion possible to poetry to-day... This new beauty, in losing so much, has indeed found a new loftiness, a something of religious exaltation that the old had not" (*CW4* 272; *E&I* 378). And in the 1932 introduction to *An Indian Monk*, he notes that the Indian "approaches God through a vision, speaks continually of the beauty and terror of the great mountains," but also finds it in delicate birdsong and birds, "the whiteness of a sheet, the softness of a pillow, the gold embroidery upon a shoe. These things are indeed part of the 'splendour of that [Divine] Being'" (*CW5* 133; *E&I* 431).
- 92 See Matthew Gibson, "Satori in Yeats's 'Stream and Sun at Glendalough,'" *Irish University Review* 28.1 (1998): 28–36.

- 93 The automatic script concentrates on the moments of crisis, including the *Beatific Vision*, for the subjective or *antithetical* incarnations of such people as the Yeatses. The equivalents for *primary* incarnations are often very sketchy and this imbalance is likely one of the reasons why Yeats felt uncertain about including such material in the public expositions of *A Vision*.
- 94 A footnote explains that the six states between death and birth “correspond roughly to Phase 22, Phases 23, 24, 25, Phases 26, 27, 28, etc., upon the wheel of the *Faculties* which is at right angles to that of the *Principles*,” which is marked by the zodiac. By the phasal measure, Phase 22 corresponds to *The Vision of the Blood Kindred* (for the *Principles*, solar Aries, AVB 223), Phases 23, 24, 25 to the *Return* (Taurus, AVB 225), Phases 26, 27, 28 to the *Shiftings* (Gemini, AVB 231), Phase 1 to the *Beatitude* or *Marriage* (Cancer, AVB 232), Phases 2, 3, 4 to the *Purification* (Leo, AVB 233), and Phases 5, 6, 7 to the *Foreknowledge* (Virgo, mislabeled Scorpio, AVB 234). The drafts give the correspondences as “symbolical March” to August (NLI 36,272/22, p.9), but Yeats evidently decided that the solar months of the zodiac were more correct, which indicates that the mapping of lunar to solar divisions will be only ever “correspond roughly.” See Colin McDowell, “The Six Discarnate States of *A Vision* (1937),” *YAACTS4* (1986) 87–98.
- 95 NLI 30,354, [p. 17].
- 96 Consideration of the lightning flash and *Critical Moments* reached relatively advanced typescripts in the drafting of AVB (see NLI 36,272/10) but was eventually abandoned. See also in this volume Colin McDowell, “Shifting Sands,” 205ff. and also Janis Haswell, “Yeats’s *A Vision* and the Feminine,” 293 and 304 n6.
- 97 See Colin McDowell’s treatment in his review of Hazard Adams’s *The Book of Yeats’s Vision*, *YA13* (1998), 357–66, at 364.
- 98 The preceding part of the sentence—that “Such love has a relation with the dead similar to that of the Fountains,” which are the points of spiritual influx in history—hints at a connection between the dead and the *Thirteenth Cone* that is not explored further. There are further echoes in AVB, however, when Yeats writes of a fourth state of consciousness, *Turiya*, which “is that state wherein the soul... is united to the blessed dead” (AVB 222–23). Cf. also his comment in “A Packet for Ezra Pound”: “The blessed spirits must be sought within the self which is common to all” (AVB 22).
- 99 A cancelled paragraph from “Notes on the Life after Death,” NLI 36,272/12, p. 29, corrected typescript; though the previous page is missing, it probably deals with the *Beatitude*. The phrase “the sphere’s messengers” substitutes “the mere intervention of the thirteenth cone,” possibly pointing to the sense in which the *Thirteenth Cone* is a messenger or substitute for the Sphere.
- 100 Unity of Being is applied in *A Vision B* to a particular state attainable in the phases following the full moon, but elsewhere, as here, Yeats uses it more broadly and always with the sense of a harmonious tension that transcends itself; cf. an early draft on the Thirteenth Cycle cited by Ellmann, “all whirling at an end, and unity of being perfectly attained” (*IY* 166 and see note 78 above).
- 101 The phrase “the lone tower of the absolute self” recalls how “sometimes the *Celestial Body* is a prisoner in a tower rescued by the *Spirit*” (AVB 189), and indicates that the “absolute self” is *Celestial Body* or the union of *Spirit* and *Celestial Body*. The image of the blasted tower also recalls the bookplate that the Yeatses commissioned for George from T. Sturge Moore, showing a unicorn bursting from a lightning-shattered tower (*TSMC* 35), itself drawing on the Tarot image of “The Tower” or “La Maison de Dieu.”
- 102 NLI 36,272/17, p. 3; also 36,272/16, p. 9, where they are depicted on the cycle of a total cycle of life and afterlife. Cf. *Mem* 277–78, where the terms should read: “‘Spirit in Celestial Body’... ‘Celestial Body in Spirit’” (emphasis added).
- 103 NLI 30,354 [p. 19]. The passage is slightly problematic since Yeats contrasts “Beatific Vision” with an “embodied” state, but in drafts elsewhere “Beatific Vision” is applied to the afterlife state as well.
- 104 This last is taken from *Mem* 278, a stray note about *A Vision* inserted at the back of a journal started in 1908.
- 105 Conversely, “in the system Good and Evil are eliminated before the soul can be united to Reality, being that stream of phenomena that drowns us” (*CW13* 143; *AVA* 176).
- 106 This whirling of solar and lunar is also seen in the relations of man and woman, mirrored throughout the system.
- 107 “Self” here is not that of “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” but the “absolute self,” the highest principle of human spirit, “Atman,” identified in some schools with Brahman, the ultimate reality.
- 108 NLI 30,319 (5), p. 3c.
- 109 NLI 36,272/22, p. 11.

- 110 These in turn recall specifically the Hindu traditions of dancing Shiva, as well as the final question of "Among School Children: "O body swayed to music, O brightening glance, / How can we know the dancer from the dance?" (VP 446; CWI 221).
- 111 It is the sense of distance that Yeats seeks to emphasize, though he risks implying an unwarranted degree of perfection to modern culture and condescension towards primitive dance.
- 112 See R. P. Ritvo, "A Vision B: The Plotinian Metaphysical Basis"; she seeks to rescue Yeats from misrepresenting MacKenna's term "the Authentic Existent...Essence...Being" ("On the Impassivity of the Unembodied," Third Ennead, Sixth Tractate, Section 6, *Plotinus*, 2:75; see also 4:5ff. and 4:93ff.) by taking Yeats's fabrication of "First Authentic Existant" and "Second Authentic Existant" as twin aspects of the Second Hypostasis, *Nous*, "Intellectual-Principle" (38–40) but Yeats's list of correspondences in *AVA* make it clear that by "First Authentic Existant" he meant MacKenna's "First Hypostasis," see n115 below. See also Charles Armstrong, "Ancient Frames," in this volume, 96 and Matthew Gibson, "Timeless and Spaceless," 105–6 and Graham Dampier, "The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work," 57–59.
- 113 *Passionate Body* and *Husk* are essential to sensual and emotional experience and, once they have been exhausted in the afterlife, usually by the stage of the *Shiftings*, the soul assumes what Plotinus had called the impassivity of the unembodied, yet there is a form of "correspondence" so that the *Spirits* of the *Thirteenth Cone* (and *Daimons*) derive substance and sustenance from human action, for "separation and solidity" (*AVB* 230).
- 114 NLI 36,272/16, p. 8.
- 115 There is no precise equivalence. Good and evil differentiate at the stage of the *Thirteenth Cone*, while in *AVA* Yeats comments that "the One is the Good, whereas in the system Good and Evil are eliminated before the Soul can be united to Reality, being that stream of phenomena that drowns us" (*CWI* 13 143; *AVA* 176). This goes against MacKenna's explanation of what "goodness" means with reference to the One: "Morally seen, it is THE GOOD," but "if we call it the GOOD, we do not intend any formal affirmation of a quality within itself; we mean only that it is the Goal or Term to which all aspires. When we affirm existence of it, we mean no more than that it does not fall within the realm of non-existents; it transcends even the quality of Being," *Plotinus* 1:118.
- 116 NLI 30,354, [p. 18].
- 117 This poem was published in the *Dublin University Review* in 1886. A letter to Kathleen Tynan, 20 April 1888, raises a similar point: Yeats writes of how, "When I was a child and used to watch the ants running about in Burnham Beeches I used often to say 'what religion do the ants have?' They must have one you know" (*CLI* 63).
- 118 Yeats's images associated with Phase 1 have similar characteristics, and the dominant image is the plasticity of dough (*CWI* 3 94; *AVA* 116; *AVB* 183).
- 119 Yeats also includes another layer of meaning, for the saint earns his love of God through living to the full the other lives of the wheel, including those where God is rejected (*AVB* 206). Similarly, whereas the communicator seems to point to realization of negative existence, rejecting human *ideas* about God, Yeats himself comments that "The soul has to enter some significant relationship with God even if this be one of hatred," which implies a more personal rejection of God (*IY* 283; cit. *NC* 355).
- 120 The herne or heron is also a bird closely identified with Yeats himself, from Michael Hearn, the hero of the semi-autobiographical *The Speckled Bird*, to Owen Aherne, the seeker for the law of his own being in "The Tables of the Law" and, of course, Robartes's interlocutor and collaborator in "The Phases of the Moon" and the prefatory fictions of *A Vision*.
- 121 NLI 36,272/12, p. 29.
- 122 Yeats also liked to quote the aphorism of Thomas Aquinas that he had culled from *Axël*: "Eternity is the possession of one's self, as in a single moment" (*CW* 5 52; cf. *CW* 5 19, 26, 247; "Leo," *YAI* 37). Tellingly, here it is used to describe the asymptotic goal of the soul's development from Phase 8 to Phase 15, identifying it as an *antithetical* vision of eternity.

## SHIFTING SANDS: DANCING THE HOROSCOPE IN THE *VISION PAPERS*

by Colin McDowell

*Felkin told me that he had seen a Dervish dance a horoscope. He went round and round on the sand and then circle to centre. He whirled round at the planets making round whorls in the sand by doing so. He then danced the connecting lines between planets and fell in trance. This is what I saw in dream or vision years ago.*

W. B. Yeats, June 1909<sup>1</sup>

### I

It was one of W. B. Yeats's idler fantasies that *A Vision* might found a new Irish heresy, as disciples studied it and applied its doctrines (*L* 712). In fact, even as he wrote this, he knew how few readers his work could realistically expect. In *A Vision A*, he had confined his audience, somewhat pessimistically, to his "old fellow students" in the Golden Dawn, and suggested that "if they will master what is most abstract there and make it the foundation of their visions, a curtain may ring up on a new drama" (*CW13* lv; *AVA* xii). Later, when he came to write *A Vision B*, he had resigned himself to finding a solitary satisfaction; the symbols, he said, helped him "to hold in a single thought reality and justice" (*AVB* 25).

Generally speaking, readers have been content to allow Yeats his petty triumph. Literary critics continue to read the book as Yeats gave them license to do, as "metaphors for poetry" (*AVB* 8). So far, the only people who have taken up the challenge of applying the doctrines of *A Vision* have been astrologers seeking to enlarge their art. I shall briefly examine some of these later, but in order properly to assess the use to which these epigones have put *A Vision*, one first needs to see some of the ways in which the Yeateses tried to integrate astrology into the system with a possible view towards extending astrology's capabilities.

There are few traces of traditional astrology in the finished work, especially as concerns the individual.<sup>2</sup> Several passages extant in *A Vision B* mention how the natal horoscope can twist, or rather enrich and complicate, the natural character of a person's phase (*AVB* 153, 176). However, it is difficult to tell whether these passages were left in deliberately to complicate matters, or are simply vestiges of earlier thought that Yeats omitted to root out because of his impatience with proofreading. Certainly, he managed to retain the unfulfilled promise to consider "cycle and horoscope" (*AVB* 117).<sup>3</sup> It was only with the publication of "Appendix by Michael Robartes" in *Yeats and the Occult* (1975) that details began to emerge of more specific investigations that the Yeateses had undertaken: "In the Great Diagram, which is the frontispiece of the Speculum there are three circles one without the other, and all three represent the circle of the Heavens. The inmost however is merely the Horoscope of Giraldus himself placed as we are taught to place a horoscope for its better understanding" (*YO* 210). Presumably, the diagram would have explained precisely how the horoscope was to be placed, but lacking the diagram one must seek elsewhere. Since the publication of *Yeats and the Occult*, of course, the four volumes of *Yeats's Vision Papers* have appeared, and the automatic script itself has been available for perusal by interested scholars.

In the *Yeats's Vision Papers*, there are several attempts to allocate horoscopic planets of individuals to one or other of the two *Tinctures*, *antithetical* and *primary*.<sup>4</sup> As these *Tinctures* are opposites, one must work out a way to place planets so that they are opposite to each other, given that one has embarked on the allocation. But as anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of astronomy or astrology knows, planets in charts do not neatly line up with every planet having an opposition to another planet: in fact, Mercury and Venus never stray far enough from the Sun to form an opposition to it. One must therefore determine another method. There are of course traditional associations of planets with active/passive, male/female, etc., but these do not seem to have figured largely in the allocations we shall discuss, as the allocations differ from person to person, although they are occasionally used in the script as a convenient shorthand when the system is not involved.

The first attempt occurs on November 10, 1917, after several days during which the communicator tells Yeats to construct talismans or conduct evocations to strengthen or weaken planetary influences in the birth charts of himself, George Yeats and Iseult Gonne. During these instructions, the traditional astrological association of Saturn with melancholy appears to play a large part, perhaps understandably given the circumstances of the wedding. However, the complexities of taking into account three horoscopes for these procedures makes it likely that the phrase “the Saturnian opposite overpowering it [Iseult’s ‘childhood phantasy of the primary’] at times” (*YVPI* 71) is not a generic characterization of the *antithetical*, meaning that the *antithetical* is not being equated with the Saturnian, but rather that a comment is being made about the opposition in Iseult’s chart between Mars and Saturn.<sup>5</sup> This supposition is confirmed when we find George writing later that

In one the anti is Saturnian  
 In one venusian  
 In one lunar  
 No you are the venusian  
 medium  
 No except that [Moon] is part ruler you cant go by rules [*sic*: must be ruler] for *anti*  
 in each case the opposite of the primary self—Iseult [Venus]  
 primary—you [Saturn]—medium [Jupiter] [Mars]

(*YVPI* 73–74)

My assumption is that Yeats understood the Saturnian to relate to Iseult Gonne and, after the first three lines, asked if this meant that he was Lunar, only to be told that this was incorrect and that he was the Venusian while the medium was Lunar. He then queried this because he had presumed he was Lunar, only to be told that he probably only thought this because the part-ruler of his horoscope, or lord of the Nativity, is the Moon, but that one cannot use this type of ruler for determining *antithetical* or *primary*.<sup>6</sup> Yet these allocations immediately introduce complications, even as they make clear that the same planets may be *antithetical* or *primary* for one person and the reverse for another. First of all, Iseult’s *primary* is here identified with Venus, which is in opposition to no other planet, but is trine to Uranus and square to both Moon and Saturn. Then Yeats’s *antithetical* is identified with Venus,

which is square to Mars and Moon in his natal chart, but has no relationship with the planet identified as his *primary* planet, Saturn. Finally, George's *primary* planets are identified as Jupiter and Mars. These two are sextile to each other while Jupiter is opposed to Sun, and Mars is trine to Sun and square to the Ascendant. This would seem to imply that George's Sun is *antithetical*, as it is in opposition to the *primary* Jupiter.<sup>7</sup> What this goes to show is that whatever method is being used, it is by no means simple.

The script continues to say that "your venusian acts more independently of [Saturn] but her [George's] [Moon] anti close to [Uranus] but opposition primary [Mars] [Uranus] both anti & primary | yes | yes opposed by [Uranus]—thwarts it by its violence—not passive enough—your anti will work on primary—does not do so yet" (*YVPI* 74). George's Moon is sextile Uranus, a beneficial influence of 60 degrees, but I would not think this would be called "close to." But then Iseult's Uranus is not in aspect to her Moon, Saturn or Mars, although it is trine Sun and Neptune. George's Mars is not in aspect with Saturn, Moon or Uranus. None of these facts is of assistance in determining the Venusian or the Lunar. However, a script from the following day may offer assistance: "medium weak [Mars]—primary very strong [Uranus] [Moon] anti—much too strong | yes yes" (*YVPI* 77). It is difficult to know how to punctuate these fragments, but I interpret this to mean that George's Moon is *antithetical*, that her Mars is *primary*, and that Uranus, while it can be (like all planets) either *antithetical* or *primary*, is *antithetical* in GY's case. I thus put a pause or comma after the word "primary."

Fortunately, between these scraps of inconclusive script, the medium states:

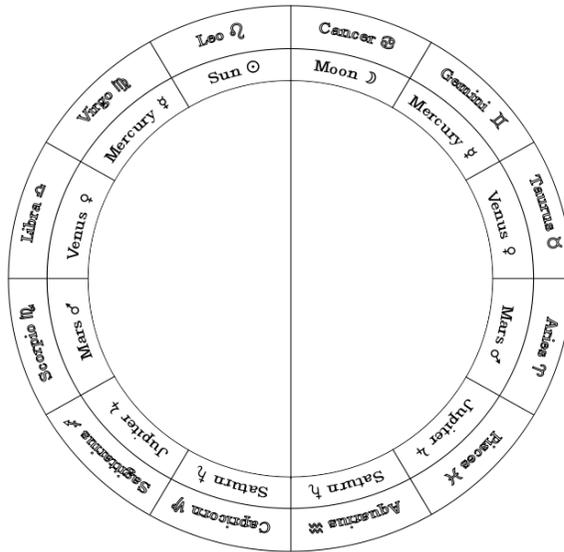
Madam Gonne. *GY*—primary [Mars] anti [Moon] [Venus]  
 Lady Gregory. *GY*—primary [Mercury] anti [Jupiter]  
 Harold [Tucker: GY's stepfather]. *GY*—primary [Moon] anti [Mars] [?or]  
(*YVPI* 76)

When this statement was codified, the three persons just discussed were also added:

Primarys— M.G. Primary [Mars] anti [Moon] [Venus]  
 Lady G. Primary [Mercury] anti [Jupiter]  
 Harold Primary [Moon] anti [Mars]  
 Iseult P = [Venus] anti ?[Moon]  
 WBY [P] = [Saturn] anti [Venus]  
 Medium [P] = [Jupiter] [Mars] anti [Mars] [Uranus]  
(*YVP3* 417; CF T13x)

This states that Iseult's *antithetical* is Lunar, although with a lingering doubt, whereas previously she had been Saturnian, and leaves George as either Martian or Uranian, whereas previously the other options had been Saturnian or Lunar. In addition, Mars is given on both sides of the equation for George. One would think that Mars must be either *antithetical* or *primary*, if there is any method in the madness.<sup>8</sup>

But what of planetary rulers, as distinct from the ruler of the horoscope? Traditionally, each planet is said to rule over one or more signs. The following diagram shows the signs with their ruling planets:



Sun and Moon do not split their rulerships, and the other planets take the signs on either side of this “central” pair in order of apparent speed of motion. Also, when the Yeates were writing, the traditional rulers had not yet been entirely supplanted by the modern versions, whereby Uranus rules Aquarius and Neptune rules Pisces. Pluto, of course, had not yet been discovered. The Yeates seem to have followed the traditional allocations and did not consider Uranus or Neptune as rulers.<sup>9</sup> It thus seems that the rulers cannot have been used by the Yeates to determine *antithetical* and *primary*, because Uranus has been named in the script more than once, and they would not have been able to allocate it using their list of the traditional rulers. However, it is apparent that when George writes “[Cancer] [Leo] really cancer and Leo [Sun] & [Moon] | no | Taking them as representing the primary self [Sun] & anti [Moon] more or less | rather less than more” (*YVP1* 73), she is identifying the rulers of Cancer and Leo with *antithetical* and *primary*.

Interestingly, if we then plot the position of the planets in the natal charts of the subjects according to which side of the horoscope they appear in when a line has been drawn from between Cancer and Leo to between Capricorn and Aquarius, the following table may be derived. I omit the allocations that the script deems to be dubious:

Sign/ruling planet	WBY	GY	IG	MG	AG	HT
Between Leo and Capricorn/Sun	Venus- <i>antithetical</i>	Jupiter/Mars- <i>primary</i>	Venus- <i>primary</i>	Mars- <i>primary</i>	Mercury- <i>primary</i>	Mars- <i>antithetical</i>
Between Aquarius and Cancer / Moon	Saturn- <i>primary</i>	Uranus- <i>antithetical</i>	Moon- <i>antithetical</i>	Venus- <i>antithetical</i>	Jupiter- <i>antithetical</i>	Moon- <i>primary</i>

What one immediately notices is that males have their *antithetical* planets on the side of Aquarius to Cancer, whereas females have their *antithetical* planets on the side of Leo to Capricorn.<sup>10</sup> While the sample size is too small for certainty, such an alternation for males and females is not something that would have been beyond George Yeats to conceive of. Certainly, it is consonant with Yeats's suggestion "I suppose the splitting between philosophic & artistic in me joyous ([Venus]) and sad ([Saturn]) in Iseult are different expressions of a universal masculine and feminine in the soul," to which the answer was "yes" (*YVPI* 109).<sup>11</sup>

In any case, these allocations were soon overtaken by the advent of the twenty-eight phases on 28 November. While the attributions already arrived at appear in the Card File without any retraction, they certainly play no further part in discussion, and any contradiction with what was later taught is silently passed over. The twenty-eight phases developed out of discussion of the cardinal points and the midpoints between them, which are named Head, Heart, Loins and Fall.<sup>12</sup> Amusingly, the cardinal points are first called 1, 7, 14 and 28 rather than 1, 8, 15 and 22 (*YVPI* 100). Unfortunately, because the editors of the *Yeats's Vision Papers* were in the habit of considering the diagrams to be largely meaningless, it is difficult to be entirely sure of the course of the discussion, but the following is my best reconstruction. The task is made more difficult by uncertainty on the part of both Yeats and his wife, and consequent revision which may or may not introduce retrospective interpretations to the discussion. One is not entirely heartened by George's admission "no I must get it right—I will do it again" in relation to the diagrams (*YVPI* 116), nor by Marcus telling Yeats that "You are to ignore all script which Thomas has given you which is [Lunar] symbolism and the symbolism of outer circle" (*YVPI* 124).

In fact, Head, Heart, Loins and Fall appear to introduce a digression into the discussion and are a complication which has been introduced too early: a headlong dive rather than dipping one's toes, it might be said. It is only later in the script that the concepts are fully thought out. Card File D32x relates the birth charts of WBY and GY to the "world diagram," and codifies a discussion of 23 November 1917:

How does the new East arise?

In the cycles man is born from North in the world Diagram. In the Human [diagram?] [he is born] under the sign which in each case rotates during the cycle so that if he is born under the eastern sign (?) [the editors decipher the word in the corresponding passage in the automatic script as Aries, which is the same thing] it will be in the position of his stage in the world Diagram"

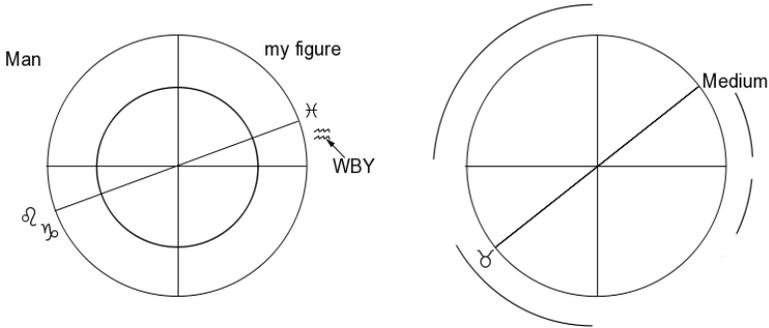
Diagram for man "in [Scorpio] anti"

[*Editorial note*: two diagrams: one for "birth" with arrow pointing to N [Taurus]; the other for "Man" pointing to [Taurus]]

(*YVP3* 289, referring to discussion in *YVPI* 111)

Although it is difficult to know precisely what is intended without the described diagrams to guide us, this seems to imply that everyone is born at Aries or internal East, at least on the human wheel, which is also the position of Head and the spring equinox, taking the cues from D31 (*YVP3* 289). The bit about Taurus must then relate to *YVPI* 112: "Why [Taurus] at  $\frac{3}{4}$  stage of anti. GY | [Capricorn] [Scorpio] or [Libra] or [Cancer]—the sign does not matter—if you are born under [Pisces] that sign comes to the part of the world

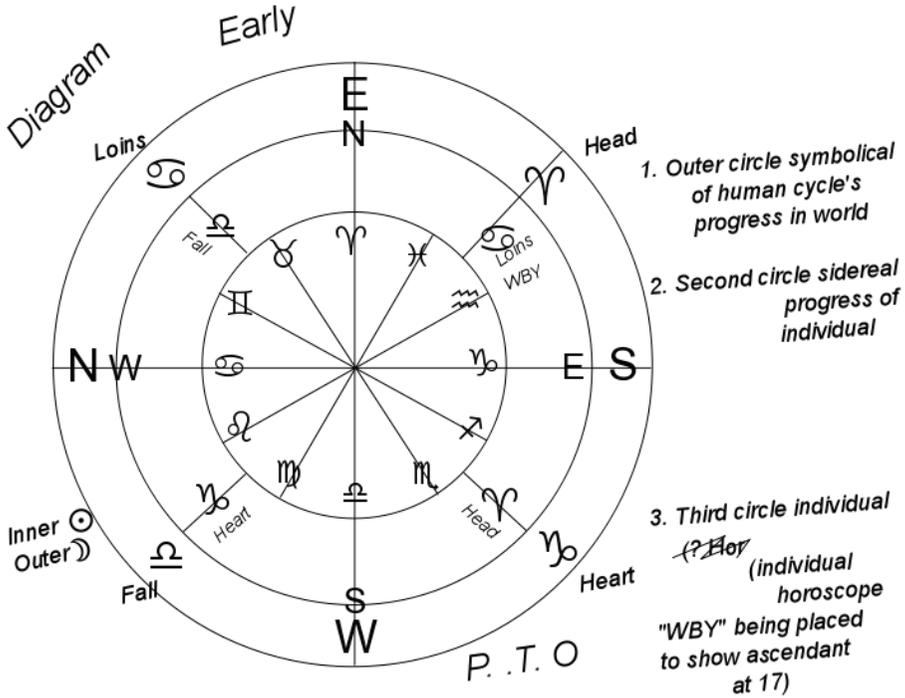
diagram which represents your development at that stage.”<sup>13</sup> Yeats then demands to be given his diagram and it is here I presume that the circles from the codification in D32x appear:



See *YVP3* 289. In the diagram on the left, the editors wrongly give the symbol for the Moon's North Node instead of Leo, the opposite sign to Yeats's rising sign Aquarius (corrected here). I also suspect that the sign for Capricorn is a mistake for Virgo, the opposite sign to Pisces. The rising sign of George, the medium, is Scorpio, the opposite sign to Taurus, so I suggest that in the diagram on the right, Scorpio should appear at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mark of the *antithetical* where the word "Medium" is situated.

With regard to these diagrams, Yeats makes the interesting observation: "so my ascendant would compare to head Zodiac sign at phasal number. I have [Aquarius] at 17" (*YVP3* 290).<sup>14</sup> Note in these diagrams, assuming that they have been drawn accurately from the manuscript, that W. B. Yeats's Aquarius is depicted as being contiguous to, or just after, what would be Phase 15: what Yeats calls "new S[outh] in outer" (*YVP1* 117, if we superimpose the diagram in D31 on the left-hand diagram from D32x). Certainly, it is not at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mark of the *antithetical*, where Head would be on the wheel. (Remember that the collaborators already knew that the middle of the *antithetical* phases was Phase 15, and the end of the *antithetical* phases was Phase 22. Aries or Head would then have to be at the end of George Yeats's Phase 18, and in fact would be between Phases 18 and 19. In the diagram from D32, it is tacitly assumed that George's Scorpio overlaps the position of Head precisely. This cannot be the case.) Whether or not it was intended in this particular script, the phrase about the birth sign going to "the part of the world diagram which represents your development at that stage" is beginning to look like an instruction to put birth signs against phase of the individual rather than at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mark or Aries, or perhaps it might be best to say rather that the instructions in the script are such that they may later be interpreted in this manner. When all of this information is codified in D47, *Diagram Early* and its accompanying text, not only has the subtle shift from  $\frac{3}{4}$  *antithetical* to the Phase of the individual taken place, but Aries or Head in the outer wheel seems to belong to a different sphere of action, where it is contiguous to Loins on the second, interior wheel. Given that the editors of *Yeats's Vision Papers* attribute this Card File note to "AS 25 Nov 1917" (*YVP3* 296), that is, the day following the D32x diagram, they are either in error or else Yeats has imported later information into an earlier diagram. The other possibility, of course, is that a large part of the discussion

went unrecorded, but this does not seem likely. The editors of *YVP* reproduce *Diagram Early* from D47, and the reader who wishes to see it is referred to *YVP3* 296, but the following typesetting is clearer:



The outer circle here is the wheel of the twenty-eight lunar phases, with its NWSE in the correct positions but no phase numbers. The circle next to it is variously described as “second circle sidereal progress of individual” and “2nd circle civilization in world” (*YVP3* 296).<sup>15</sup> This circle, I take it, will become the twelve cycles, each of which contains an average of 28 incarnations, although at the stage of the script from which it comes it is identified with the *primary*. The internal circle, which is the one I wish to concentrate on, is “individual horoscope ‘WB’ being placed to show ascendant at 17” (*YVP3* 296).

Harper et al. attribute “Diagram Early” to 25 November 1917, and the editorial description at the head of the transcription reads “diagram: circles, crossed with dissecting lines marking Cardinal Points, Chief Signs of the Zodiac, and Head, Heart, Loins and Fall at diagonal corners” (*YVP1* 116). The Card File diagram reproduced here appears to be based on the corrected one drawn after GY says “no I must get it right—I will do it again” (*YVP1* 116). Thus, WB’s *primary* is described as being “just past East going to aries” (*YVP1* 117), meaning E on the second or middle wheel at 3 o’clock going to Aries at 4:30, while the *antithetical* is “just past South,” meaning S at 3 o’clock going to Aries at Head at 1:30.<sup>16</sup> Obviously, the phrase “just past” is not especially accurate. These permutations of E and Aries are meant to explain Yeats’s supposedly violent nature, although Yeats himself wants to relate the positions of Aries and East here to his horoscope with the

more traditional opposition between Mars and his Moon in his Ascendant sign. Of more interest is Yeats's questioning of the placement of the Ascendant itself. George explains that one must "also remember individual horoscope—That is way to find primary anti and so on" (*YVP1* 118). Yeats asks how this is done, and is told "You must know stage of develop[ment] [i.e., person's phase number]—put then horoscope into this figure." Yeats, still at a loss, asks how one is to know the stage or phase, and is told, "By clairvoyance if you know the person represented by the horoscope." To the question "Must I judge each house & contents [viz. planets] in relation to outside circles," the answer is given that one must "Judge by aspects of Planets & houses they are in—then refer major aspects to both outer figures—you must have method—work from without to within—first outer circle for generality then inner for individuality then centre for detail." It is then that Yeats asks for an explanation of the attributions he had been given earlier in the script, of his *antithetical* Venus and *primary* Saturn. Unfortunately, the answers have been lost, but they must have included a fair bit of obfuscation, because George Yeats had moved on in a different direction since those equations had been adumbrated. Where she eventually ended up meant that they no longer applied.

It is perhaps not entirely unexpected that several weeks passed before a concerted effort was made to examine natal planets against phases: the rotation by ninety degrees of directions and signs for Head, Heart, Loins and Fall between the two outer wheels introduced too many complications, as did the use of outer wheel for *antithetical* and inner wheel for *primary*. Yeats's chart was looked at first, although the editors of *Yeats's Vision Papers* chose not to include most of the relevant Script, despite Harper's separate tabulation of it in *A Vision A* as "Undated: 'Examination of my horoscope...'" (*CVA* xx). Regardless of Harper's inability to date this script, its importance surely demanded separate publication, possibly as an appendix to *Yeats's Vision Papers*. In point of fact, parts of this script were published in these volumes, but were not identified as such. Now, however, there appears to be sufficient information available to place these 10 pages of 40 questions in the correct chronological order within the body of the work.

In the *Vision Notebooks*, VNB1, there is a note by George which reads "Astrology (see script of Jan 16) | page 74. | 84–86" (*YVP3* 179). The footnote identifies "some notes Yeats made on a blank page (74) after his Qs on 16 Jan 18," and quotes the following:

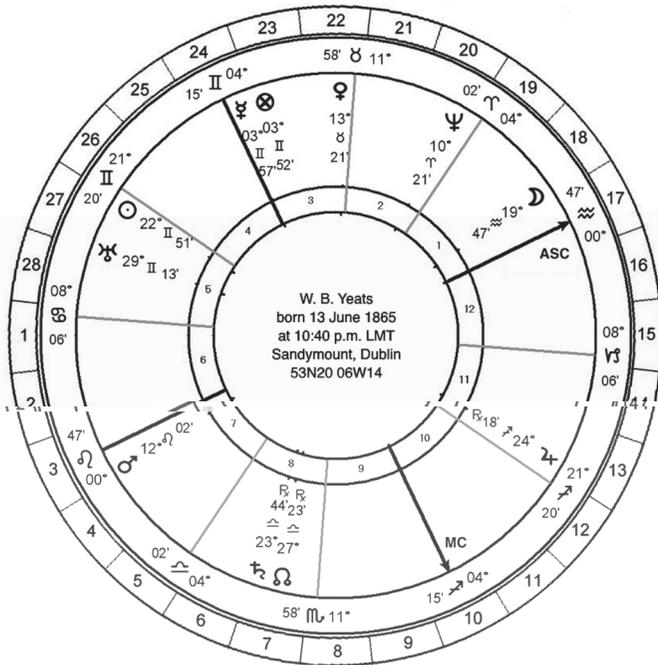
[Moon] [opposition] [Mars]	Ego & Mask
[Sun] & [Uranus]	PF
[Jupiter]	CG EG
[Venus]	22

(*YVP3* 216 n116)

In Peter Kenny's catalog of the *Occult Papers of W. B. Yeats*,<sup>17</sup> there is an entry for NLI MS 36,256/25 which reads: "Sheets. Questions and Answers, numbered 1–40. Also, on reverse of GBY natal chart GBY's script mentioning March horary.<sup>18</sup> At head of Questions: 'Examination of my horoscope with the 28 phases!' At head of Answers: 'Horoscopes.' [3]; [3]; [1] sheets; Questions paginated 74–76," (*OPWBY* 19; also 11). Since NLI MS 36,253/11 has questions which end at page 73, and NLI MS 36,253/12 has questions that begin at page 77, it is reasonable to assume that the questions for the "Examination" can be dated

to January 16 or 17, 1918 (*OPWBY* 5–6). Such a dating is consistent with the very similar examination of George's horoscope occurring on January 18, which I examine below.

Neil Mann, whose unpublished transcription of the “Examination of my horoscope with the | 28 phases!” I have used, reads Yeats as asking first of all if one always places the Ascendant at the “begging” [i.e., beginning] of the phase.<sup>19</sup> This is answered in the affirmative, although when Yeats writes the “Discoveries” manuscript, he specifies the center of the phase: “according to the astrological system the Ascendant of a horoscope is always placed directly under the middle point of the native’s phase and all the aspects and planets are studied in relation the phases at which they are placed” (*YVP* 4 24; cf. *YVP* 4 79). In what follows, I have used the center placing, as it positions the planets so they correlate more closely with the questions. I have also used a chart where the houses are of equal magnitude, which means that the signs vary, as using the chart more commonly used nowadays, where signs are of equal magnitude, does not produce the correct results. It should be noted that when the Yeatses used the standard blank charts purchased as templates, they used the twelve equal divisions for the houses, and so depicted what are called intercepted signs, where two signs can be wholly squeezed within one house, thereby radically altering how the planets are positioned on a chart:

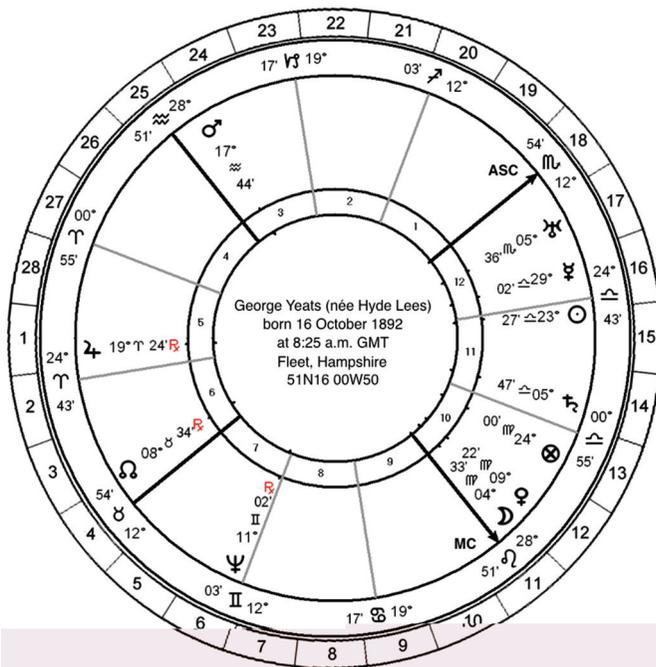


Here, it can be seen that the Moon is at Phase 17, Mars is opposite it at Phase 3, which for a person of Phase 17 is the position of *Mask*, while Sun and Uranus are at Phase 27, the position of *Body of Fate* for a person of Phase 17, with Jupiter at Phase 13, where *Creative Mind* would be. Venus is also at Phase 22. These are the planets and phases the medium gives when she is asked to choose the principle ones and comment on the placing. Others

mentioned in the “Examination” manuscript are Saturn at Phase 6, Mercury at Phase 24 and Neptune at Phase 20.<sup>20</sup>

The analysis, which is hardly inspirational or incisive, states that having Sun and Uranus at *Body of Fate* gives unexpected twists of fate in matters of love but that Jupiter at *Creative Mind* will bring good luck through other people or in creative work. Moon opposite to Mars gives dispersal by acting against intensity in the *Mask*. Yeats asks what is the effect of having Venus at Phase 22, and is told in no uncertain terms that he did not need to ask the question. Mercury at Phase 24 allowed him to work with Lady Gregory, whose Phase that is, whereas his Mars going to Phase 4 is correlated with the fact that Phase 4 is the *Mask* of Phase 18, which is George’s phase. Other planets mentioned seem to be subject to interpretation irrespective of phase. Although we know from the published versions of *A Vision* that *Will* and *Mask* are *antithetical* in *Tincture*, while *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate* are *primary*, with *Will* and *Creative Mind* being subject against *Mask* and *Body of Fate* as object, any *Faculty* can appear in any phase, as it traverses them in order. The script defines Moon as being *antithetical* here, whereas Mars is said to be in a *primary* phase. Thus, one should divide the wheel into *primary* and *antithetical* halves, splitting phases 8 and 22, and the planets will take their *Tincture* from their positions. This is a development from 25 November and its “Diagram Early,” where *antithetical* and *primary* were each given their own separate wheels.

When it comes to the turn for George’s horoscope to be examined in connection with phases, George first selects “Primary planets [Mars] [Jupiter] | Anti [Uranus] [Sun] [Moon] [Venus]” (*YVP1* 272; cf. *YVP3* 352, P12: “Whose Horoscope? Georges”).<sup>21</sup> Her diagram is as follows:



It can be seen that the allocation is correct, if we split the wheel into *primary* and *antithetical* halves in the normal manner at Phases 8 and 22, and that Neptune is also *primary*. Here, Moon and Venus are roughly at the position of Phase 18's *Body of Fate*, viz. Phase 12, but because there are no planets at the positions of *Will*, *Creative Mind* and *Mask*, the analysis takes a different tack from that used for W. B. Yeats. Yeats asks what effect having Jupiter at Phase 1 has, and George includes Sun at Phase 15 in the discussion as well. As both of these are phases of spirits, George's mediumship and clairvoyance can be explained. Her Mercury is in Yeats's phase, Phase 17, and is loosely conjunct her Sun.<sup>22</sup> Uranus at Phase 18 causes a few problems for the interpreter, because it is described as "The only primary strength in horoscope" (*YVPI* 273). On Yeats's protestation that Uranus has been put amongst the *antithetical* planets, George responded that "Yes but it is the only planet which can act primarily because [Mars] is at 24—If [=Jupiter?] at [Phase] one [Sun] at [Phase] 15 [Moon] [Venus] 13 & 12 between" (*YVPI* 273). I do not understand this, and also think that the last two phases should be 11 and 12. But perhaps one is not meant to understand it: George is thinking very quickly in order not to get caught out in a contradiction. There are then a few attempts to correlate George's phases and planets with the phases and planets of her husband, who apparently comes into her horoscope at her "Creative & Evil G[enius]," or Phase 12, where her Moon is placed. Yeats's Moon is in Aquarius, and is conjunct George's natal Mars. Her Mars at Phase 24 causes self-suppression, although it is not entirely clear to me how this happens.

Although Yeats asked the medium whether she could "go on with Maurice here" (*YVPI* 274), meaning Iseult Gonne, the response was not encouraging, and the topic of applying planets to phases appears not to have been returned to, at least not in the published script. However, Peter Kenny lists as NLI MS 36,274/26, "Template of 22 phases for analysing charts into different cycles. 1 card with centre excised" (*OPWBY* 50), and there is another note in NLI MS 36/273/12/2 which says "Iseult Gonne, (1) chart with planetary circle cut out" (*OPWBY* 47). Lest one think that "22" in the first is simply a misprint for 28, it is worth turning to the *Vision Papers*, as mention is made there of a blank page with "a circular diagram with twenty-two numbers on the outside and the following on the inside: '12 = mind, 10 = Soul, 22 = Ascent.' He [WBY] had difficulty accommodating these numbers to the 28 Phases (see *CVA* 34n [note to p. 140, lines 4–5])" (*YVPI* 531). As reference to the *CVA* Note shows, the template Harper is talking about also includes the 28 phases: "Besides the 28 Phases, this circle incorporates three sets of numbers representing divisions of the single cycle: '10 soul, 12 mind, 22 ascent'" (*CVA* 34 n140).<sup>23</sup> Given that its center was excised, I imagine that it was placed over horoscopes such that the subject's Ascendant was situated on the phase. The position of the planets could then be roughly determined.<sup>24</sup>

We thus have at least two methods of divining *Tinctures* for planets. The first, if I have discerned it correctly, split the wheel from the point between Leo and Cancer to the point between Capricorn and Aquarius, while the second used the eventual split of the wheel into *antithetical* and *primary* and placed the Ascendant at phase. Depending on how the planets were positioned in the chart, they could be either *antithetical* or *primary*. For example, Yeats's Jupiter is *primary* according to the former method, and *antithetical* according to the latter, while his Uranus, Mercury and Sun are *antithetical* according to the former and *primary* according to the latter. Both methods agree on the placement of five planets: Moon, Neptune and Venus are *antithetical*, while Saturn and Mars are *primary*.

## II

I mentioned earlier that several astrologers had sought to incorporate the Yeates' ideas into their art in order to enlarge it. In doing so, they have had to jettison one of the main tenets of phase allocation. For the Yeateses, phases of people were to be divined by knowledge of the particular person, and could not be derived astrologically. Once one has the phase, one could then apply it astrologically. By way of contrast, Busteded, Tiffany and Wergin use the distance between Sun and Moon in the natal chart, counting counter-clockwise, to determine phase, and thus allocate Yeats to Phase 19 rather than to the phase with which he identified himself. This is basically the same as putting the subject's Sun at the moment of birth on the Ascendant or Phase 1 and then seeing where the Moon is positioned in a wheel divided into twenty-eight. It is also, as Neil Mann explains, the position of the Part of Fortune in the horoscope, using the day formula for both night and day charts, as some astrologers do.<sup>25</sup> By the same principles, George would be Phase 25 rather than Phase 18, and Iseult Gonne Phase 5 instead of Phase 14.<sup>26</sup> An unintended consequence of this method is that it makes a mockery of another of Yeats's oft-expressed tenets, according to which Phases 1 and 15 are purely supernatural incarnations. For Busteded et al., Leo Tolstoy belongs to Phase 1 and Edward Kennedy to Phase 15: both examples worldly, both flawed, although one worked on it more than the other. The script itself originally placed Tolstoy in Phase 6, but Yeats found this surprising (*YVP1* 194–96). He is not named in the appropriate place in *A Vision*.

## III

The concept of the Initiatory and Critical Moments deserves more space than I can give it here. A full exposition would include such things as the Lightning Flash, Third and Fourth Daimons, *Teaching Spirits* and *Victimage for the Ghostly Self*, Chance and Choice, and the Beatific Vision. It is possible that the concept also explains the Opening of the *Tinctures*.<sup>27</sup> In short, the full exposition would have to encompass a large part of the entire system and much of what Yeats left out of the published work. As he writes in the dedication to *A Vision A*: "I have not even dealt with the whole of my subject, perhaps not even with what is most important, writing nothing about the Beatific Vision, nothing about sexual love" (*AVA* xii, *CW13* lv). Here, I wish merely to note the attempt made by the Yeateses to correlate the Initiatory and Critical Moments with astrological factors. In this I simplify greatly, because the astrological factors involved in each Moment are also correlated with the *Four Faculties* and can apparently be plotted on the gyres.

Neil Mann helpfully defines the Initiatory and Critical Moments as follows:

[The Moments of Crisis are a]n important element of the Automatic Script, which received brief treatment in *AVA* (172–73) and none in *AVB*, linked particularly with sexual love. They are associated with the *Daimon*, the least predictable element of the System, and are symbolised by the lightning flash. The Initiatory Moment represents a shift in the nature of the *Mask* and *Body of Fate*, the "sensuous image," effectively in our aims, values and goals, which set in motion a series of events which reach a climax at the Critical Moment. The Critical

Moment represents a moment of the greatest freedom within an individual life, where the intellect is able to analyse the aims and actions initiated, probably with the help of the *Daimonic* mind, and the individual is able to act with as much free will as he or she is capable of. The Critical Moment is not always reached, and even if it is, this process may be repeated without the individual reaching the third stage of Beatific Vision, where the individual moves into a form of greater wholeness, and possibly Unity of Being.<sup>28</sup>

This is much clearer than the discussion in *A Vision A* (*CW13* 140; *AVA* 172–73), but as a summary it necessarily omits complications. For example, there are two series of IMs and CMs. Yeats explains: “All such subjectives [i.e., extreme examples of their phase] however have experience, if process is completed, of two kinds of IM, called two series & of two kinds of CMs called the First CM & the second CM” (*YVP3* 112, 123). Although there are generally only two CMs in each person’s life, there are at least three named CMs for WBY (see *VNB2*, “My Im & CMs,” *YVP3* 193). As the purpose of the first CM is to free the C[reative] G[enius] [= *Creative Mind*] from the Ego [= *Will*], and the purpose of the second is to free the *Mask* from the P[ersona of] F[ate] [= *Body of Fate*] (*YVP3* 123), perhaps this means that one of Yeats’s CMs was not successful. Also, although it is said that “IMs and CMs are the expression of the Wheel in the life of sexual passion” (*YVP3* 111), it had earlier been stated that “The CM of an objective person is not sexual nor is the IM” (*YVP3* 110). The following discussion is concentrated on the CMs and IMs of two subjective people, W. B. and George Yeats, as is much of the script, so this complication has also been ignored.

In studying the Moments one must bear in mind that it is a developing concept. There is Yeats’s specific note withdrawing legitimacy from several pages of script relating to the Moments: “Much of the information in these scripts about IMs and Cms confused and apparently wrong,” he wrote, and although he suggests this may be to do with confusion of terms and “some uncertainty about ‘victim’ etc.,” Harper is probably correct to caution that the note may extend to much more than the single date where the note appears (*YVP2* 559, relating to *YVP2* 225). We shall see examples shortly of uncertainty about whether a particular event is an IM or a CM or even an OM.

In determining planetary attributions in the script, it was often a matter of guessing the meaning from incomplete fragments. With the CMs and IMs, this problem remains, but a complication has been added. The Yeatses are much further on in the script, and a shorthand known to both of them is in place. The reader must become familiar with references such as “the March horary,” and know that “1913” refers to Mabel Dickinson, making sense of such snippets via external sources and cross-referencing of similar passages. Needless to say, the margin for error is large. The cross-referencing is not always straightforward. To take a simple example of immediate relevance to the Critical Moments, one need only look at the list of CMs and IMs in *VNB2*. George Yeats’s Second Series list begins as follows:

End of April & Nov 1909 [ First Sept  
 <  
 [ Nov finish. [Venus] [Neptune]

(*YVP3* 193; cf. *YVP3* 192, where the relevant script is reproduced as an illustration.)

Here, the reading “Sept” appears to be corroborated by the accompanying illustration, but it is almost certainly incorrect, as the script for 22 July 1919 gives “sight” (*YVP2* 331), as does Card File C51 (*YVP3* 267), but whether this is an editorial error or the Yeatses who have been unable to decipher their own previous handwriting is not something the reader can know without examining the original.<sup>29</sup> Nor is it currently possible to determine whether “first sight” is shorthand for “love at first sight,” although this is probable. On 6 September 1919 Yeats suggested that “at first sight in love it is always [Mars] [Venus] Signs ascending,” and was told that he was correct (*YVP2* 406). Mars and Venus signs are Aries, Taurus, Libra and Scorpio, and each sign ascends once a day, so there are plenty of opportunities on any day of the year for “love at first sight.” Whether the sex of the loved one changes according to the traditional Mars and Venus is not stated.<sup>30</sup>

The IMs and CMs make their first appearance in the automatic script during a discussion of the “March horaries.”<sup>31</sup> These horaries doubtless attracted the attention of the Yeatses because of their unusual grouping of planets (technically called a “stellium,” although the Yeatses used the term “sterium,” *YVP2* 344, 360).<sup>32</sup> As Saddlemyer explains, the March horaries were drawn up for 18 and 20 March 1917, when the Yeatses cast horoscopes “concerning the possibility of marriage.” He obviously cast his horary first to see if conditions were favorable, asking her two days later, despite having reservations (*BG* 207; cf. 87, 97, 207–8). Strangely, both horaries can be read to foretell the astrological nature of the two children the Yeatses would have.<sup>33</sup> And both horaries would eventually join the lists that were drawn up of the respective IMs and CMs for W. B. and George Yeats as memorializing either an IM or a CM. George’s IM horary of “20th March 1917. [Mars] [Venus] 9.15 am.” appears in two lists, the second of which informs us that a conjunction of the two planets is involved, while W. B. Yeats’s horary of 18 March 1917 is identified as a CM connected with a Phase 18 person, obviously George (*YVP3* 192–93, 240–41, 267). Mars and Venus are conjunct in both horaries.

Of especial interest is the first appearance of a dedicated CM/IM list in the script. Ameritus tells Yeats to wait, and then says that he wants “to show you the curious Astrological concurrence with initiatory moments.” A list of months and years then follows, with [Mars] [conjunct] [Venus] after each one. This list is repeated with its conjunctions in CF C51, where Yeats writes, wrongly, that it is “copied from Script with corrections” (it is word for word) (*YVP3* 267). Unfortunately, reality was not quite so neat or accommodating. When this list was transcribed to VNB2 with specific days and times, one or other of the Yeatses had realized that Mars and Venus were not conjunct at any time in 1913, and revised Mars and Venus to Venus and Saturn, which were conjunct in July of that year (*YVP3* 192). Interestingly, one of George’s IMs was literally an initiation: at 3.15 p.m. on 24 July 1914, she was formally admitted to the Golden Dawn (*BG* 65). Needless to say, Mars and Venus were conjunct, with a six-degree separation. Given the astrological background of both Yeatses, one might have thought that the astrological correspondences were not simply of the moment, but would involve transits to natal horoscopes, but this does not appear to be the case. Thus, it would seem that anyone could experience an IM on any date when one of these conjunctions occurred, regardless of his or her birth chart.<sup>34</sup>

Yeats writes, in NB8, “The first CM in man has as its horoscope [Venus] [Saturn] as a rule and the second [Venus] [Mars], or [Venus] [Mars] [Jupiter]—the converse in woman. In woman second CM we get as a rule [Venus] [Saturn] & then [Jupiter].... It is possible

that the IMs do not correspond as exactly to this always as the CMs for my first series IM are I am told [Moon] [Venus] not [Venus] [Saturn] & my second [Sun] [Moon] [Mars] instead of [Venus] [Mars]. (I have not verified this & it may be a mistake)" (*YVP3* 116; cf. *YVP3* 195). This correction seems to have been made on 24 July 1919, where these planets are listed followed by the circled numerals 1 and 2, obviously relating to the two series of IMs and CMs (*YVP2* 336).<sup>35</sup>

Deirdre Toomey is almost certainly correct when she writes that George was still feeling her way, in both the script and the marriage itself, as she was not yet fully aware of the details of her husband's history: "George gets her dates wrong (and hence the Critical Moments and Initiatory Moments) and Yeats becomes a hostile cross-examiner" (*YA10* [1993] 270). Thus George has to guess dates for his affairs with Olivia Shakespear, Maud Gonne and Mabel Dickinson.<sup>36</sup> She was on firmer ground in discussing her own relationship with him. In fact, the overriding concern of the IMs and CMs was to convince Yeats that he and George were destined for each other, and that their fates were inextricable. Thus it is that Yeats writes, "My 2 CM Nativity of First Child | Georges 1 CM [Nativity of] Second Child" (*YVP3* 193) and "all her [Mars] [conjunct] [Venus] IMs connected with W.B.Y." (*YVP3* 267). However, convincing him was not an easy task, as he was often skeptical, and George also overstepped the mark several times, as when she suggested that Maud Gonne's marriage in February 1903 was merely an initiatory prelude to a CM, possibly that of March 1917. The date of Gonne's marriage appears as an IM in the CF A34, but in June 1919 the interpreter corrected WBY by stating that 1903 was "Not an IM" (*YVP2* 311). Doubtless she had gathered, after her initial suggestion, that Yeats would not countenance such a downgrading, so 21 February 1903 duly became an OM when Yeats writes, as a correction for CF A34, "I was said to have OM 'direct effect of past life' when MG married" (*YVP3* 241; cf. "OM. | mine MG marriage," *YVP3* 349). The OM, of course, is the "moment of greatest disquiet" in any life, and it appears to be the "reversal" of the Beatific Vision (*YVP3* 349).<sup>37</sup> Yeats also writes that "Interpreter had OM in July 1916—[Saturn] [Uranus] the same" (*YVP3* 341), which seems to imply that his own OM also featured these two planets. However, this is not the case for the date of Maud Gonne's marriage, and in fact Saturn and Uranus form no aspects in July 1916 either. Oddly, however, they are in opposition for the revised date of George's OM, 24 October 1917, which is the presumed date of Iseult Gonne's unsettling letter or rather the date at which Yeats showed it to his new wife (*YVP2* 520 and note; *YVP3* 349).<sup>38</sup> This event had earlier been identified as one of George's CMs (*YVP2* 224) and CF C3 identifies it as "a crisis...from which philosophy has come." Yeats further states that such a crisis only comes to couples where one is in the "First CM series and the other in Second," these CMs being equated to Venus and Saturn and Mars and Venus respectively. Venus and Saturn are identified with George's CM: "the one who gets true Genius ([Venus] [Saturn]) is expressive (interpreter)" (*YVP3* 249). Neither of these planetary attributions makes sense with George's OM or her husband's version of it (*BG* 101). Even stranger is the fact that the reverse side of CF A34, which had originally identified George's OM as "Nov 21" but later changed it to the October 24 date, continues: "after date of George OM I find 'Now that you have seen Ephemeris what are the important stars?' | [Saturn] [Uranus] [Saturn] because of [Venus] | [Uranus] [because of] [Mercury][]" (*YVP3* 241). Perhaps this too was added later, as it also relates to 24 October 1917, where Saturn is in trine to Venus

and Uranus in trine to Mercury. For Yeats's OM, Saturn and Venus do not have the same aspects, although Saturn is conjunct Mercury and Uranus square Venus. This may mean nothing or it may mean some sort of sexual reversal.

I earlier mentioned that Yeats had three CMs rather than the regulation two. One of these was his consummation of his relationship with Maud Gonne. The date itself shifts in the script and its codification variously from 1910 to 1907 to 1908. One would think that he would have remembered the year if not anything more precise, and the blame for the imprecision cannot be laid at George's door alone. The 1910 date is first given by George as "Ego CG crisis" and this is identified as one of what are "generally two critical moments in a life." The other CM for Yeats is identified as the "horary of March" (*YVP2* 208). He wants to know which of two women his "Ego CG" CM refers to, Olivia Shakespear or Maud Gonne, and is told "The Lioness," meaning Gonne, whose Ascendant was in Leo, and this is confirmed by his later asking, "Taking my I.M. of 1896 [his sexual initiation by Shakespear, the IM which led up to the later CM] & my C.M. of 1910 did 'the pity' of victim in I.M. act on me or MG in 1910" (*YVP2* 229; cf. *YVP3* 118–18). Nevertheless, Warwick Gould thinks that Yeats may have resumed his affair with Shakespear on 31 March 1910 (*YA9* [1992] 301, 307), and the 1910 date for Maud Gonne is corrected several months later, after some rather fruitless talk of previous incarnations: "You spoke of victim in my '96 I.M. & of that victim making possible CM of 1910 (–1907?–)." That this is not an insertion at a later date is shown three questions later, when a definite 1907 is given (*YVP2* 375). When the lists of CMs and IMs are drawn up, the 1910 date has disappeared. *VNB2* gives "CM 1907 or [190]8 (16)," where "16" is Gonne's phase (*YVP3* 193, while the Card File gives "1907 CM | Event. 1 event | Paris" (CF A43, *YVP3* 240). Yeats does not seem to have been in Paris in 1907, although the two met in Dublin in November 1907, but he was in Paris in December 1908, which is when Foster thinks the long courtship was consummated (*Life1* 386, 393, 603 n172). Given the equivocation of the automatic script, the date seems reasonable enough. Foster has relied on the advice of Elizabeth Heine regarding a horary, probably the one mentioned in Kenny as NLI MS 36,273/4, "1908 (while visiting Gonne in Paris)" (*OPWBY* 46). One might also remember that WBY had written that "the CMs for my first series IM are I am told [Moon] [Venus] not [Venus] [Saturn]" (*YVP3* 116). The first two planets are conjunct on 20 and 21 December 1908, whereas the second two are not conjunct at all during that month.

#### IV

One conclusion to be drawn from this paper, unsurprisingly, is that things that are proposed in the automatic script get tacitly dropped as the system develops and becomes both more complicated and simpler and that one should beware of reading later developments into earlier. In other words, not all of the revisions are noted as such and attributable to the Frustrators; the sands do indeed shift. Rather than adopting a derisory attitude to these changes, one can and perhaps should regard them as belonging to the scientific approach whereby one proposes hypotheses and then discards them for others when they are found not to work. But there are more important lessons to be drawn from the book than any apparent conformity with scientific principles. The system, Yeats says, was the joint creation of his *Daimon* and the *Daimon* of his wife (*AVB* 22). It could be said that this is

offered as an excuse for the failings of the system, particularly with respect to the parts that did not make it to the final published work. The analogies to the natal charts, allocating planets to either *primary* or *antithetical Tincture*, and then planets to the *Four Faculties*, may have worked (roughly speaking) for the two principal authors, but I think they wisely stopped while they were ahead. Thus it was that only the very general suggestion remained that horoscope and cycle needed to be considered as well as phase. Certainly many of those parts of *A Vision's* more private arcana did not make it to the published editions.

Yet I do not think that the thesis that *Daimons* created the system is offered as an excuse for its failings. It does not absolve either Yeats or his wife from responsibility. It is simply a statement of fact. The *Daimons* told the Yeatses what they needed to hear. The crisis that was their marriage forced both of them to confront ultimate shipwreck and to salvage what they could. George Yeats may have thought she was distracting her husband from his own thoughts but in the end she brought him back to where the two of them began, so that they knew the place for the first time, once again, and knew their place in it. After all, a *Daimon* is only one's own ultimate self.

But what of the general principles of *A Vision*? Can anyone other than the two Yeatses, or perhaps it was only ever one of them, draw succor or solace from the book's ideas? The theories of Initiatory and Critical Moments quite obviously have a general validity, offering as they do novel ways of understanding peak experiences and how they do or do not fit in with our normal lives. They are also the parts of *A Vision* which can be most seamlessly extracted from the whole; in fact, similar theories have been adumbrated by others. In her book *Astrology: A Place in Chaos*, the astrologer Bernadette Brady has delineated a "chaotic astrology," which sees a person's life "as containing two types of periods: that of when the person was living within their comfort zone and that of when they were moving through a tipping point."<sup>39</sup> According to her thesis, the planetary patterns in a horoscope can be seen to function rather as strange attractors in chaos theory, while the sensitive points in the horoscope as indicated by such things as transiting planets aspecting the natal planets may be compared to chaos theory's saddle points, where bifurcations seem to open up in what had previously appeared to be a stable system. While Brady does not mention Yeats, the Yeatsian alternatives of Choice and Chance are very much at the forefront of her thinking. The analogies with the astrology of Initiatory and Critical Moments should not need to be spelt out. As for such things as types of people, historical cycles and the stages of life after death leading to rebirth, I myself do not believe in some of these things, or at least not in precisely the same way, but they do seem to me to be as adequate as any other metaphor that people have come up with to explain life and give meaning to it. "Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth," wrote Blake.<sup>40</sup> At the time of his assassination, the Romanian scholar Ioan Couliano was working towards a theory that combined structuralist principles with D'Arcy Thompson's morphodynamics to come up with something that looks to me rather like the Process Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, whereby Eternal Objects ingress into Actual Entities. According to Couliano's thesis, systems of great complexity can be built up from quite simple premises, rather as nature can be seen as being generated in a fractal-like manner, or as *A Vision* grows out of the two *Tinctures*, *antithetical* and *primary*, and eventually encompasses all of life.<sup>41</sup> One may compare the two halves of the human brain, with their branching neural connections, which seem often to follow predetermined pathways but which sometimes

spark and create something completely new and surprising. In his own way, Yeats has tapped into a universal principle, and the system he and his wife created perhaps allowed him a glimpse into how things work.

In the end, *A Vision* serves to remind us that we can never truly know anything. We think we are examining the nature of the external world and find that we have simply returned to the mind's own imaginings: "As mummies in the mummy-cloth are wound" is how Yeats put it (*AVB* 305: the book's final words, apart from the flourish "Oxford, Autumn 1920"). In short, the book is an invitation to wake up. The truth, like rising in the spirit or the glorified or celestial body, is beyond all cycles. *A Vision* shows us how difficult it is to escape determinism. The explanations that we come up with are only so many stories, some more convincing than others, some of which will trip us up if we continue to believe them, some of which cocoon us safely so that we never need to question them. It is the very strangeness of the Yeateses' system, its distance from what most of their contemporaries were writing about, that is unsettling and ultimately most fulfilling. Yeats was never as silly as Auden and the audience he presumed to speak for. There are mirrors and mirrors, to use another of Yeats's metaphors, and mind is the trickiest of them all.

### Notes

1. PIAL Notebook, NLI MS 36,276, entry dated 4 June 1909, quoted by Elizabeth Heine, "Yeats and Maud Gonne: Marriage and the Astrological Record, 1908–09," *YA13* (1999) 26.
2. Of course, the twelve cycles are related to the astrological ages but these are not my concern here. See Matthew Gibson's essay in this volume "Timeless and Spaceless," 15ff.
3. The later equation of "the seventh house of the horoscope where one finds friend and enemy" with *Mask* and *Body of Fate* (*AVB* 213) is not so much a description of the actual mechanics as it is a picturesque analogy, alluding to the previous meditation published in *Autobiographies* and, after Yeats's death, in *Memoirs* 165–66. See also *Memoirs* 217: "Does it [meaning Yeats's difficulties with friendship] come from [Mars] in VII (house of partners, etc.), [opposition] [Moon] in I?" This refers to WBY's natal horoscope, where Moon in the first house is in opposition to Mars in the seventh.
4. Deirdre Toomey wisely cautions that *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* had not been published when the script began (*YA10* [1998] 268), but it is almost certain that the term "antithetical," first used in the script in November 8, came from there. It appears as though WBY used the term in an unrecorded question (*YVPI* 64), and GY must have been quickly brought up to speed. In a way, the automatic script is an extended drawing out of the implications of *Per Amica*: the concept of the Critical Moments, which I discuss later, is obviously heavily dependent on *Per Amica*'s idea that the function of the *Daimon* is to bring the soul to crisis.
5. In generating charts, I have used Walter D. Pullen's free astrological program Astrolog, version 5.14G, obtainable from <http://www.magitech.com/~cruiser1/astrolog.htm>, along with several other packages I have picked up over the years. For example, to determine what phase a person would be if the distance between Sun and Moon in the natal horoscope was the determining factor, I have used Clairvision's Canopus, which I downloaded when it was freeware. For determining times when aspects can occur, I have used Configuration Hunter, available from <http://www.configurationhunter.com>. There are of course numerous software packages available, some more expensive than others, just as there are websites that will generate a chart for you.

The reader should take care, however, that the chart generated by whatever package for WBY does not have its Ascendant in Capricorn. Thus, the chart in the compendium of Aleister Crowley's astrological writings, *The General Principles of Astrology*, is taken from Lois Rodden's Astro-Databank but is not the one that will make sense to a reader of Yeats, for whom his Ascendant was in Aquarius. Crowley himself used the Aquarius Ascendant for Yeats, thus necessitating an amendment on the part of Crowley's editor; see Aleister Crowley with Evangeline Adams, *The General Principles of Astrology*, ed. Hymenaeus Beta (York Beach, ME: Weiser, 1992), 576 n190. There are a couple of considerations here: First, his birth time of 10:40 p.m. was local time, not Greenwich Mean Time; so if a program does not allow for Local Mean

Time, the birth time should be amended to 11:05 p.m. Second, Yeats was born in Sandymount in Dublin (53N20 6W14), not Sandymount in Louth (53N58 6W22). The chart he himself prepared is reproduced in Elizabeth Heine, "W. B. Yeats' map in his own hand," *Biography* 1:3 (1978) 37–50, and the data is: ASC 0Aqu41, MC 4Sag15, Sun 22Gem51, Moon 19Aqu45, Mercury 3Gem57, Venus 13Tau21, Mars 12Leo2, Jupiter 24Sag19Rx, Saturn 23Lib46Rx, Uranus 29Gem16, and Neptune 10Ari21. The latitude and longitude used is N53.23 and W6.20, GMT 23:05:20, Sidereal time 16:09:03. Alan Leo used "information supplied from Private Sources" for entry no. 960 in *A Thousand and One Notable Nativities* (1911 [*WBGYL* 1113; *YL* 1103]; 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Mokelumne Hill, CA: Health Research, 1978), 49, 98–99. Leo rounded the data to degrees only, though rounding the Ascendant down to 0° Aquarius rather than up. *A Thousand and One Notable Nativities* was used by Crowley for his horoscopes, and one may presume that Doctor Sturm did likewise, thus making it somewhat easier for him to have worked over three hundred horoscopes to check the phases of the Moon (*LTWBY2* 381).

As Saddlemyer explains, George Yeats's birth date was 17 Oct 1892, but she always used the day before, probably as a result of rectification (*BG* 15, 661 n18, 662 n19). In *YVP3* 359, there is a chart for the progression of GY's chart from her supposed birth date of 16 Oct 1892, 8:25 a.m. As a check of Robert Anthony Martinich's 1982 dissertation "W. B. Yeats's 'Sleep and Dream Notebooks'" p. 25 shows, what is concealed in the published *YVP* as "diagram: unlabelled horary signed GH1" (*YVP3* 21) is in fact GY's natal horoscope. Despite the publication of *YVP*, Martinich's dissertation (Florida State University, PhD, 1982; UMI 8416718) remains necessary to the scholar, as it prints diagrams omitted from *YVP* and occasionally has the correct astrological signs where the published version does not. It should be noted that GY puts her own ASC on 13Sco20 and Moon at 4Vir2. For the Moon to be at 4Vir2, the ASC would have to be at 5Sco36. This just goes to show the limitations of chart construction done in the days before computers. The rest of GY's data as she saw it is as follows: MC 30Leo, Sun 23Lib35, Moon 4Vir2, Mercury 29Lib17, Venus 9Vir12, Mars 17Aqu40, Saturn 5Lib57, Jupiter 19Ari23, Neptune 11Gem1, Uranus 5Sco47 (Martinich, p. 25). I do not think the differences between this data and that generated by my software are at all material, but give the data in case anyone thinks differently.

Lady Gregory writes in *Seventy Years: Being the Autobiography of Lady Gregory*, edited and with a foreword by Colin Smythe (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1974), 1: "At the midnight hour between the fourteenth and fifteenth of March 1852, the planet Jupiter, so astrologers say, being in mid heaven, a little girl was born at Roxborough that is in Connacht." Jupiter is actually conjunct the Ascendant.

Maud Gonne's birth data has been taken from Elizabeth Heine's article "Yeats and Maud Gonne: Marriage and the Astrological Record, 1908–09," 6–8 (21 December 1866, in Aldershot, in the afternoon or evening, time "rectified" to 6.40 p.m. for WB). Iseult Gonne gives her birth data to WB in *Letters to W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound from Iseult Gonne: A girl that knew all Dante once*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares, Anna MacBride White and Christina Bridgewater (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 63 (6 August 1894, in Paris, at 3 a.m.), whilst the date of Harry Tucker's birth, but not the time, is given in John Harwood, *Olivia Shakespear and W. B. Yeats: After Long Silence* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 5 ("on 7 March 1866 at Wharton Grange, Framfield, a small village in the north-east of Sussex"). The precise time of birth is needed to determine the position of the Ascendant, but the use to which Tucker's data is put does not necessitate knowing what his Ascendant was.

6. For a succinct explanation of why the Moon is part-ruler of Yeats's chart, see Neil Mann's web page on Alan Leo and the Yeates' charts, <http://www.YeatsVision.com/Leo.html>.
7. Any astrological textbook will define these relationships, which are derived from divisions of the circle. As a methodological preference, I generally eschew textbooks that the Yeateses could not have used, and would recommend others to do the same, but these definitions are standard. Rory Ryan helpfully notes that the astrological "opposition" is used by Yeats in *A Vision* with the same meaning, while "square" equates to a discord ("The Opening and Closing of the *Tictures*," *YA17* [2007] 216). Generally speaking, Ryan uses all sorts of modern astrology textbooks, thereby weakening his arguments. I cannot forbear to mention that, when earlier in his piece Ryan says I have a different interpretation of the phrase "its Phase 8" than the one he holds, I disagree with his disagreement. "Its Phase 8" means "a quarter of the way round the Wheel." Any other interpretation would necessitate the use of the phrase "its half of Phase 8," and Yeats does not say this.
8. Of course, a planet may straddle signs in a horoscope, but my inclination is to believe that the Yeateses allocated more definitely than this. There is a problem with Maud Gonne's allotment as well. In her chart, there is no way of constructing hemispheres such that Mars and Venus can be in separate halves while the Moon is grouped with Venus. One may perhaps interpret this impossibility as having something to do with GY's reluctance to examine anything to do with MG at all closely.

9. Their position was consistent with that of Alan Leo, as stated in the Glossary appended to *Horary Astrology* (London: Modern Astrology, 1907), 126: “[Uranus] and [Neptune] have had no houses accorded them, but are considered strong in [Aquarius] and [Pisces] respectively.” This book appears in the “1920s Catalogue of W. B. Yeats’s Library,” *YA4* (1986) 285.
  10. The need to find another male exemplar perhaps explains why Harold Tucker here makes one of his few appearances in the automatic script. It seems, however, that WBY did not take GY’s hints as to how to determine the nature of the planets. Later, in connection with a different schema, he will ask “How do you get [Saturn] primary [Venus] anti from this figure in my case?” (*YVPI* 119). The short answer is that one cannot, as I later show.
  11. With the horoscopes in front of one, the other planets can easily be added, on the assumption that this is the correct method. I list the allocations for WBY later.
  12. Ryan, *YA17* (2007) 343 suggests that “Fall” is named for the season. His citation from the *Vision Papers* seems apt. However, Yeats states that Mathers would talk of the “Fall of the Daimon” (*YVP3* 96), and I would hesitate to rule this out as a source, along with its theological associations. Moreover, in astrology, a planet when it is in the sign opposite to that in which it has exaltation is said to be in its “fall.” Given that the opposite of “Fall” in *A Vision* is “Head,” which one may equate to exaltation, this may be even more apposite.
  13. Here, “stage” may be equated to the later “phase.” It should be noted that when the Yeatses wrote the term “birth sign” did not mean what it now means in the age of newspaper horoscopes tailored to a mass audience, viz. the Sun sign, but referred rather to the sign rising in the Ascendant. In order to know what the Ascendant is, one must know the precise time of birth. Such a complication is obviously of no use if a horoscope is to be general enough to interest someone who does not know what his or her Ascendant is. Note that Saddlemyer writes, of Anne Yeats, that she was a “Gemini with her sun in Pisces” (*BG* 205), although later she characterizes Michael Yeats as “a Leo with Virgo rising” (*BG* 278). The latter usage is more consistent with current practice.
  14. As a comment on the diagram it accompanies, this comment is mystifying: what does “compare” mean here? It is a reasonable assumption that the Yeatses knew their phase numbers on November 24, which is the date of this script. It is inconceivable that GY would say that Phase 17 is that phase where “The Ego is in greatest capacity for artistic creation” (*YVPI* 116) without having first decided that this was WBY’s phase. It is interesting that Yeats also notes how his Ascendant is in Aquarius, which is the next World Age. This topic ties in with that of the Third and Fourth Daimons, which I find rather tiresome because of its insistence on seeing the Yeats children as the new avatars, but I imagine that I or someone else will have to bite the bullet on this in order to understand the meaning of much of the script.
  15. The positions of these two wheels reverse what will later become the principle that “the greater circle is always primary in relation to that which turns more quickly and within” (*CW13* 121; *AVA* 149). As the phrase has it, “Lunar South in [*sic*: is] Solar East” (*AVB* 188).
  16. Note that the central circle of the illustrated horoscope is not being referred to here, where Aries is at 12 o’clock. In the original diagram reproduced in *YVP* the sign that looks like an upside-down Aries at roughly 8 o’clock must in fact be a badly drawn Leo.
- Editors’ note:* The automatic script’s diagram of 25 November 1917 actually appears as part of the National Library of Ireland’s virtual Yeats exhibition ([www.nli.ie/yeats/](http://www.nli.ie/yeats/), under “Interactives,” “An Occult Marriage”; consulted March 2011).
17. Peter Kenny, *Collection List No. 60: Occult Papers of W. B. Yeats* held in the National Library of Ireland, see [www.nli.ie/pdfs/mm%20lists/yeatsoccult.pdf](http://www.nli.ie/pdfs/mm%20lists/yeatsoccult.pdf). Hereafter *OPWBY* in text.
  18. For this, see *YVPI* 522. Brenda Maddox has used this particular script to “prove” that GY had used the stars to catch WBY. See *George’s Ghosts: A New Life of W. B. Yeats* (London: Harper Collins, 1999), 95. However, I read “Your March horary” as referring to WBY, so it was WBY who was looking to be married. For more on the March horaries, see later.
  19. I would like to thank Neil for his generosity in sharing his transcriptions with me, and for his encouragement in general. Needless to say, I wholeheartedly recommend his website, <http://www.YeatsVision.com/>, to anyone who wants an introduction to *A Vision*. He touches on several of the topics discussed here. I have had many private discussions with him about these and other matters, and we have had numerous points of agreement and disagreement, but I think that what I have written here is my own. I should like to thank him for preventing me from making several serious errors. Needless to say, any errors that remain are entirely my responsibility.
  20. The arbitrariness of the type of wheel that one needs to draw to get these attributions is surely indicative of a problem with the general application of the idea. It is also probably indicative of the fact that the Yeatses,

while being competent astrologers, did not really think about what it all meant in terms of astronomy, in other words, whether it was the ecliptic being divided into twelve, the earth's equator or a celestial point's semi-arc: they most probably only ever learnt one method and stuck with it, without ever realizing that there were other ways of drawing charts.

21. The same planets and allocation are given on a blank page in the script for 27 January 1918, following a question about historical cycles. See *YVPI* 296 and 533 n252. It is apparent that the editors think these allocations relate to historical cycles rather than to an individual's horoscope.
22. Mercury is in fact in Phase 16 rather than in Phase 17, but is close enough to be imagined to be in Phase 17. Had the Ascendant been placed at the start of Phase 18, instead of at the center, then Mercury would quite clearly have been in Phase 16.
23. Once again, I thank Neil Mann for assistance with NLI documents. The corresponding note in *CWL3* refers to a completely different diagram, NLI MS 36,253/12, which accompanies the script of January 1918 (*YVPI* 275), but the note at *YVPI* 531 n214 appears to refer to NLI MS 36,274/26, although Harper says that diagram has "twenty-two numbers on the outside." In fact, the NLI diagram includes three concentric circles with the 22 numbering on the inside one, and the numbers I to X and the numbers 1 to 28 both on the outside. The diagram also includes the cardinal points, the signs of the zodiac and the signs for Head, Heart, Loins and Fall.
24. An entry of 4 June 1918 mentions using a similar method for horary astrology, which seeks to answer questions about current events: "in horaries on phases the person asking the question places the quesited [subject of the question] at phases unless the question is about himself only—If judged as event put house representing event at phase—nature of event—question of VIIIth house obviously as it was a question of marriage" (*YVPI* 475).
25. See <http://www.YeatsVision.com/Lunation.html>.
26. See *Phases of the Moon: A Guide to Evolving Human Nature* by Marilyn Busted, Richard Tiffany and Dorothy Wergin (Berkeley and London: Shambhala, 1974), revised edition by Busted and Wergin only (Tempe, AZ: American Federation of Astrologers, 1981). I simplify somewhat here. Busted et al. have two methods of determining phases, only one of which uses equal phase division. In *Moon Phases: A Symbolic Key* (West Chester, PA; Whitford Press, 1988) Martin Goldsmith prefers what Busted et al. call the solar method, which allocates 30 degrees to each of Phases 1, 8, 15 and 22 and ten degrees to all the other phases. This method derives from those diagrams in *A Vision* where Yeats gives greater emphasis to the four phases of crisis than to the other phases. They have thus taken what was a visual symbolism to be literal fact. David T. Wilkinson also had a website devoted to Moon Phases up until about 2003, but only a few of his pages survive on the Internet archive, <http://web.archive.org>. However, Neil Mann lists a published book in his bibliography, which I have not seen: *Your Inner Phase* (private [MyPub.com], 1997). The distance between Yeats's Sun and Moon is 237 degrees, which gives Phase 19 on an equal-phased wheel. Stuart Hirschberg long ago attempted to demonstrate that such a calculation would give Yeats's phase as Phase 17, although his calculations appear to be based on a misreading of Raphael's Ephemeris (*At the Top of the Tower: Yeats's Poetry Explored through "A Vision"* [Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitäts Verlag, 1979], 145). Of course, the learned Dr Sturm had tried this method even earlier, and finding it did not work (*LTWBY2* 381), resorted to looking at the distance between Sun and Moon in the prenatal epoch (*LTWBY2* 383), only to be told by Yeats that he was wasting his time (*FPS* 88). See the summary by Neil Mann at <http://www.YeatsVision.com/Astrology.html>.
27. That is, if we are to relate to the Opening of the *Tinctures* the lines which state "IM Past (a closing) | CM Present (deivision)," *YVP3* 257 and *YVP2* 233. See also *YVP3* 272, where WBY says that "the resemblance between p[hase]25 & description in CM IM (1) card of womans second CM ([Venus] [Saturn]) suggests the following, 11–12 to 18–19 = mans 1 CM & 25–26 to 4–5 woman 2 CM." The relevant part of the description of the woman's second CM in the "CM IM (1)" card reads as follows: "In [woman's] second CM man is always object of pity 'isolation of the helpless' is real pity...[R]emember identification by isolation of the helpless with p25" (*YVP3* 273).

My discussion of the dates of the CMs and IMs is largely dependent on the assistance given by Elizabeth Heine to Ann Saddlemyer, as utilized in *Becoming George*. For general discussions of CMs and IMs, one may consult *MYV*, Margaret Mills Harper, *Wisdom of Two: The Spiritual; and Literary Collaboration of George and W. B. Yeats* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), and Janis Tedesco Haswell, *Pressed Against Divinity: W. B. Yeats's Feminine Masks* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997). Barbara J. Frieling's extended discussion in "The 'Moments of Crisis' in Yeats's *Vision Papers*," *YACTS10* (1992) 281–95, has by no means been superseded.

Ellmann was amongst the first to recognize the importance of the Moments. Although he was under the misapprehension that WBY was just beginning to work out the conception in 1938, his referencing of WBY's letter to Ethel Mannin of 9 October 1938 is important; see Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 213–14, and *L* 916–17. One may also note the use of “moment” in the “Seven Propositions,” quoted by Ellmann on p. 236. As I have pointed out elsewhere, the “Seven Propositions” were originally drafted in 1929. See also Neil Mann's <http://www.YeatsVision.com/7Propositions.html> for the different iterations of the Seven Propositions.

28. See <http://www.YeatsVision.com/Terminology.html>.
29. Note that Harper gives “sight” in *MYV2* 234. In *YVP2* 331, “First sight” is allocated first to October 1910, and then to April 1909, causing Harper et al. some puzzlement, and it is the latter date that stuck. Saddlemyer points out that GY had her traditional “coming out” in October 1910 (*BG* 29), so that would qualify as a “first” of some description.
30. As for “Nov finish,” GY's father died on 18 November that year, and on that day Venus and Neptune were in opposition. See *BG* 43. See also *YVP2* 213 and *BG* 664 n37 for “glass door.”
31. This is also the script where GY changes her appellation from “Medium” to “Interpreter.” It is, significantly enough, the first script after the birth of Anne Yeats (*YVP2* 200), and various commentators have made much of the change of title, but both questioner and answerer used the term “medium” indifferently in later scripts as well. Cynics may choose to regard the introduction of the Moments of Crisis as GY's almost completely successful tactic to distract WBY from the failure of the communicators to predict the sex of the Yeateses' first child. Nevertheless, as I go on to show, the concept remains valid in itself.
32. If “sterium” is an accurate transcription, I suggest that the Yeateses misremembered “stellium” via confusion with asterism [Editors' note: the microfilm of the script supports the transcription]. Modern astrologers have tended to see an Anglo-American split in the usage of “stellium” and its synonym “satellitium,” with “stellium” being favored in the United States. “Stellium” is however the usage given in James Wilson's original *A Complete Dictionary of Astrology* (London: William Hughes, 1819), which the Yeateses owned (*WBGYL* 2299; *YL* 2284). I suspect it is their source, as it is also for the sole citation in the OED under “stellium”: “Stellium, a crowd of planets in an angle.... So far as my observation extends, a stellium of 4 or 5 planets in any part of the radix always produces in the course of the native's existence some tremendous catastrophe” (380) (I am grateful to Neil Mann for checking the 1819 edition for me). For the March horaries, which differ from natal charts in any case, although horary astrology treats specific moments as births, GY seemed to think the patterning “remarkable,” and did not comment on possible disaster. The horaries of 18 March 1917 and 20 March 1917 are discussed in *BG* 87, 97, 207–8.
33. I confess I do not understand which horary Heine means when she says, of “George and Willy's union” that it is “the first horary, Moon conjunct Saturn” (*BG* 207), but the two March horaries make sense with the comments which follow in Saddlemyer about the two children.
34. The horary of 29 July 1913 at 2.30 p.m. has Venus and Saturn conjunct GY's natal Neptune, which might be considered auspicious as it could be interpreted to signify GY's psychic abilities, but the other dates do not seem to have any significant transits. As Saddlemyer notes, there is a problem with the date “17<sup>th</sup> or 22 Nov 1915 [Mars] [conjunct] [Venus] 2.15 p.m. Sunday,” as neither of these dates falls on Sunday in that year (*BG* 80). However, the 22<sup>nd</sup> is a Sunday in 1914, so it is probable that a transcription error by the Yeateses was involved, as significant events occurred in November in both years. Mars and Venus were conjunct on 22 November 1914.
35. I am unsure if the date “July end 1916” which follows is meant to be linked to CMs or IMs. Harper et al. mistakenly link the date to Maud Gonne, whereas VNB2 links that date to Phase 14, Iseult Gonne's phase (*YVP3* 193). Moon and Venus are conjunct in late July 1916, but the list in VNB2 seems to imply that the date corresponds to an IM (*YVP3* 193). If WBY's second CM is the nativity of his first child, then Venus and Mars is correct, rather than Sun, Moon and Mars.
36. I should add here that WBY himself was not always sure of his own dates. It is only astrologers, inveterate diarists and those seeking alibis who remember precise dates, and WBY was not an astrologer at all times, unlike his wife, and only a fitful diarist. Nor is it always possible for an astrologer who has memorialized an event with a horary to lay hands on the record at a given moment. As an interesting example of hostile cross-examination, one may note that WBY queries the use of 11 degrees separation in what GY claimed was a conjunction (*YVP2* 530).
37. Harper et al. suggest that the OM may be “[an]other BV Moment,” *YVP2* 559 n29, referencing the automatic script of 22 December 1919 (*YVP2* 521). Further investigation of the geometry in CF O6 may confirm this suggestion (*YVP3* 349). Note that there is a misprint in Harper's Index for “OM” (*YVP2*

593), where 419–21 should read 519–21. The precise meaning of “OM” remains a mystery. Like Barbara Frieling, I had concluded that it most probably meant “Objective Moment,” but Frieling offers several reasons in support of what, for me, was only a hunch. See “The ‘Moments of Crisis’ in Yeats’s *Vision Papers*,” 291–92. I might add that the lack of explanation of the term may intentionally add mystery to it, and that it has overtones of “ominous” and of the Sanskrit “OM,” which obliterates all distinction.

38. Cf. *BG* 101, 691 n193, 691 n194, and Frieling, “The ‘Moments of Crisis’ in Yeats’s *Vision Papers*,” 290–91.
39. Bernadette Brady, *Astrology: A Place in Chaos* (Bournemouth: The Wessex Astrologer, 2006), quotation from p. 160. Brady herself warns against drawing simplistic parallels in order to give oneself the illusion of understanding. The proof of the parallels are in what one can make of them
40. *The Complete Writings of William Blake with Variant Readings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 151.
41. Ioan P. Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992). See also Couliano’s *Out of This World: Otherworldly Journeys from Gilgamesh to Albert Einstein* (Berkeley and London: Shambhala, 1991). Couliano nowhere mentions Whitehead, but his analogies with the three-dimensional spoon dipping into two-dimensional Flatland remind me irresistibly of Whitehead’s theory of ingression. For Couliano, the Flatlanders cannot grasp the full spoon, just as we cannot grasp a fully thought-out system of thought, but must piece it together from the two-dimensional slices that unfold in time, or perhaps one should say, one must piece it together from the slices that create time in their unfolding. For WBY, the particulars are likewise the work of the *Thirteenth Cone*. As he says in the Seven Propositions: “The acts and nature of a Spirit during any one life are a section or abstraction of reality and are unhappy because incomplete. They are a gyre or part of a gyre, whereas reality is a sphere” (Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats*, 237).

## “METAPHORS FOR POETRY”: CONCERNING THE POEMS OF *A VISION* AND CERTAIN PLAYS FOR DANCERS

by Wayne K. Chapman

### I

Less than four years after the elaborately conceited *A Vision A* was published, subtitled *An Explanation of Life founded upon the Writings of Giraldus and upon Certain Doctrines Attributed to Kusta Ben Luka* (to acknowledge sources of the poet's invention), Yeats's *modus operandi* was revealed in the beautifully written *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (Cuala Press, 1929; Wade 163), in the section entitled “Introduction to ‘The Great Wheel.’” Almost as soon as *A Vision A* had been committed irretrievably to the hands of its publisher, T. Werner Laurie, Yeats had begun rewriting it. As an apologia written by one contemporary poet to another, *A Packet for Ezra Pound* eventually accompanied the 1931 *Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends: An Extract from a Record Made by His Pupils* (Wade 167; without the dance play *The Resurrection*) to become the formal entry way into the standard, remade, and amplified interior of *A Vision B*. The story of *A Vision* in the making, both A and B versions, provides multiple contexts for this study of the function of poetry in the service of those versions, as well as of poems and plays in verse coincident with the writing and rewriting of this difficult book.

Of course, the revelation of *A Packet* and *A Vision B* is that Mrs. Yeats and supposed spirit guides collaborated with the poet to develop a symbolic body of thought from a mode of “expression that unites the sleeping and waking mind” (*AVB* 23), and to create “stylistic arrangements of experience” analogous to abstract modern art (*AVB* 25). The “whole system,” he claimed, was “the creation of my wife's Daimon and of mine” (*AVB* 22), based on an assumption that “all the gains of man come from conflict with the opposite of his true being” (*AVB* 13). He reported that the instructors had said (without a verbatim equivalent in the automatic script): “we have come to give you metaphors for poetry” (*AVB* 8). Thanks to George Mills Harper's *The Making of Yeats's ‘A Vision,’* one is spared repeating much of his well-known account, particularly as a more recent study by Margaret Mills Harper is excerpted and available elsewhere in this anthology.<sup>1</sup> Rather, the work undertaken here builds on my own research on the Yeatses as a collaborating couple engaged to promote the poetry written by one of them. Naturally enough, that research has occasionally involved the poems printed entirely, or in part, in *A Vision A*, *A Vision B*, or both, as well as the half-dozen outriders in experimental theater, 1917–1924, that dramatized themes in the manner of the Noh but also issues raised in philosophical investigations conducted by the duo. Aimed primarily at Yeats's creative writing, the upshot of late has been a book entitled *Yeats's Poetry in the Making: ‘Sing Whatever Is Well Made,’*<sup>2</sup> to which I refer the reader for contexts, materials, and lines of inquiry not necessarily considered here.

To begin, one must consider the 1919 Macmillan edition of *The Wild Swans at Coole*, chronologically the vessel that might have gathered all of Yeats's uncollected po-

etry between Macmillan's 31 May 1916 agreement with the poet for a first edition of *Responsibilities and Other Poems* (London, 10 October 1916)<sup>3</sup> and their 26 September 1918 formal agreement for *The Wild Swans at Coole*, with subsequent associated correspondence, up to 3 December 1918, on the question of rights to poems first published in English and American journals.<sup>4</sup> *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) was an artistic success that dramatized the amelioration of several opposed or tangent currents in Yeats's life. At least three bodies of work coalesced in this book. One is the poetry of a dejected, middle-aged man, as formulated in the twenty-three poems reprinted from *The Wild Swans at Coole* (Dundrum: Cuala Press, 1917), which Ronald Schuchard has called Yeats's "Pruffrock volume."<sup>5</sup> Opposed to this is the second, a spousal love poetry first issued as *Nine Poems* (privately printed by Clement Shorter, 1918). Related to these poems and to experiments in automatic writing begun by Mrs. Yeats in October 1917, a third type of verse developed from subjects investigated in philosophical antecedents such as *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (Macmillan, 1918). For reasons of diplomacy, the wars in Ireland are an absence even though the poet had *not* been silent and even though the European war, wryly acknowledged as a statesman's affair in the epigram "On being asked for a War Poem" (written in February 1915), shattered the calm reflection of the title poem with insertion of the Robert Gregory elegies and dramatic monologue of 1918, written in a period of relative peace during a sometimes broken, three-year sojourn outside Ireland, in Sussex, Oxford, and America. In contrast to the fertility of husband and wife in the marketing of manuscripts and literary projects to support the family they had begun during that same sojourn, regret and anguish presided over the poems written in 1915 about Maud Gonne. In spite of melding, amplifying, and cooking the Cuala book until it became, as a whole, an object of art fully better than any of its constituents, the poems "His Phoenix," "A Deep-Sworn Vow," "Broken Dreams," and "Presences" exhibit his willingness to be believed still troubled by the death of his love for her and by his bad luck with Iseult Gonne, to whom he had proposed marriage in 1916 and 1917.

The relevance of such facts to the making of *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) has been demonstrated in Stephen Parrish's edition of the manuscripts in the Cornell Yeats series.<sup>6</sup> Much of the context relates to several poems that Yeats deferred to his next book, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (Dundrum: Cuala Press, 1921), anticipating a return to public life in Ireland with the formation of the Free State. A synthesis of different styles and politics was achieved in assembling five rebellion poems with ten lyrics in 1921—including several contributions to the war between the sexes—seemingly to forge a link with ensuing poems of conflict in *The Tower* and later volumes of poetry. The return to public life was soon marked in London by Macmillan's publication of *Later Poems* (1922), which, with the latest T. Fisher Unwin edition of *Poems*, presented to the general public the most complete and textually up-to-date compendium of Yeats's lyric poetry then available.<sup>7</sup> As Parrish observes, "By pairing 'The Phases of the Moon' with 'The Double Vision of Michael Robartes' at the close of [*The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919)], Yeats clearly intended to signal his turn away from the prevailing mode of the 1917 [Cuala] volume and his work from his marriage onward" (xxxv). As I have dealt elsewhere with the radical displacement of the chronology of poems in this transitional period as well as the reasons for it, it is now my objective to address the poetry of *A Vision*

along the following bifurcated track suggested to me by the two pivotal poems of 1918 as cited by Parrish.<sup>8</sup>

## II

A few months into his marriage and given the occasion of the death of Major Robert Gregory in Italy, Yeats turned in his reading to Spenser, Virgil, and Theocritus to determine how best, while making an elegy, to impose upon pastoral dialogue the exposition of an occult tableau. Spenser's well-known Neo-Platonic prolixity, as Yeats noticed particularly in *The Faerie Queene's* Garden of Adonis and in the geometric riddle of stanza II.ix.22, established precedent for Yeats's application of Platonic theology derived from Thomas Taylor and Henry More.<sup>9</sup> The automatic script of early 1918 was turned into literary capital after the fashion of Spenser's tribute to Sir Philip Sidney (see *L* 646–48 and 650).<sup>10</sup> By June, apparently after a period in which Mrs. Yeats had been away, such efforts had produced a fictional prose dialogue with a connection in manuscript to the poem “The Phases of the Moon” (*MYV2* 30 and 421n).<sup>11</sup> The poem, in its prose context, however, seems formally to be inspired more directly by the example of Walter Savage Landor than by Plato. (Yeats then owned copies of *The Dialogues* and *The Republic* but does not seem really to have encountered the Greco-Roman Platonists until later.)<sup>12</sup> “The Phases of the Moon” acknowledges, also, a few honest debts of Yeats's past. The clustering of Milton, Shelley, Palmer, Blake, and Pater in orbit around a didactic corpus (*VP* 373–77, ll. 31–123; *CWI* 165–68) is characteristic of the poet's attempt to lend reality to the abstractions of psychic research in order to make them intelligible.<sup>13</sup> In embryonic state, the poem and prose dialogue of which it was part promised “simple” wisdom which could not have fully anticipated, as a prolusion, the philosophical toil of the next two decades. And like “Ego Dominus Tuus”—a dialogue completed late in 1915, affixed as a proem to the philosophical reflections of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* in 1918, and set before the later poem in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) but for the intervening “A Prayer on going into my House”—“The Phases of the Moon” (dated variously “1918” and “Ballylee 1919 Summer” by George Yeats; *YPM* 237) found its place at the head of Book I of *A Vision A* (as “The Wheel and the Phases of the Moon”). Much later, it served as a prelude to the revised first book of *A Vision B*, following the fictional “Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends” from 1931.

Yeats's conception of the poem changed radically in the course of its writing, although its scene was always pastoral and possibly always situated at Thoor Ballylee. The customary view of the poem's ancestry shifted, however, as unpublished evidence came to light, a few years ago, among the manuscripts of “The Phases of the Moon” at the National Library of Ireland—namely in two sheets, or three pages of draft, in NLI 13,587(21). Augmented with fragments elsewhere in collections (NLI 36,265[2], 1<sup>r</sup> and 1<sup>v</sup>, in the Occult Papers of W. B. Yeats), a very different initial mode of exposition is apparent. Leaves 13 and 14, the last in NLI 13,587(21), were evidently kept because they bear the introductory and concluding parts of the frame Yeats hung around the poem's core, which ran from the bottom of page “2” to page “7” in this version. The first speech of the early version renders imagery parallel to that which was applied to Fand and the Sidhe in *The Only Jealousy of Emer*—seductresses who “drop

their hair upon" men, "Lap them in cloudy hair or kiss their lips" (*VPI* 549, ll. 214a and 214; *CW2* 324), in order to steal men's souls. References to wind, birds, and children seemingly call to mind the people of Danu and the children of Lir, as well as Yeats's imaginative use of the birds of Aengus's kisses and the transformation of lovers in the narrative poem "Baile and Aillinn" (1903). Aengus's abrupt disappearance at the conclusion of the second fragment has precedent in Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, in the tale "The Only Jealousy of Emer." Essentially narrative in conception, the surviving early fragments of "The Phases of the Moon" show their visionary speaker, the Master of Love, Aengus (identified by name in leaf 14<sup>v</sup>), to be disguised much as he had been in Yeats's other poem: that is, a "crude ragged man" here, as elsewhere "an old man" with "ragged long grass-coloured hair," "that old gaunt crafty one" (*VP* 190, ll. 25–26 and 193, l. 100; *CW1* 404 & 406). It is impossible to know how the dialogic between Aengus and the author's surrogate, Cuchulain, was carried out in full. However, what remains of the draft reflects Yeats's attempt to bring animation to his first poem about "the system," in a way anticipating such later works as "Cuchulain Comforted." A complete transcription of the extant fragments of early draft are given in *YPM*, pp. 131–35, which may be compared with that of Parrish, who reproduces photographic facsimiles.

So the first revelation the manuscripts have in store for us is that the initial forebears of "The Phases of the Moon" were Yeats's own early poems "The Harp of Aengus" ("young Aengus in his tower of glass": *VP* 219, l. 2; *CW1* 415) and "Under the Moon" ("Land-of-the-tower, where Aengus has thrown the gates apart": *VP* 209, l. 8; *CW1* 80). Instead of a Robartes-Aherne dialogue, we find an Aengus-Cuchulain arbitrated vision, which dissolves supernaturally with the apparent metamorphosis of the Irish god of love and poetry (a "crude ragged man" at Cuchulain's side) into an object which, at the end, "Slid slowly down, & dropped into the stream." Indeed, "a rat or water-hen...or an otter" in "The Phases of the Moon," lines 8–9 (*VP* 372; *CW1* 164), recalls by suggestion "Niamh and Laban and Fand, who could change to an otter or fawn" in "Under the Moon," line 12. Although the draft ends where the poem begins, Yeats's "system," as delivered in lines 31–123 of "The Phases of the Moon," seems already in place. The mystical Robartes had only to take possession of it from Aengus. Hence, the shift from Aengus-Cuchulain to Robartes-Aherne transferred ostensible authority for the visionary content of the poem from suprahuman sources such as the Tuatha De Danaan to a mediator (or even medium) in keeping with actual circumstances. This shift occurred with Yeats's attempt to transplant the verse exposition of the first draft into two of the approximately 40-page prose dialogues mentioned above. Conjecturally, this surgical procedure may have been accomplished by Yeats actually lifting the numbered pages of the Aengus/Cuchulain version from the early draft of *The Only Jealousy of Emer* in NLI 8774(14), where paper types match and lacunae are roughly correspondent. The change also antedates the revision of the poem, in two stages (around June 1918), based on an English, especially Miltonic, literary venue and a Platonic doctrine that remained undetected for a long time in the finished poem.

In revision, the narrative preface of lines 1–7 (set in italic in the next stage) began to take shape around the "rocks & briars," "uneven road," and "late scarce risen dwindling crescent" of the moon—all very much in tune with the scene at the Yeats

tower, but also (and as frequently recognized) in keeping with Samuel Palmer’s engraving “The Lonely Tower” as reproduced in *The Shorter Poems of John Milton* (London: Seeley, 1889)<sup>14</sup> as an illustration of “Il Penseroso,” lines 85–7 (quoted opposite the picture), including “two shepherds” who “speak together of the mysterious light above them.” Giving this scene the local accent of Gort, County Galway, Yeats made Aherne and Robartes “old men” in “conne mara [*sic*] cloth worn out of shape.” After the scene is set in a few lines in NLI 13,587(21), 2<sup>r</sup> and 2<sup>v</sup>, the beginning of their talk arises from the closing scene of the Aengus-Cuchulain draft and introduces most of the analogues recognizable in *VP* lines 8–30, the lines of dialogue up to Robartes’s singing, or reciting, the song of his Master.

Yeats himself presides over this creation as in the finished poem. Iconographically, too, his tower is the same one as Milton imagined (or in Yeats’s words, “saw through the night”) with his midnight lamp set

...in some high lonely Tow’r  
 Where I may oft outwatch the *Bear*,  
 With thrice great *Hermes*, or unsphere  
 The spirit of *Plato* to unfold  
 What Worlds, or what vast Regions hold  
 The immortal mind that hath forsook  
 Her mansion in this fleshly nook:  
 And of those *Daemons* that are found  
 In fire, air, flood, or underground,  
 Whose power hath a true consent  
 With Planet, or with Element. (“Il Penseroso,” ll. 86–96)<sup>15</sup>

By second draft, the person of Milton had been displaced by the persona of his poem. After some difficulty with Shelley and Athene (the latter to shift to line 45: *VP* 374; *CWI* 165),<sup>16</sup> Yeats delivered the lines

From the far tower where Milton’s Platonist  
 Sat late, or Shelley’s visionary prince:  
 The lonely light that Samuel Palmer engraved.... (*VP* 373, ll. 15-17; *CWI* 165)

Subsequently, the poet discarded Milton’s oily lamp for the self-consuming taper of Donne’s “The Canonization,” l. 21, as a sheet of manuscript from “The Living Beauty” joined the poem then in progress, producing “candle-light” in line 14.<sup>17</sup> This incident recalls two of Yeats’s courtships of 1917 and the equally relevant fact that the designated light is beaming from his bedroom (see, for example, “Climb up the narrow winding stair to bed”: *VP* 324, l. 5; *CWI* 132). After a few verses, Yeats permitted his creations to ridicule the “elaborate style / He had learnt from Pater,” suggestive of his own marginalia in *Plato and Platonism*.<sup>18</sup> But even before that, at the end of the first-draft exchange quoted above, the poet had left an important clue to the poem’s meaning—a clue just as impressive as are the obvious references to his iconographic models. Unfortunately, readers have tended to make do with retrograde interpreta-

tions of the poem based on *A Vision* since this clue, almost a private allusion, is both misleading and obscure.

We should be mindful of possible correspondences with the Tarot Hermit and Tower, as Raine is,<sup>19</sup> and suspect links with the "Masters" of MacGregor Mathers, the "Instructors" (later the "singing masters") of Yeats, and the "Eternals" of Blake ("I dare not pretend to be any other than the Secretary[.] the Authors are in Eternity"<sup>20</sup>). Only recently<sup>21</sup> have scholars commented on Aherne's peculiar use of quotation in line 30, despite its crucial placement before the important poem-within-the-poem:

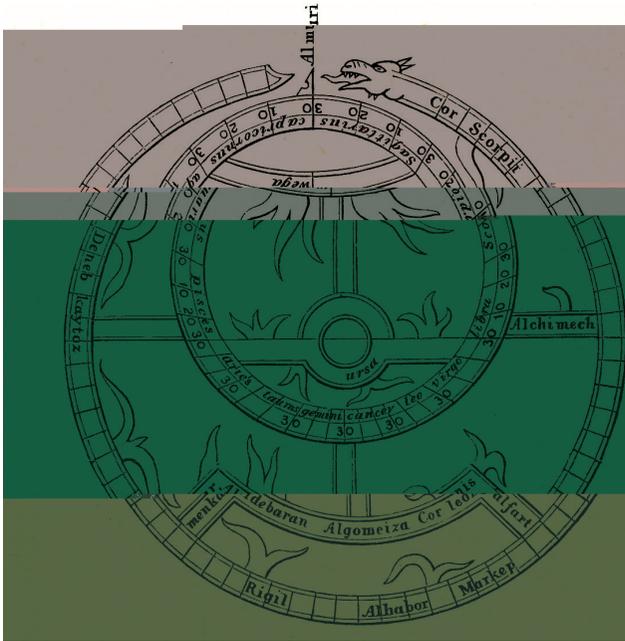
*Aherne.* Sing me the changes of the moon once more;  
True song, though speech: "mine author sung it me."

Warwick Gould and Stan Smith have argued that the phrase approximates Chaucer's "For as myn auctor seyde, so seye I" (*Troilus and Criseyde* II.18), following the valid assumption that in conceiving the heart of the poem Yeats remembered the Franklin's use of a hearsay book of "magik naturel" which "spak muchel of the operaciouns, / Touchinge the eighte and twenty mansiouns / That longen to the mone, and swich folye" (*Canterbury Tales*, F. 1125ff.).<sup>22</sup> This is on a plausible track, pursuing a lead investigated by the Yeatses on Chaucer's *A Treatise on the Astrolabe*. After copying out ll. 1117–34 (and double-scoring 1129–34) of the *Franklin's Tale* in long-hand from the Skeat edition, George Yeats followed up her copying (in NLI 36,274/29) with inscriptions glossing the passage with much of the editor's note, itself drawn, almost verbatim, from his preface to the *Astrolabe*:

The twenty-eight "moon-stations" of the Arabs are given in Ideler's *Untersuchungen über die Bedeutung der Sternnamen*, p. 287. He gives the Arabic names, the stars that help to fix their positions, &c. See also Mr Brae's edition of the *Astrolabe*, p. 89. For the influence of the moon in these mansions, we must look elsewhere, viz. in lib. i. cap. 11, and lib. iv. cap. 18, of the *Epitome Astrologiae* of Johannes Hispalensis. Suffice it to say that there are 12 temperate mansions, 6 dry ones, and 10 moist ones. (Skeat, *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 5:392)

Skeat also notes that the "number 28 corresponds with the number of days in a lunation" (ibid.). George's copying introduces a number of variants unique to her, as one confirms when further comparing her version of the editor's note with Skeat's preface to *A Treatise on The Astrolabe addressed to his son Louys* (London: Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1872), lix.

As an instrument of old used to find the altitude of a star and other astral bodies, the forerunner of the sextant, the complex astrolabe somewhat resembles the far simpler Great Wheel the Yeatses imagined together and Edmund Dulac drew for *A Vision*. One of Skeat's illustrations will serve to show the concentric (though off-center) belt of the heavens labeled with the names of the zodiac (cf. Yeats's use of only the cardinal signs: Aries, Cancer, Libra, and Capricorn), within a raised border, in this case resembling a time-serpent or dragon



From Skeat’s 1872 Early English Text Society edition of Chaucer’s *A Treatise on the Astrolabe addressed to his son Lowys*, Figure 9 (of 19); also reproduced in *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, vol. 3, Plates IV, Figure 9 (3:[lxxxvii]).

However, in fact, the quotation in “The Phases of the Moon” that Yeats, uncharacteristically for a draft, put between quotation marks, implying that Robartes’s verse discourse ought to be regarded as song, derived from John Milton’s tractate *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1644 edition), I.vi: “*The Fourth Reason of this Law, that God regards Love and Peace in the family, more then a compulsive performance of marriage...*” Milton’s “author,” though, (unlike Chaucer’s) is Plato; and his song is a dialectic of love with direct appeal to Yeats’s theory of the self and anti-self:<sup>23</sup>

Love, if he be not twin-born, yet hath a brother wondrous like him, call’d *Anteros*: whom while he seeks all about, his chance is to meet with many fals and faining Desires that wander singly up and down in his likenes....But after a while, as his manner is, when soaring up into the high Towr of his *Apogaeum*, above the shadow of the earth, he darts out the direct rayes of his then most piercing eyesight upon the impostures, and trim disguises that were us’d with him, and discerns that this is not his genuin brother, as he imagin’d, he has no longer the power to hold fellowship with such a personated mate. For strait his arrows loose their golden heads, and shed their purple feathers, his silk’n breades untwine, and slip their knots and that original and firie vertue giv’n him by Fate, all on a sudden goes out and leaves him undeif’d, and despoil’d of all his force: till finding *Anteros* at last, he kindles and repairs the almost faded ammunition of his Deity by the reflection of a coequal and *homogeneous* fire. *Thus mine author sung it to me...* (emphasis added at close)

The "Tower of [Love's] *Apogaeum*" seems to be one attraction the passage held for Yeats, and he would not have found it in the *Phaedrus* he possessed, if indeed *Phaedrus* was one of the "two or three...principal Platonic Dialogues" he said that he had read by then (*AVB* 12).<sup>24</sup> The poem's presiding symbol is the tower; moreover, in first draft, Love (or Aengus in be-towered Ireland) had direct charge of the poem's vision and song. However, more important, the Platonic doctrine Milton presented—as a parable on "matrimonial love"—suited perfectly Yeats's second ingenious conception of the poem. This conception, in deference to the Miltonic modification of Plato's metaphor of the charioteer and two steeds, placed the soul in a corporeal tower before two travelers, who seem imaginative projections of the poet's *primary* and *antithetical* selves, rather as we suppose the speakers Hic and Ille of "Ego Dominus Tuus." In fact, Yeats had devised a conceit similar to the one he had once tried to visualize for Spenser's House of Alma.<sup>25</sup> Yet in this case, Milton's presentation of "twin-born" Eros and Anteros, opposites who seek reunion in the "*homogeneous* fire" of their first state, lent the poem a philosophical dynamic Yeats soon attributed to the fictitious authority of the *Speculum Angelorum et Hominum* (1594) by "Giraldus."<sup>26</sup>

Probably Yeats did consult his *Phaedrus*, in 1914, when interpreting the auguries of Lady Lyttelton and W. T. Horton. Their respectively spiritualistic and mystical appropriation of the myth of Phaeton, connected with proceedings involving Miss Georgie Hyde-Lees and the poet's discourse with his sixteenth-century "daimon," influenced almost from inception the collaborative script that gave rise to *A Vision*.<sup>27</sup> Horton's "strange adventures" in "Platonic love" with Amy Audrey Locke—commemorated in the dedication and lyric tailpiece of that book (*CW13* liii and 208, ll. 22–23; *AVA* x and 253 [*VP* 471; *CW1* 232])—seems pertinent in light of George Yeats's desire to be recognized as the "symbol" of her husband's anti-self, or the instrument by which he came to find his "Mask."<sup>28</sup> That she succeeded is implicit in his severely elliptical use of Milton's treatise. The passage in question affirms that "Love in marriage cannot live nor subsist, unlesse it be mutual" (i.e., that dual entities such as Eros and Anteros might be joined in a way that alters the meaning of Plato's original); but in the next breath, shifting to an authority that Yeats himself adopted in several philosophical poems on sexual love and the "Beatific Vision" (see *CW13* lv; *AVA* xii), Milton makes a celebration of wedlock in the names of another authority (as "saith *Salomon* in *Ecclesiastes*"): "If *Salomons* advice be not overfrolick, *Live joyfully*, saith he, *with the wife whom thou lovest, all thy dayes, for that is thy portion.*"<sup>29</sup> Yet, standing by itself (as Yeats perhaps encountered it), the whole splendid passage seems less a defense of divorce than a way of envisioning ideal marriage. Presumably George Yeats caught the allusion, in spite of its obscurity for the rest of us, though the poet would not have expected his public to recognize such slight personal touches.

In line with Chaucer, Milton used the word "author" when he really meant his own poetic insight.<sup>30</sup> Smith argues that "Mine author" in Yeats's poem is the poet himself, whose imaginative reconstruction of the quintessential "narrative paradigm" from multiple "debased variants" must characterize his performance both as a storyteller and perpetrator of Platonic tradition.<sup>31</sup> Yeats's use elsewhere of the tag "mine author sung it me" (in *CW4* 245; *E&I* 340 and, slightly altered, in *LDW* 26) seems to confirm such reasoning.<sup>32</sup> In a sense, his shadow truths *are* "without father"; his texts "impostures"; his spokesmen the mere issue of poetic license. Hence, the Yeatsian tower poet—as "Milton's Platonist"—draws ridicule from figments of his imagination for aspiring to wisdom "that

he will never find.” Such overt self-ridicule in the poem is foregrounded in *A Vision B* by the irascible character John Aherne, brother of Owen, in a long letter addressed “Dear Mr. Yeats” (53–5).

An irony, of course, is that *as* “Milton’s Platonist,” the author W. B. Yeats has already achieved sufficient transcendence over such self-critics to write the poem and attain greater knowledge than it publishes beneath the window of his “lonely tower.” Solitude can be ameliorated and spiritual growth achieved, as the legend of Eros-Anteros teaches, with reconciliation of the divided self. Dialogues, as Yeats read in *Plato and Platonism* (possibly the reason Pater appears in this poem), move intelligence up the ladder of the dialectical process. In Yeats’s first draft, Aengus observes that man “longs / To come into possession of himself.” The dialogue’s movement, or *processus*, a term used by Pater (after Arnold, as Yeats understood), serves just such a purpose since it involves “that dynamic, or essential, dialogue of the mind with itself.”<sup>33</sup> Hence Pater helped define a literary genre for Yeats, it would seem, if Milton suggested a philosophical basis for its development: “the essence of that method, of ‘dialectic’ in all its forms, as its very name denotes, is dialogue, the habit of seeking truth by means of question and answer, primarily with one’s self.”<sup>34</sup>

The *processus* of Robartes’s “song” in “The Phases of the Moon” therefore advances by a succession of aphoristic variations on the Goatherd’s song in the elegy “Shepherd and Goatherd” (*VP* 342–43, ll. 95–110; *CW1* 145). This advance by retrograde progression of the soul from grave to cradle (here in twenty-eight “embodiments”) is the song’s main theme, recalling Thomas Taylor’s Orphic theology as well as Spenser’s Neo-Platonic mysticism in the Garden of Adonis section of *The Faerie Queene*:

[The souls are] sent into the changeful world agayne,  
Till thither they retourn where first they grew:  
So, like a wheele, around they ronne from old to new. (qtd. in *Myth* 363; cf. *CW5* 30)

In “The Phases of the Moon,” Robartes’s phrase “When all the dough has been so kneaded up / That it can take what form cook Nature fancies” (*VP* 377, ll. 114–15; *CW1* 168) expresses Henry More’s idea of the plastic power of the individual and world souls (see *CW5* 20–22; *Myth* 348–52)<sup>35</sup> and calls to mind Eros’s supposed ability to “fashion forms in which a divine soul could dwell” (*Myth* 284)—grist for later milling in this essay as well as a by-product of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*.

### III

The only other poem first collected in *The Wild Swans of Coole* (1919) and put to later use in *A Vision A* and *A Vision B* is “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes,” though other lyrics of 1918 are kindred. For instance, “The Saint and the Hunchback” foreshadows Yeats’s depiction of Phases 26 and 27 on the Wheel of Incarnation, and “A Prayer on Going into My House,” “Two Songs of a Fool,” and “Another Song of a Fool” all celebrate the empathy of husband (dreamer, fool, scholar) and wife (dream-mate, speckled cat, butterfly) as succeeded by such delightful contemporary poems about their mystical exploits as “Solomon and the Witch,” “An Image from a Past Life,” and the *Complementary Dream* lyric “Towards Break of Day” from *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. However, unlike

“The Phases of the Moon,” which uses verse to introduce figuratively the philosophical matter to follow it in plain prose, “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes” is quoted variously, briefly, and always embedded in texts that serve as glosses to help explain the meaning of its unusual imagery, particularly that of juxtaposed Sphinx and Buddha reconciled by the girl dancing between them, “outdanc[ing] thought,” a state of “Mind moved yet seem[ing] to stop / As ’twere a spinning-top” (*VP* 384 ll. 43–44; *CWI* 173), completing for the reader a geometrical figure summoned to the mind’s eye as in the poet’s vision. The explanation given for this in *A Vision A*:

In the *Beatitude* and in the states that immediately follow, the man is subject to his *Daimon* only, and there is no alternation of sleeping and waking. In the *Beatitude* communication with the living is through that state of soul, where an extreme activity is indistinguishable from an equal passivity. ( *CWI* 196; *AVA* 238)

This occurs in part X of Book IV, “The Gates of Pluto,” unique to *A Vision A* and its investment in the fictitious Robartes’s supposed Arabian authority, Kusta ben Luka, on the *Dreaming Back* and on spiritual cycles approaching and following the discarnate Phase 15. In Book III of *A Vision A*, in part of the final movement of “Dove or Swan” withheld from *A Vision B*, lines 9–12 are quoted to characterize “the last gyre,” with which “must come a desire to be ruled or rather, seeing that desire is all but dead, as adoration of force spiritual or physical, and society as mechanical force [is] complete at last” (*CWI* 176; *AVA* 213). With these earlier glosses gone by 1937, a new Book II called “The Completed Symbol” reproduced three full stanzas of the poem to illustrate the conjunction of opposites as “heraldic supporters guarding the mystery of the fifteenth phase” (with the caveat that Christ should have been substituted for Buddha, according to the instructors):

Although I saw it all in the mind’s eye  
There can be nothing solider till I die; I saw by the moon’s light  
Now at its fifteenth night.

One [the Sphinx] lashed her tail; her eyes lit by the moon  
Gazed upon all things known, all things unknown,  
In triumph of intellect  
With motionless head erect.

The other’s [the Buddha’s] moonlit eyeballs never moved,  
Being fixed on all things loved, all things unloved,  
Yet little peace he had,  
For those that love are sad. (*VP* 383 ll. 25–36; *CWI* 173)

An earlier gloss to the same passage occurs in the typescript of the dialogue “The Discoveries of Michael Robartes,” where Robartes explains to Aherne that “[t]he images at fifteen do not affect the automatic portions of the mind at all[;] for[;] being each one separate and complete[,] they cannot start any sequence of thought and image[;] the mind in their

presence is stationary in a Buddha[-] or Sphinx[-]like trance of wonder” (*YVP* 4 41 and 58 n139). “All thought becomes an image” at that stage in “The Phases of the Moon” (*VP* 374 l. 58; *CW1* 166), and Yeats felt that the latter helped clear up the “too obscure” symbolism of “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes” (letter to Ezra Pound, cit. *YVP* 4 4) and so gave priority to the former in *The Wild Swans at Coole* and both editions of *A Vision*.

The metaphor of the dancer as representative of the mind in trance-like, passive state could only be suggested, of course, by the example of the actual George Yeats in the creation of the automatic script. But the script itself proved to be a fertile source for the origin of poetry, as the emergence of “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes” shows, from the session of January 7, 1919 (*YVP* 2 162–63 and *MYV* 2 198–202). The contemporary plays were sometimes complexly related to the events of these sessions and grew occasionally from a number of sessions and therefore were part of the making of *A Vision*. Out of the analogy between the beatific mind/soul negotiating the counterpointed “evil and good” of Sphinx and Buddha, or Christ, grew in 1918–19 a line of inquiry on the Evil Genius. To take up first the last of Yeats’s original four “plays for dancers,” *Calvary* began as a “Judas play” and wound up as a “Christ play” with thematic and constructive parallels born out of Yeats’s second Noh play, *The Dreaming of the Bones*.<sup>36</sup> A “reconstructive interpretation” of *Calvary* from the evidence of the automatic script has even been published by one of the contributors to this anthology, Janis Haswell.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps the choral speeches in the manuscript (NLI 30,361) and those of the First Musician in the second draft are all that remains of a Sinn Feiner (as in *The Dreaming of the Bones*) conversing “with Judas in the streets of Dublin” (*L* 645) from first conception. In manuscript, in the opening “Song of folding & unfolding [of the cloth],” “The savior of men dreams his bitter dream / Sees those that mocked him,” dreaming himself back through the psychic trauma of the last moments of his life, repeatedly enduring the mockery of those whom he has saved. Thus he carries an invisible cross in an “Asiatic street,” not a Dublin roadway, the gist of the plot borne by the arguments of the ungrateful Lazarus and the arch-betrayer, Judas. The “Song for the folding and unfolding of the cloth” in the published version of 1921 displaces Christ with a symbolic bird, following the precedents of hawk, sea-bird, and birds crying in loneliness, wheeling overhead in the plays that accompanied *Calvary* in *Four Plays for Dancers* (Wade 129):

Motionless under the moon-beam,  
Up to his feathers in the stream,  
Although fish leap, the white heron  
Shivers in a dumbfounded dream. (*VPI* 780, ll. 1–4; *CW* 2 329)

Christ “stands amid a mocking crowd” and the First Musician sings:

Oh, but the mockers’ cry  
Makes my heart afraid,  
As though a flute of bone  
Taken from a heron’s thigh,  
A heron crazed by the moon,  
Were cleverly, softly played. (*VPI* 781–82, ll. 31–6; *CW* 2 330)

The pronouncement of mockery and ensuing demonstration of it by the chorus and by the Roman soldiers at the play's end recall Yeats's vituperative treatment of the subject in the poem "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen":

Mock mockers after that  
 That would not lift a hand maybe  
 To help good, wise or great  
 To bar that foul storm out, for we  
 Traffic in mockery. (*VP* 432, ll. 108–112; *CWI* 213)

And in that poem, the insipient modern age is brought on with the Platonic Year, "Whirl[ing] out new right and wrong," reminiscent of that pivotal girl in "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes," near the middle of the poem, with the remembered effect of "Loie Fuller's Chinese dancers enwound / A shining web, a floating ribbon of cloth" seemingly changed into a "dragon of air," "hurr[ying] them off on its own furious path" (ll. 49–51 and 53).

Incidence of war in 1916—the one in France and the Sinn Féin uprising in Dublin—made Yeats's first adaptation of the Noh in *At the Hawk's Well* only the beginning of invention, for the Japanese paradigm at hand "arose in an age of continual war and became a part of the education of soldiers" (*CW*4 172; *E&I* 235). Yeats may not have had an inkling at that time that he had a play within him on the passion of Christ, although he recognized that such dramatic forms permitted "the most vivid and subtle discrimination of sense and the invention of images more powerful than sense"; "the Deity gives us, according to His promise, not His thoughts of His convictions but His flesh and blood" (ibid.). Intertwined with *The Dreaming of the Bones*, the making of *Calvary* was for the future while the former was for the present and "only too powerful politically" (*L* 626), Yeats said, acknowledging the play to be incendiary in its way, like the group elegy "Easter 1916" and several other insurrection poems that had been too hot for his *oeuvre* until, in 1921, the dragon of war had begun to subside in its fury. The crux of the play, as projected from a thumbnail prose subject (in NLI 8775[1], 1r), is the question of how love of such legendary proportion as that of Deirdre, Grania, Helen, or, in this case, Dervorgilla should invite evil and lead to the infamous ruin of Ireland in the Norman invasion. In the meeting of past (the ghosts of lovers Diarmuid and Dervorgilla) and present (a fleeing rebel), we marvel that the patriot comes to his senses and withholds forgiveness from the abject couple just as we realize the irony of his refusal to acknowledge likeness and culpability in his recent participation in violent political insurrection in the 1916 Easter Rising. Being human, he lacks heart sufficient to forgive them for their selfish betrayal, as only God can love joy co-existent with sorrow. His renunciation ("Terrible the temptation and the place!"; *VPI* 775, l. 282; *CW*2 315) resembles the protests of Lazarus and of Judas in *Calvary*, fraught as they are with the philosophical questions that Yeats and his wife had raised with the spirit guides up to July 1920, when the preface and notes to *Four Plays for Dancers* were finished. With heart running wild at the cry of the curlew and the eddying of cat-headed bird, the play closes with the lovers lost in their "self-created winding of the labyrinth of conscience" (*VPI* 777; *CW*2 692). Considering Dervorgilla's few speaking lines, Yeats says her part

may be “taken by a dancer who has the training of a dancer alone,” and, as in the performance of Mr. Ito as the Guardian of the Well in *At the Hawk’s Well*, “nor need that masked dancer be a woman” (ibid.).

*The Dreaming of the Bones*, wherein shades of the dead “dream back” the events of their lives “in the order of their intensity” according to Cornelius Agrippa, the Judwalis, and “a Japanese ‘Noh’ play” (ibid.) and slightly later recounted in “The Gates of Pluto” V and X (*CW13* 185–88, 195–97; *AVA* 224–28, 236–39), was more than a year in its making, as George Yeats dated it: “August 1917 / re-written 1918 summer” (*WBGYL* 2371; *YL* 2350). Its writing had collided with and elided into other works, including *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, which had given place to it until shortly after her marriage, when the spirit guides instructed Yeats in the completion of work-in-progress and counseled him from depression after he had abandoned pursuit of Maud and Iseult Gonne. For a time, even work on the “philosophical dialogue” from which *A Vision* originated had to be stopped to relieve insomnia and to write verse once more, as he reported to Lady Gregory in December 1917, noting that the way had just cleared to “finish my play & then return to the dialogue” (*CL Intelix* 3375). The play to which he referred is evidently *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, interrupted by the writing of *The Dreaming of the Bones* and, like *Calvary*, requiring the collaborative genius of the automatic script to get Yeats’s writing into verse. Unlike the other two plays but like *At the Hawk’s Well* for its doubling of the protagonist, Cuchulain, into projections of the playwright, *The Only Jealousy of Emer* confronted the demons of an aging man’s feelings of conflicted loyalties and responsibilities on the proverbial sexual battlefield of life. As George Harper has shown—indeed, by reproducing a diagram unmistakably representing Thoor Ballylee anthropomorphized as Yeats with his “three birds” (*MYV1* frontispiece; *YVP3* 36)—the women of the play mirror the women at that moment in his life: Woman of the Sidhe (or Maud Gonne as Fand at Phase 15, reprised from *At the Hawk’s Well*), Eithne Inguba (or Iseult Gonne as Cuchulain’s “newest love”), and Emer (or George Yeats as Cuchulain’s suffering but most worthy wife, with a tinge of Lady Gregory added for good measure).<sup>38</sup> Although warned by one of the guides not to write about himself as a Phase 17 man superimposed on the hero, “both Yeats and George were strongly conscious that he had projected himself and his ‘three birds’ in the mythical surrogates of the play” (*MYV1* 149). The Figure of Cuchulain, actually the shape-shifter Bricriu (Evil Genius or False *Creative Mind*), has displaced the Ghost of Cuchulain (Ego or *Will*) literally to embody the conflict of good and evil (ibid., 89). But Cuchulain triumphs and is restored to himself by Emer’s refusal to renounce her love for him even though he awakens, ironically, calling for Eithne Inguba to comfort him: “I have been in some strange place and am afraid” (*VPI* 563, l. 304; *CW2* 327). The Cuchulain dialogue that preceded the familiar version of “The Phases of the Moon” in early draft has been discussed already in this essay, as well as instances in which lines compare with treatment of the seductive Sidhe, shape-changers who “drop their hair upon” men and “Lap them in cloudy hair or kiss their lips” (*VPI* 549, ll. 214a and 214; *CW2* 324), beguile them until they forfeit their souls. In *At the Hawk’s Well*, the hawk-woman Fand takes possession of the passive Guardian of the Well and creates just such a distraction to the entranced Old Man and Young Man at the well that both miss their chance to collect even a drop of the waters of immortality; but that play predates Yeats’s marriage, the automatic scripts, and the writing of *A Vision*.

Rather more to the point here is the unfinished Noh play, a “summary of 1918,” as George Yeats called it but a work that occupied Yeats, off and on, until 1923, through the period of his work on the Robartes dialogues, on three of his *Four Plays for Dancers*, and on the poem that most presides over *A Vision A* as the fictive rudiment of the volume as a whole, “The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid.” In a scenario that Mrs. Yeats gave to Birgit Bjersby on the Noh plays *At the Hawk's Well* and *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, we learn that an “unfinished draft” of another work, not a Cuchulain play, survived in the form “of two dialogues, one between an old man and a young girl, the other between an old woman and her son, a young man who is in love” and wants to marry the young girl, who lives in an old tower upon a hill “in charge of all the goats of the hill.”<sup>39</sup> In actuality, though, there are two drafts, not just the dialogues or scenes that Bjersby describes. The longer draft, in prose, works out an elaborate plot in no less than five scenes (see my transcription of NLI 30,427 in Appendix B, Part 1 of *YPM*). The shorter draft is Yeats's excessively labored attempt to versify Scenes 1 and 2 (the transcription of NLI 30,488 given in Appendix B, Part 2 of *YPM*). The young girl “comes to see the old man who has a letter for her from her lover, and she tells him that the young man's mother does not want her son to marry: ‘She says that I am evil and yet has never set her eyes upon me’” (Bjersby 35). In the course of the play, Oedipal and Electral myths interfuse with character doubling. The old man excuses the jealousy of youth by asking the young woman to imagine herself in the place of the old woman; hence the girl's imagining and projecting herself into what she imagines, an old woman grieving the loss of a son, adds a touch of magic as well as pathos to the girl as *femme fatale*<sup>40</sup> because the girl has grievances of her own, like the Old Woman in *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. So the young man, in Scene 2, defends her against his materialist mother. Like Michael Gillane, this son argues that his beloved wants protection because “she has neither friends nor relatives.”

After this, the mother curses her son, wishing that, while crossing the rising cataracts of the river to meet the beggar girl in the old towerhouse, he will “be drowned with that girl looking on.” Tragically, the embittered mother's curse comes to pass, as does, ironically, his rejoinder: “If I needs be drowned before the day / In coming from my love, & not in going.” For, soon after he reaches the other side of the river, a fatal misunderstanding occurs as his sleep-walking beloved reports to him that her lover (the boy himself in her dream) already lies within the walls of the towerhouse, in her bedchamber. When her somnambulistic account provokes the young man to a senseless fit of jealousy, he flees. Eventually both are drowned and mourned by the old man and the mother. The old and young men are, of course, doubles as are their like in *At the Hawk's Well* (Old Man and Young Man wearing masks) and *The Only Jealousy of Emer* (Figure and Ghost of Cuchulain, both masked).<sup>41</sup> However, to underscore difference between generations and their respective times, the old fisherman intones ruefully: “They have been carried away to the cataract. I will take their dead bodies from the water, & I will put a cross above them, & carve upon [it,] ‘He was jealous of a dream’[;] no one in my youth were jealous of a dream” (NLI 30,427, 13; *YPM* 259); “I heard the noise of the cataract. I will go along the edge of the shore—I will b[u]ry them under two crossed sticks—no body in my youth were ever jealous of a dream” (NLI 30,427, 17; *YPM* 262).

The unfinished Noh play that I refer to as “The Guardians of the Tower and Stream” was a rather transparent sequel to *The Only Jealousy of Emer* based on the legendary beauty

of Mary Hynes at Ballylee as told by the poet Anthony Raftery, the *genius loci* of the place (see “The Tower,” *VP* 410 ll. 33–48; *CWI* 199). Affected as much by his rhymes as by her beauty, men were driven out of their wits until “one was drowned in the great bog of Cloone” (l. 48). Considering Raftery’s blindness, the speaker, Yeats, creator of Hanrahan, observes: “I find / That nothing strange; the tragedy began / With Homer that was a blind man, / And Helen has all living hearts betrayed” (ll. 50–3). The lovers in Yeats’s unfinished play marry as spirits sometimes do in Noh plays, a gesture possibly intended as a tribute to his mediumistic wife, to whom he bestowed as a wedding present the Anglo-Norman towerhouse, Thoor Ballylee, restored and furnished. In *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, he led off with the title lyric and two other dialogic poems she inspired (“Solomon and the Witch” and “An Image from a Past Life”) and closed it with a pair of epigrams (“A Meditation in Time of War” and “To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee”), announcing the gift of poems and house in a stormy setting. In November 1922, gossiping in a way that applied something of the play’s tragic *danse macabre* drowning sequence, Yeats employed the figure of the whirlpool to delight his wife in harmless but cruel amusement at the expense of his friend Edmund Dulac, whose wife had fled to her mother, having left him to a young woman who had rescued him from a “whirlpool” without being one herself (*CL Intalex* 4211; 20 November 1922).<sup>42</sup> In the letter, Yeats addressed his own wife as “Dobbs,” first used in their private correspondence only the day before, an endearment kindred to the appellation “pretty Huddon, who lives in the tower on a hill over the river” (NLI 30,427, f. 1; *YPM* 247), the only reference the Old Man makes to the Young Girl by any name in the play. Successive instances of the word *whirlpool* in letters to various friends confirm that it was Yeats shorthand for one (often a woman) who causes such trouble for oneself that others are drawn into it, a *human whirlpool* as well as the person who is under such a whirlpool’s spell.<sup>43</sup> From 1917 to 1931, the term was common to a certain kind of news conveyed to intimates such as Lady Gregory, Olivia Shakespeare, and George Yeats (see *CL Intalex* 3322, 4099, 4100, 4211, 4219, 4969, and 5504).

On May 1, 1923, with writing in the mornings and (ironically) “amusing” afternoon duty in the Seanad, Yeats applied himself to the often interrupted work of converting his old “new No[h] play” into verse in consultation with his wife. Significantly longer than the other dance plays, it was intended for performance in his own lodgings in Merrion Square, Dublin (Yeats to Dulac; *CL Intalex* 4317).<sup>44</sup> Thus he wished everything to adhere to the limitations of the Georgian drawing room and had in mind the simplicity of an actor’s climbing on a table to search the darkness with a lantern, as Old Man and Young Girl do, finally spying her lover singing and dancing (simulated “swimming”) in the whirlpool. Two months later, progress had begun to falter (*CL Intalex* 4342; 28 June 1923). By the end of July, he was still trying to carry it forward, planning to bring it out at the Cuala Press with one or two short poems (Yeats to Lady Gregory, T. Sturge Moore, and Ezra Pound of 6, 17, and 29 July [1923]; *CL Intalex* 4344, 4349, 4352). As yet, he had not considered substituting a short miracle play, *The Cat and the Moon*, and two long poems (“Meditations in Time of Civil War” and “The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid”) for that project as occurred in the next year (in Wade 145). What happened?

The last Cuala Press volume with such a plan to gather together selected poems and a play by Yeats was *The Wild Swans at Coole, Other Verses and a Play in Verse* (1917; Wade 118), forty-seven pages including notes. The play was *At the Hawk’s Well*. Since then,

only *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1920; Wade 127) and *Seven Poems and a Fragment* (1922; Wade 132) gave some combination of short lyric poems and verses written in dialogue. Neither were what Yeats had in mind in 1923, but the former volume, a trifle at 35 pages, included poems and notes bearing some relation to Yeats's unfinished Noh play. The dialogic poem "Images from a Past Life" (with notes on the Judwalis and Kustaben-Luki) and the dramatic lyric "Towards Break of Day" (in manuscript, "the double dream"<sup>45</sup>), for example, explore the esoteric course of image and dream from gendered and dual perspectives of oneself and one's beloved that in 1918 was also traced in the prose draft of the play. The "dark stream," "eddies gleam," "river imaging the flashing skies," "sweetheart from another life float[ing]," "starry eddies of her hair," "hair stream[ing] upon the wind" (*VP* 389–90, ll. 3, 4, 20, 22, 27, 40; *CWI* 180–81)—seem familiar after reading the play. Likewise, Yeats's unusual valediction-to-morning poem of 1918–1919 visits the psychic regions of night and day, past and present forms as the play explores the precincts of the symbolic nightingale and lark. In both the 1918 and 1923 states, the girl sleeps and transcends her poverty by summoning in a dream a regal lover on a "horse shod with silver" who mounts the winding stair and comes covertly to her bedchamber (*NLI* 30,427, f. 4; *YPM* 250).<sup>46</sup> But she talks in her sleep, fortunately, so that the Old Man can inform the audience about psychic behavior the rash Young Man will misinterpret (see *YPM* 255–56). The poem "Towards Break of Day" telescopes the drama of doubles rhetorically into a question:

Was it the double of my dream  
The woman that by me lay  
Dreamed, or did we halve a dream  
Under the first cold gleam of day? (*VP* 398, ll. 1–4; *CWI* 187)

In the 1925 edition of *A Vision*, Yeats quoted these lines and speculated that "A whole age may be bound in a single dream, or wheel, so that its creations have all the same character though there is no visible influence" (*CWI* 141; *AVA* 174). In Yeats's Occult Papers at the National Library of Ireland, one finds among the drafts of the basic system a manuscript of the poem unknown to Parkinson as well as a strikingly different version of Book II, part XXI in *A Vision A*, wherein Yeats quotes the opening lines and then asks one to imagine a couple dreaming or meditating in conflict with one another, the one on Helen's birth from the egg of Leda (the creation of beauty), the other on the birth from a second egg of Castor and Pollux (the creation of war), being part of the same story.<sup>47</sup> As possibly "the best example of Yeats's experience with Complementary Dreams," the poem is only one of several recorded in the so-called "Sleep and Dream Notebooks" (*YVP* 3).<sup>48</sup> After numerous "philosophical sleeps" "talked out' during the day and typed" out by Mrs. Yeats in the summer of 1922, the latter began talking in her sleep and "seemed a different self" as she did so. In autumn 1923, when Yeats abandoned the play, her "philosophical sleeps" ended also, on November 27 (*YVP* 3). Just the month before, having dispatched the manuscript of *A Vision* to Werner Laurie for typesetting, he had estimated that another three months were required to finish and to produce his play if the Civil War did not start up again in Dublin with nightly disturbances (*CL InteleX* 4381; cf. *L* 700). With irreducible succinctness, Saddlemyer gives context for the work at hand:

Despite renewed cautions [from George’s instructors], Willy had talked freely if not entirely openly of their work on the system....In notes to [“An Image from a Past Life” and “The Second Coming” in Wade 127] and other poems he had resurrected the characters John Aherne and Michael Robartes, who “take their place in a phantasmagoria in which I endeavour to explain my philosophy of life and death.” The first intimation was in fact as early as 1919, when his coy preface to *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* announced his intention of publishing Robartes’s mass of “letters and table talk” and exposition of the *Speculum Angelorum et Hominum* of Giraldus. He first planned a series of dialogues involving these two quarrelers and the persona Yeats, eventually abbreviated in *A Vision* [AVA only] to Owen Aherne’s sly “Introduction” and ornate discussion of “Desert Geometry—or The Gift of Harun Al-Raschid.” (BG 306)<sup>49</sup>

Yeats’s work on “Guardians of the Tower and Stream” relates to that “coy preface” of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (Wade 127), in which he promotes future publication of a “great mass of letters and table talk” (resembling his father’s correspondence, edited by Pound in 1917 and Lennox Robinson in 1920). Just as Yeats compares himself in the preface to Goethe, a poet who “needs all philosophy,” so the old but lusty fisherman’s decision not to withhold from the dreaming girl a love letter the Young Man has sent to her is occasioned in the manuscript by a note (see YPM 275) from which Yeats developed in *A Vision* the paradox of “burning restraint” (here “hot head & a cold heart”): “One remembers Faust, who will find every wench a Helen, now that he has drunk the witches’ dram” (CW13 48; AVA 56; AVB 123).

The unusual attention given to letters as one of the play’s principal conceits, especially in Scene 1 of the 1923 verse version in relation to the Young Girl’s particular love letter, leads directly to the poet’s epistolary tribute to his wife’s abilities as medium and co-author of the philosophy featured in *A Vision: An Explanation Founded upon the Writings of Giraldus and upon Certain Doctrines Attributed to Kusta Ben Luka* (1925), Book II: “What the Caliph Refused to Learn.” Later called, simply, “The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid,” the poem traces its origin from a fragment filed with the manuscripts of the play, preserved that way with the older prose scenario labeled by Mrs. Yeats “MS of ‘A Play Begun and Never Finished.’” Folio “1a,” as I refer to the fragment to distinguish it from the folios transcribed in YPM 246–89, is the earliest known precursor to the poem’s opening lines:<sup>50</sup>

Kusta Ben Luka is my name, I write  
To Abd Al-Rabban; fellow-roysterer once,  
Now the good Caliph’s learned Treasurer,  
And for no ear but his.

Carry this letter  
Through the great gallery of the Treasure House  
Where banners of the Caliphs hang, night-coloured  
But brilliant as the night’s embroidery,  
And wait war’s music.... (VP 460–61, ll. 1–8; CW1 451)

Yeats's commentary, masquerading as a letter from Owen Aherne, makes clear the veiled autobiographical nature of the poem: that "his [Kusta ben Luka's] wife a few days after his marriage began to talk in her sleep, and that she told him all those things which he had searched for vainly in his life in the great library of the Caliph and in the conversation of wise men" (*VP* 829; *CWI* 701). Before the note was published with the poem in 1924, it was preceded by an earlier version that makes Yeats's charade even more apparent. According to the draft, the "elderly philosopher" had taken a "young bride" who had "fallen in love with [him]...to the surprise of her friends and relations." Her sleep-talking is a kind of cypher for George Yeats's automatic writing: "She taught him for a number of years, often walking to the border of the desert in her sleep, and there marking upon the sand innumerable intricate symbols" (*CVA* 121, notes p. 30).

As progress on the play bogged down, "The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid" took off at a tangent to it. Finally, work on the play stopped altogether because Yeats received a telegram, on 15 November 1923, announcing that he had won the Nobel Prize for literature, which impacted his work terrifically. By the end of January 1924, he acknowledged to John Quinn that he was only then catching up from the flood of letters and was obligated to turn attention to *A Vision* for Werner Laurie and to revising "various volumes" for the uniform edition of his work for Macmillan (*CL Intelelex* 4464; *L* 703-4). In the end, Yeats wrote to his literary agent with instructions that certain poems he had sent to *The Dial* ("The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid" and others<sup>51</sup>) were to be published in the June number with the interlude "The Cat and the Moon" to follow in July as he saw to it that his sister simultaneously made up a volume of this work, called *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems*, at the Cuala Press (WBY to A. P. Watt, 20 April 1924; *CL Intelelex* 4524). Obviously, this book lacked the play that might have become the pinnacle of all Noh plays, substituting a short work that he had withheld previously because it was "in a different mood" from that of his *Four Plays for Dancers*. More of a miracle play than the others, *The Cat and the Moon* was eventually reprinted with two later plays for dancers, *The Resurrection* and *Fighting the Waves*, in *Wheels and Butterflies* (1934; Wade 175).

#### IV

"The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid" bore with it in first printing a mystery about its being inspired by a Bedouin tradition of "contradictory stories that seem to be a confused recollection of the contents of a little old book, lost many years ago with Kusta-ben-Luka's larger book...[but recovered] by some Judwali scholar or saint" (*VP* 829; *CWI* 701). The poem cast a long shadow on the first published version of *A Vision* in 1925, and not just because it presided over Book II as introductory verses, as "The Phases of the Moon" presided thematically over Book I and "Leda [and the Swan]" and "The Fool by the Roadside," respectively, stood before Books III and IV, with "All Souls' Night" serving both the latter and the volume as an epilogue. Together, the first two books, "What the Caliph Partly Learned" and "What the Caliph Refused to Learn," scarcely to cite the introduction by the fictitious Owen Aherne, constituted sixty percent or more of the entire volume, most of its "desert geometry," and depended on imaginary authority that Yeats had largely invented as a ruse and cited as the "Robartes papers," from the philosophical dialogues he had begun writing in late 1917,<sup>52</sup> encouraged by George Yeats as collaborator. So gifted

a young wife, given, so to speak, by the Caliph to Kusta ben Luka (Yeats), deserved an epithalamion prominently featured in the one fantastic book of the Yeats canon that she most engendered.

In addition to the natural frustrations incumbent to any collaboration, the supernatural ones of which Yeats wrote in *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (Cuala Press, 1929), later moved, for the most part, to *A Vision* (Macmillan, 1937), were chiefly withheld from *A Vision: An Explanation of Life Founded upon the Writings of Giralduus and upon Certain Doctrines Attributed to Kusta ben Luka* (1925). The supernatural beings who participated in the creation of “stylistic arrangements of experience” (*AVB* 25) by engaging his wife’s *Daimon* and his own were the affirmation “that all the gains of man come from conflict with the opposite of his true being” (*AVB* 13). Spiritual agents may have come to give him “metaphors for poetry” (*AVB* 8), but he undertook writing about that new experience by reverting to procedures followed by Edwin Ellis, as Yeats said, in mixing “philosophical discussion...with improvised stories” (*CW3* 145; *Au* 162). In developing structures for the changing logic of *A Vision* between 1925 and 1937, Yeats traded out old for new sequences of invention in fiction and poetry. Initially struggling to write a long dialogue between Owen Aherne and Michael Robartes, Yeats abandoned this plan to the *A Vision A* scheme, where these two characters are given to quarrel with the author and each other in an introduction supposedly by the imaginary Aherne; in the verse dialogue that functioned as the prologue of *A Vision* Book I, “The Wheel and the Phases of the Moon” (where they rehearse the book’s philosophy as speakers); and in *A Vision* I.2, “The Dance of the Four Royal Persons,” also by Aherne, who vows to “discuss all these matters at length in [his] own book upon the philosophy and its sources” (*CW13* 12; *AVA* 11).<sup>53</sup> Both the 1925 and 1937 editions of *A Vision* conclude with Yeats’s elegiac remembrance of three of his *actual* friends from early life as a creative mystic. “All Souls’ Night: An Epilogue,” a tribute to fellow mystics William Horton, Florence Farr, and MacGregor Mathers, Yeats believed to be one of his best poems, though worrying that his own excitement over the book’s philosophy might not be matched by that of his poetry-reading public. So one precaution taken was to limit the first edition. The other was to issue a caveat, acknowledging that he had doubts that certain parts of the book would elicit enthusiasm from such readers:

I have moments of exaltation like that in which I wrote “All Souls’ Night,” but I have other moments when remembering my ignorance of philosophy I doubt if I can make another share my excitement. As I most fear to disappoint those that come to this book through some interest in my poetry and in that alone, I warn them from that part of the book called “The Great Wheel” and from the whole of Book II, and beg them to dip here and there in the verse and into my comments upon life and history. (*CW13* lv; *AVA* xii)

In 1937, “The Phases of the Moon” remained as a prelude to Book I, “The Great Wheel,” but without the Owen Aherne pieces, because it still anticipated much of the new first movement, incorporating some rudiments of geometry from the expunged Book II to the “Table of the Four Faculties” through the long section in *A Vision A* called “The Twenty-eight Embodiments.”<sup>54</sup> He longed for the time when “I need no longer write poems like ‘The Phases of the Moon’ nor ‘Ego Dominus Tuus,’ nor spend barren years, as I have done

some three or four times, striving with abstractions that substituted themselves for the play that I had planned" (*CW13* lv; *AVA* xii; a possible allusion to his abandoned Noh play). Like the poetic service of "Ego Dominus Tuus" to the abstract body of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1918), Yeats's use of the sonnet "Leda and the Swan" (part 1, "Leda," of *A Vision B*'s Book V, *A Vision A*'s Book III), set in apposition to the figure "The Historical Cones," remained at the outset of "Dove or Swan," the review of history through the evidence of art that Yeats left roughly intact except for about seven pages (*CW13* 174–78; *AVA* 210–15) that he cut when shifting forward rewritten matter from Book IV ("The Gates of Pluto," later "The Soul in Judgment"). Considering the general framework of the book, much had either to be radically altered or replaced.<sup>55</sup>

One reason for a major rewriting of *A Vision* involved additional reading and calculations on the *Magnus Annus*, or Great Year of the philosophers, that Yeats undertook after publishing *A Vision A*, Book II, "What the Caliph Refused to Learn." Ruminations in the pages of his Rapallo notebooks of the late 1920s and elsewhere were brought to fruition, by 1937, in *A Vision B*, Book IV, "The Great Year of the Ancients," although, sadly, the fantastic verse epistle that had inaugurated the superseded section had to be expelled after disclosure, in 1929 in *A Packet for Ezra Pound*, that W. B. and George Yeats were the same as the "Two contemplating passions [who had] chose[n] one theme / Through sheer bewilderment" in "Desert Geometry or The Gift of Harun Al-Raschid" (*VP* 466; *CW1* 454). Therefore, one of Yeats's masks, that of Kusta ben Luka, came to be shed with the removal of preliminaries by Owen Aherne, so that Giralduus might remain. The likeness of Yeats, bearded and turbaned, by Dulac was moved from the frontispiece to the interior of a wholly new unit of "improvised stories" entitled "Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends: An Extract from a Record Made by His Pupils" (first published by the Cuala Press in 1931 beside the play *The Resurrection*). The gambit of the Judwalis and the education of the Caliph had given place to the contemporary scene of bohemian artists and mystics updated from the pages of *The Secret Rose* and particularly the stories "Rosa Alchemica," "The Tables of the Law," and "The Adoration of the Magi." The setting straight of "Dear Mr. Yeats" by means of transcripts signed by John Aherne, Owen's brother, and John Duddon, a new character based on an old Irish tale about the fleecing of gullible yokels, offers a tongue-in-cheek counterpoint to the serious point of Yeats's open letter to Pound on the authority of *A Vision*.<sup>56</sup>

In spite of great extravagance and charm in the context of *A Vision A*, "The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid" had a checkered history, drawing creative energy away from what was to have been Yeats's most ambitious Noh adaptation from Ballylee legends and rather incongruously used to fill out pages to make a book of *The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems* (1924). More satisfactorily, the poem took up a climactic position in *The Tower* (1928) before "All Souls' Night" (which, as in *A Vision A*, concluded the arrangement) and after numerous masterpieces as well as the lyric sequence "A Man Young and Old." The environment was far different from that of the chronologically arranged "Narrative and Dramatic" section of *The Collected Poems* (1933). The latter context makes the poem seem an anomaly, one of six pieces, the first five of which are obviously Celtic. Still, even Yeats's note in *The Tower* cultivated the impression that the poem was only one section of a broken field, "Part of an unfinished set of poems, dialogues and stories about John Aherne and Michael Robartes, Kusta ben Luka, a philosopher of Bagdad, and his Bedouin followers" (*VP* 830; *CW1* 700).<sup>57</sup>

Naturally, the poetic crux of *A Vision A*, Book II, “What the Caliph Refused to Learn,” largely disappeared from sight in *A Vision B*, with scattered traces of Blake and Swedenborg (and Heraclitus) being all that remained from vital sections on background such as II.2.III “Blake’s Use of the Gyres” (*CW13* 107–8; *AVA* 133–34), and II.2.V, “Blake and the Great Wheel” (*CW13* 112–13; *AVA* 139). Indeed, what might be called the Blakean crux of *A Vision* as a whole and as indicated in the first edition was “The Mental Traveller.” As a footnote in *A Vision B* testifies, Blake’s poem had been especially intriguing to him as an editor: “Neither Edwin Ellis nor I, nor any commentator has explained the poem, though one or another has explained certain passages. The student of *A Vision* will understand it at once” (*AVB* 189). In fact, consistent with editorial procedures agreed upon by the two men, Ellis and Yeats worked independently as well as in concert for a printing of “The Mental Traveller” and discussion in their edition of *The Works of William Blake* (1893; see *WWB2*: “Interpretation and Paraphrased Commentary”). Consequently, we have the text (on *WWB2* 31–33, with displaced note on the text on p. 41) and the collation Ellis made (on *WWB2* 34–36) of parallels traced to Blake’s other works; and we have all but one page of a five-page synopsis by Yeats.

On the first page of this unpublished manuscript of c. 1891, beneath the title “The Mental Traveller,” the male and female of Blake’s poem are said to be facets of the imagination and, according to descriptions by the Cambridge Platonist Henry More, of the *Anima Mundi* (NLI 30,289). Pages “3,” “4” (verso) and “5,” located in another file (NLI 30,534, drafts of the Ellis-Yeats *Works of William Blake*), show Yeats trying to interpret the countervailing stories of such mental facets as “man” and “woman.” The first story is about the man’s growth from aimless traveler to one who attains the spiritual gifts of love and suffering as he achieves dominion over the woman while the second story is about the woman’s growing away from the man’s tyranny toward her achievement of dominion over him. She gives life to him as he grows young, just as he, as an old man, gives life to her as she grows young (3). This law of dominance is not due to the master’s gifts of imagination but to gifts of love, the perhaps twenty-five-year-old Yeats had surmised. In “the pulsation of the artery” (Blake’s measure of time in *Milton*), a poet accomplishes his work and all the momentous events of his life are conceived and carry forth (4). From unhappiness, the man “endows” the body with beauty and then endeavors to subdue it with law, with emotion, consequently evading that law if it brings him pleasure. As abstraction goes, Yeats discerned a pattern in this observation and recalled one of Blake’s best known sayings from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 3: “Without contraries is no progression” (5). So, according to “The Mental Traveller,” when the man grows old, he imposes himself for good upon a woman, giving her the master’s gifts. But when he grows young as she imposes herself on him, he awakens to the world of reason. Conversely, the old woman, cruel but growing younger, denies him her love and relinquishes eternity, yet, while young and growing older, she brings him the ecstasy of natural love (4). Like intersecting points of the *primary* and *antithetical* gyres, the points at which the protagonists of the two stories are of equal age (by turns, the one aging as the other grows young) are marked by “a plight”: that is, if he makes life a desert, she pitches her tent in that desert (4).

In 1925, quoting Blake to stress the rapture of precisely such moments, Yeats writes that:

Blake, in the "Mental Traveller," describes a struggle...perpetually repeated between a man and a woman, and as the one ages, the other grows young. A child is given to an old woman and

Her fingers number every nerve  
 Just as a miser counts his gold;  
 She lives upon his shrieks and cries  
 And she grows young as he grows old.  
 Till he becomes a bleeding youth  
 And she becomes a virgin bright;  
 Then he rends up his manacles  
 And bends her down to his delight.

Then he in his turn becomes "an aged shadow" and is driven from his door, where "From the fire on the hearth a little female babe doth spring." He must wander "until he can a maiden win" and then all is repeated for

The honey of her infant lips  
 The bread and wine of her sweet smile  
 The wild game of her roving eye  
 Does him to infancy beguile.  
 . . . . .  
 Till he becomes a wayward babe  
 And she a weeping woman old[.]

...The woman and the man are two competing gyres growing at one another's expense, but with Blake it is not enough to say that one is beauty and one is wisdom, for he conceives [of] this conflict as that in all love...which compels each to be slave and tyrant by turn. (*CW13* 107–8; *AVA* 133–34)

A few pages earlier, the waxing and waning, female- and male-gendered gyres conjoin Flaubert's "La Spirale"; the "gyrations," "spiral movement of points" and "vortexes" of Swedenborg; Descartes' "vortex"; Boehme's "gyre"; and like "allusions in many writers back to antiquity," including a passage in the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus (*CW13* 103; *AVA* 128–29). The dynamic of the system went back somewhat to the notes on Henry More and the *Anima Mundi*, for, as Yeats wrote, "It is as though the first act of being, after creating limit, was to divide itself into male and female, each dying the other's life[,] living the other's death" (*CW13* 105; *AVA* 130). His reading notes in John Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy* (1892 [*WBGYL* 316; *YL* 308]) betray a different application of the admired locution. In Burnet's English, Heraclitus actually said: "Mortals are immortals and immortals are mortals, the one living the other's death and dying the other's life" (p. 138).<sup>58</sup> Marking the symmetry and points of balance, or "plights," were a geometrical business left to succeeding sections of *A Vision A*—such as II.2.V, "Blake and the Great Wheel," where Yeats adjusts Blake on the evidence of men studied "true to phase" as opposed to "out of phase":

We interpret the symbol differently from Blake because his tyrant and slave, slave and tyrant are man and woman out of phase, and their youth occurs at Phases 8 and 22 of our symbol because there is the greatest passion, whereas their old age is at Phase 1 and Phase 15...[whereas] [w]ith us these are the moments of the greatest Beauty and Wisdom respectively because we have mainly studied men true to phase...As it is, the system constantly compels us to consider beauty an accompaniment of war, and wisdom of decay. (*CWI3* 112–13; *AVA* 139)

Yeats included “The Mental Traveller” without comment in his edition of *The Poems of William Blake* (1893). But the “Summary” he composed at the end of his unused note for *The Works of William Blake* suggests that Yeats had grasped the relationship between Love and Strife as a paradigm for *A Vision* some forty years before he came to present, in 1923, “the first big bundle” of the latter in manuscript (letter to Laurie, 7 September 1923, *CL Intelex* 4364). Coming either into separation or manifestation, truth and love become antagonists; love is made a cruelty, an “external law,” against which truth struggles and makes of its gifts of the spirit, lacerated by suffering, an external beauty until truth becomes love (*NLI* 30,354, p. 5).

Even without the evidence of Yeats’s early commentary, the importance of Blake’s poem to the system developed in *A Vision* has been apparent for a long time.<sup>59</sup> The crux of the book was hardly a poem that he failed to understand; rather, it proves to have been a poem he understood *better* in light of his own invention. With much less Blake evident in the 1937 Macmillan edition (*AVB*) because two sections had been dropped that bore his name, there was still the footnote in “The Completed Symbol” (*AVB* 189), references to the *Creative Mind* and *Will* in relation to Blake’s symbolic woman and man (*AVB* 212, 262), and quotations left without attribution because of those cuts (*AVB* 106, 277) to testify to the importance of “The Mental Traveller.” Yeats congratulated himself, moreover, for having found the key to interpreting Blake’s poem:

When my instructors see woman as man’s goal and limit, rather than as mother, they symbolise her as *Mask* and *Body of Fate*, object of desire and object of thought, the one a perpetual rediscovery of what the other destroys; the seventh house of the horoscope where one finds friend and enemy; and they set this double opposite in perpetual opposition to *Will* and *Creative Mind*. In Book III [“The Soul in Judgment”] I shall return to this symbolism, which perhaps explains, better than any I have used, Blake’s *Mental Traveller*. (*AVB* 213)

And such a poem might constitute a potent textual gene for some of Yeats’s own poetry—for example, in the lyric “Girl’s Song” (“Saw I an old man young / Or young man old” [*VP* 515; *CWI* 265]), following seven Crazy Jane poems and counterpointed by “Young Man’s Song” (“‘She will change,’ I cried, / ‘Into a withered crone.’ / ...And all shall bend the knee / To my offended heart / Until it pardon me” [*VP* 516; *CWI* 266]), at the heart of the sequence “Words for Music Perhaps.” Like Yeats’s intersecting *primary* and *antithetical* gyres, the gene provided a blueprint for oscillating sequences “A Man Young and Old” and “A Woman Young and Old,” which Yeats began composing from fictive characters and arranging in complementary units between 1926 and 1928 (see “A Chronology of

the Composition of the Poems" in *YPM*). At the same time, he began reassigning to *The Tower* poems that had appeared in *A Vision A* in the direct service of creative mysticism.<sup>60</sup>

All but one of Yeats's poems featured in *A Vision A* appeared in *The Tower*. The exception was "The Phases of the Moon," which originated from *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919). The first stanza of "Towards Break of Day," a poem from the collection *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), had been quoted in *A Vision A* in evidence of "Complementary Dreaming" but not borne forward into *A Vision B* just as "The Fool by the Roadside" had failed to do so as the epigraph to "The Gates of Pluto" when Book IV of *A Vision A* was deleted.<sup>61</sup> Still, the epigraph appeared in *The Tower*, strategically cycled into a new context as the concluding movement of a poem entitled "The Hero, the Girl, and the Fool" (formerly "Cuchulain the Girl and the Fool" in *Seven Poems and a Fragment* [1922]). In revising the poem for *Collected Poems* (1933), the dialogue between the alpha male and female was cut, leaving "The Fool by the Roadside" to face "Owen Aherne and his Dancers" and, after that, the sequence "A Man Young and Old," and in slightly altered circumstances as "my days" had become "all works" in line 1. Notably, in *A Vision A* and *The Tower*, the Fool had spoken, in the first stanza, of life in view of "The Mental Traveller" and the doctrine of the *Dreaming Back*:

When my days that have  
From cradle run to grave  
From grave to cradle run instead;  
When thoughts that a fool  
Has wound upon a spool  
Are but loose thread, are but loose thread.

These lines forecast one ending, the same ending, for both books:

Such thought, that in it bound  
I need no other thing  
Wound in mind's wandering,  
As mummies in the mummy-cloth are wound. ("All Souls' Night" 97–100)

In *The Collected Poems*, the poetic sequence amounts to a complex medley of voices that balance out, in number and sense, its female complement in *The Winding Stair*. The ten songs of "A Man Young and Old" in *The Tower* version of 1928 were the unnumbered aggregate of poems first published in April 1926 and May 1927 in *The London Mercury* and then assembled into two numbered units in *October Blast* (Cuala Press, August 1927; Wade 156). The units were called "The Young Countryman" (numbered I–IV) and "The Old Countryman" (I–VI), assigning a rough identity to speakers in the order maintained in *The Tower*. But in having made a single sequence from two, Yeats gave the ensemble a title paired with a single, universalized speaker, a "Man" young and old. "The poet imagines a man speaking the passionate moments of his life from youth to age," but the songs collectively register more than one person can say, "as if he, like the fool by the roadside, is an unknowing oracle who has somehow managed to say more in the whole than in the parts" (Adams 175). The first four poems ("First Love," "Human Dignity," "The Mermaid," and

“The Death of the Hare”) are a young man’s story. The pivotal fifth poem (“The Empty Cup”) is an old man’s reflection on “one’s youth as to [a] cup that a mad man dying of thirst left half tasted,” as Yeats observed in a letter to Olivia Shakespear (*L* 721).<sup>62</sup> The allusion this past lover would have understood is compound, based on a quatrain addressed to the young protagonist of “The Tale of the Steward” from the *Arabian Nights* (“A year or two I wasted / And then I drank it up, / Love which is love, a cup / You never tasted”) and on the comical tale of “The Sleeper Wakened,” about the “gift” of magnificent dreaming to which Harun Al-Rashid was introduced via the feasting cup.<sup>63</sup> The comic background of the story also follows from sources that Yeats mined to celebrate his marriage, notably Tarot and Grail emblems.

However, the pivotal poem of Yeats’s sequence was not the *central* poem, nor could there be a *numerically* central poem until the sequence was altered slightly in *The Collected Poems*. Whereas in *The Winding Stair* (1929) the poet had devised an eleven-poem arrangement for “A Woman Young and Old,” closing on the choral translation “From ‘The Antigone,’” an ingenious decision was made to transpose two external poems that had followed the male sequence in 1928: “The Three Monuments” and “From ‘Oedipus at Colonus.’” Hence the latter poem became poem XI of “A Man Young and Old,” complementing “From ‘The Antigone,’” and making a middle lyric of “His Memories” (VI), a poem since associated with a carnal union between Yeats (Paris) and Maud Gonne (Helen of Troy) in 1908:<sup>64</sup>

My arms are like the twisted thorn  
And yet there beauty lay;

The first of all the tribe lay there  
And did such pleasure take—  
She who had brought great Hector down  
And put all Troy to wreck—  
That she cried into this ear,  
“Strike me if I shriek.” (*VP* 455, ll. 11–18; *CWI* 228)

This remembered moment of rapture by the old male speaker of the poem has its complement (or Blakean “contrary”) in the plight of love in “Chosen” (“A Woman Young and Old,” VI):

The lot of love is chosen. I learnt that much  
Struggling for an image on the track  
Of the whirling Zodiac.  
Scarce did he my body touch,  
Scarce sank he from the west  
Or found a subterranean rest  
On the maternal midnight of my breast  
Before I had marked him on his northern way,  
And seemed to stand although in bed I lay. (*VP* 534–35, ll. 1–9; *CWI* 277)

Living the moment and accepting her fate as chosen, the female speaker offers a contrasting view to the embittered, nostalgic young man old in the contrary sequence. Blending elements of John Donne's "A Nocturnall upon St. Lucies day" with some actual study of Macrobius's fifth-century commentary on "Scipio's Dream," described in both *A Vision A* (AVA 152–54, 162) and *B* (AVB 69) concerning movements from gyre to sphere (Yeats's *Thirteenth Cycle* or *Cone*), the soul of the man and of the woman attain their final resting place. At that instant in Yeats's poem, the ultimate objective attained affirms the mystic aspect of conjugal union in which there is only one love, two lovers but one soul.<sup>65</sup> Zodiacal images come with great passion, as in Donne's poem, beginning with an image of eclipse in manuscript that permeated, with revision, into a case of poetic expropriation: the "Nocturnall" of Donne initially attaches "midnight" to the speaker's idea that her life's "flood" might be caught in "night's deep overflowing cup," a symbol of both sexual consummation and spiritual unity. Possibly a distortion of Donne's discussion of degrees of nothingness in his poem, the apocalyptic gyres or "whirling Zodiac" are here evidence of the affirmative metaphysics of "that intoxicating 'St. Lucies Day'" (L 710), which had, by 21 February 1926, lent its stanza to Yeats's own poem, "just finished." The speaker (that is the generalized Woman of the sequence) vows:

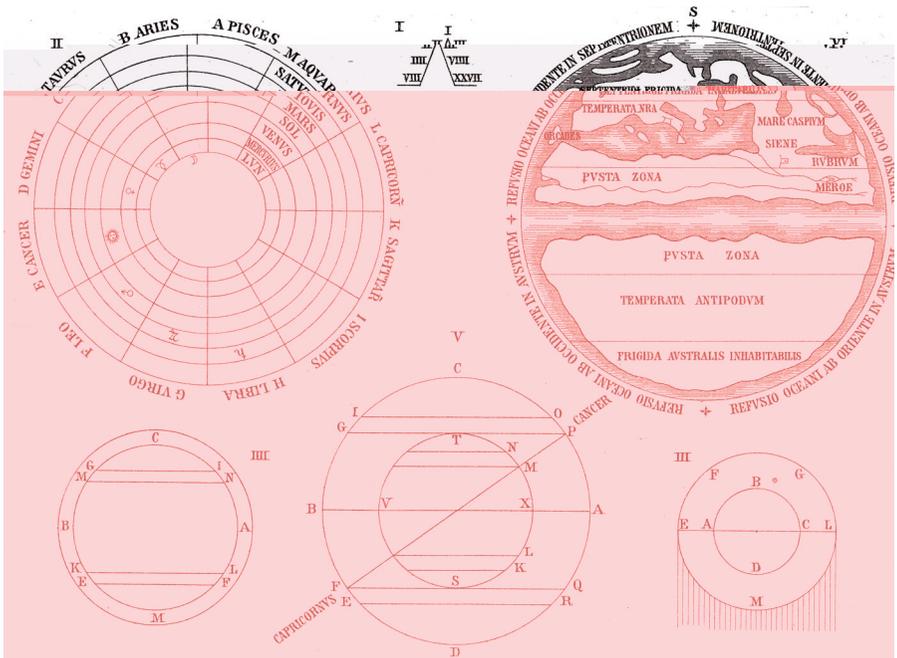
...If questioned on  
 My utmost pleasure with a man  
 By some new-married bride, I take  
 That stillness for a theme  
 Where his heart my heart did seem  
 And both adrift on the miraculous stream  
 Where—wrote a learned astrologer—  
 The Zodiac is changed into a sphere. (VP 535, ll. 11–18; CW1 277–78)

As Yeats noted on "The Mental Traveller," if Man makes a desert, Woman casts a tent in the desert. They are plighted as protagonists of two stories. They are met, equal for the moment, but perpetually bound to move in opposite directions and at values inversely related to each other. Yeats's reading of Cicero's fictional "Dream of Scipio" in *The Republic* and Macrobius's fifth-century *Commentary* for *A Vision* gives the lovers' plight a cosmic significance metaphorically. For *A Vision A*, Yeats had before him a Theosophical Society booklet, Volume V of *Collectanea Hermetica* (1894) edited by W. Wynn Westcott, which bore Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (translated into English) and but three shorter pieces, an essay and two notes on other subjects written by fellow members of the Golden Dawn: Percy Bullock ("L. O."), Frank Coleman ("A. E. A."), and Westcott ("S. A.").<sup>66</sup> From late January to March 1926, Yeats's unofficial consultant on Kusta ben Luka, Gyraldus, and Latin-to-English translation, Frank Pearce Sturm, put Macrobius squarely before Yeats and clearly helped him see the need for a thoroughgoing revision of *A Vision*. Both the Latin of the Teubner edition of the *Commentary* (1893) and his own translation of it (Lib I, Cap. xii, Sec. 5) was placed in evidence as the latest instance of "the voice of W. B. Giralduus, of cones & gyres," in his reading (FPS 92).<sup>67</sup> Hence the credit in *A Vision B* to Sturm, who, in Yeats's words, "has also found

me passages in Dr. Dee, in Macrobius, in an unknown mediaeval writer, which describe souls changing from gyre to sphere and from sphere to gyre. Presently I shall have much to say of the sphere as the final place of rest” (*AVB* 69). After reading Yeats’s poem “Chosen” and its “vague notes” in *The Winding Stair* (New York, 1929), Sturm wrote again to quote the same passage in the *Commentary*, explaining that Macrobius “tells how the descending soul, when it reaches the contact point of zodiac & milky-way, changes from a sphere to a cone (not from a cone to a sphere),” allowing, dismissively, that “It would be folly to hope for accuracy in a poet....I hear your contemptuous mutter[,] ‘wretched pedant,’ but I don’t care” (*FPS* 102). Yeats’s note in the Macmillan edition of *The Winding Stair* (London, 1933) acknowledged Sturm as a “too little known poet and mystic” (cf. “poet and scholar” in *A Vision B*) and as the poem’s authority on the “learned astrologer,” Macrobius, in l. 17 of the poem. Leaving the poem uncorrected and having it both ways in *A Vision B* by means of some “unknown mediaeval writer,” Yeats pointed to the passage

from Macrobius’s comment upon “Scipio’s Dream” (Lib. I. Cap. XII. Sec. 5):  
 “...when the sun is in Aquarius, we sacrifice to the Shades, for it is in the sign inimical to human life; and from thence the meeting-place of zodiac and Milky Way, the descending soul by its deflection is drawn out of the spherical, the sole divine form, into the cone.” (*VP* 831; *CW1* 607)

Figure V (below) in the edition of the *Commentary* to which Sturm twice referred Yeats (subsequently cited in the note above)<sup>68</sup> should be helpful.



The concentric spheres in diagram V are represented by circles ABCD and SXTV, respectively the celestial and the mundane, or earthly, spheres. The diagonal line drawn through both, like an axis, is the "Zodiac line," as defined by Macrobius's editor William Harris Stahl for the line between the solstices.<sup>69</sup> Horizontal lines to denote the earth's zones, or belts, run parallel to those of the heavens that govern them. The Zodiac line FP is marked by the tropical signs of Capricorn and Cancer as "the sun never travels beyond Cancer nor south beyond Capricorn" to cross the torrid zone (*ibid.* 210). These two signs, called the "portals of the sun" by natural philosophers, defined the path by which souls were supposed to have passed either in their transit from heaven to earth or vice versa, Capricorn (F) being called "the portal of the gods," as souls returned by way of it to their "abode of immortality," while Cancer (P) was called "the portal of men" because by its way souls descended "to the infernal regions." Continuing in this vein in Book I, Chapter XII, Section 5, Macrobius considered the descent of souls in terms of contrary influences effected by Leo and Aquarius (next to Capricorn) as they reached the intersection of the Zodiac and the Milky Way:

The soul, descending from the place where the zodiac and the Milky Way intersect, is protracted in its downward course from a sphere, which is the only divine form, into a cone, just as a line is strung from a point and passes this indivisible state into length; from this point, which is a monad, it here comes into a dyad, which is its first protraction.<sup>70</sup>

Yeats's inversion of this protraction from cone to divine sphere in "Chosen" is intentional, for portraying sexual rapture as spiritual ascent is natural to love poetry, indeed a Metaphysical figure in Donne's "Aire and Angels" ("So thy love may be my loves spheare" [25]) and magnificent conceit in "The Sunne Rising" ("Shine here to us, and thou art every where; / This bed thy centre is, these walls, thy spheare" [30]). In Donne's time, the winter solstice, which marks the sun's entry into Capricorn, fell on St. Lucy's Day, "the yeares midnight." Yeats's countervailing travelers were understood to be "double cones," a man and woman as "competing gyres growing at one another's expense" (*CW13* 108; *AVA* 134) but in "Chosen" plighted heart to heart, the signification of Capricorn on the Great Wheel of incarnations (*CW13* 14; *AVA* 13).<sup>71</sup>

## V

The Blakean crux of *A Vision* and the kind of oracular poetry that it seems to have engendered in Yeats's work does not end in the paired sequences from *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair*, of course. One could turn for additional examples to Crazy Jane and the lyric company she keeps in *Words for Music Perhaps*, to the old hermit Ribh on the topic of love in the "Supernatural Songs" of *A Full Moon in March* (1935) and the play with the same title, and to those broadside lyrics in *New Poems* (1938) written in competition with Dorothy Wellesley. The gene was a fantastically fertile one as it developed from Yeats's immersion in Blake at different times and from his resourceful wife's unseen communicators between late 1917 and 1925. Combining such stimuli to the imagination, though only two of the many that would occur on the least eventful day in the life of a poet, tremendously profited Yeats in the making of poetry, not to mention the

writing of his plays and short fiction. Aside from the oblique treatment of “Huddon, Duddon, and Daniel O’Leary” in this essay, the making of *Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends* (not originally intended for *A Vision*, it seems) remains a tale for another time and outside my topic. The “poems of *A Vision*” are the poems by Yeats in that book without counting several lyrics by other poets besides “The Mental Traveller.” Given the essay’s focus on poetry, including several discussed for sake of background, several contemporary plays for dancers were considered because their story, a new development for Yeats as a verse-dramatist, channeled much of Yeats’s creative energy over the years required to write *A Vision* in its original state. One might easily project the philosophy onto the second generation of his dance plays—on *The Resurrection* as a sequel to *Calvary*; on *The King of the Great Clock Tower* as a precursor to *A Full Moon in March*, subsequently rewritten to become its sequel; on his masked Sophoclean tragedies; and on *The Herne’s Egg*, *Purgatory*, and *The Death of Cuchulain* as last plays. Yet it seems sufficient to me to leave off with the verse sequences of *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair* as far as making projections from *A Vision* to poems that at least were written during the rewriting of that extraordinary text.

As early as 1919, the emergence of a “set” of philosophical dialogues, lyric poems, and stories about Michael Robartes and pseudo-Arabian lore began to draw fire from critics who decried a waywardness or lack of intelligibility in the turn that Yeats had just taken in his poetry. But, as Michael Sidnell has observed, “the evidence of Yeats’s poetic inattention, the intercourse with the phantasmagoria, was, of course, the opening of a splendid phase in Yeats’s work, not the sterile conclusion to it.”<sup>72</sup> On the poems to which the writing of *A Vision* contributed most, critics complained impatiently about his being misled by “spooks” and, consequently, writing foolishly and unintelligibly,<sup>73</sup> reminding one of Pound’s affectionate ribbing of Uncle William in *The Pisan Cantos* and Yeats’s pre-emptive self-defense in *A Packet for Ezra Pound*: “I remember that Swedenborg has described all those between the celestial state and death as plastic, fantastic and deceitful, the dramatis personae of our dreams” (*AVB* 23). Perhaps intended as an ironically self-referential play on Swedenborg as sentinel at the tomb of Poetic Genius, his writings the folded shroud, or, to mix metaphors, merely the index of “already publish’d books,” as Blake wrote in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (Plate 21: 5–6). Concluding *A Vision A and B* with the same lines, about contemplating “the damned [who] have howled away their hearts” and “the blessed [who] dance,” allows Yeats a subtle self-ribbing, a humble effacement of those “mummy truths” told in the book as a whole rather more than revealed in the elegiac “All Souls’ Night: Epilogue to ‘A Vision’” (*VP* 474 ll. 95–6; *CWI* 234). The poem was assigned the same place in *The Tower*. As a complement to the peregrine soul of the first-person speaker in “Sailing to Byzantium,” the “mind’s wandering / As mummies in the mummy-cloth are wound” (ll. 99–100) recalls what the famous imperative bade the sages at the outset of the collection: “Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre, / And be the singing-masters of my soul” (*VP* 408, ll. 19–20; *CWI* 197). Metaphors suggest such *different* things, of course, depending on context. Something like the ritual folding and unfolding of the cloth, the curtain ceremony in Yeats’s plays for dancers, is inherent, too, in the metaphor of a literary work viewed as the linen clothes of an author, folded up. In fine, I believe, Yeats preferred the role of poet to that of prophet although, with dramatic irony, he never discounted that a great poet might *also* be a prophet.

## Notes

1. Sounding its own note, Margaret Mills Harper's *Wisdom of Two: The Spiritual and Literary Collaboration of George and W. B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) develops a premise acknowledged by Yeats himself but first investigated in detail in the two volumes of *MYV* and supported by the evidence of *YVP* in four additional volumes. She argues convincingly, too, that what the instructors communicated to Yeats in the automatic script, "misquoted" by him when referring to pages filed with the manuscript of *A Packet for Ezra Pound*, was "philosophy to give you new images you ought not to use it as philosophy" (ibid. 90). She restates the case in her contribution to this volume.
2. Wayne K. Chapman, *Yeats's Poetry in the Making: "Sing Whatever Is Well Made"* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); hereafter cited as *YPM*. See especially chapters 5, 7, and 9.
3. See BL Add. MS 54897, f. 197.
4. See BL Add. MS 54898, ff. 11–15. On the correspondence concerning rights for poems appearing in British and American periodicals, see note 30, below.
5. Ronald Schuchard, "Hawk and Butterfly: The Double Vision of *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917, 1919)," *YA10* (1993) 112.
6. W. B. Yeats, *The Wild Swans at Coole: Manuscript Materials*, ed. Stephen Parrish (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994); hereafter cited as Parrish.
7. For a detailed account of the derivation of *Later Poems* (1922) as such a compendium, see *YPM*, Ch. 3.
8. Inspiration for this strategy came when reading the introduction of W. B. Yeats, "*At the Hawk's Well*" and "*The Cat and the Moon*": *Manuscript Materials*, ed. Andrew Parkin (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010), xxv, where Parrish is quoted at somewhat greater length.
9. Yeats's debt to More and Taylor for the infusion of Platonic theology in "Shepherd and Goatherd" is discussed by F. A. C. Wilson, *W. B. Yeats and Tradition* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 201. See also below, note 35, on More. In reading for his select edition of Spenser, Yeats made particularly interesting notations in *WBGYL* 1992A (*YL* 1978A)—*The Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. J. Payne Collier, 5 vols. (London: Bell, 1862), 2:246 and 255. Beside *The Faerie Queene*, II.ix.22 (with vertical strokes to the left of a corresponding footnote), Yeats made his first of three attempts to visualize the "goodly Diapase" of Spenser's House of Alma, avoiding, as Collier directs, the "mystical interpretation of... Sir Kenelm Digby." This rather crudely anthropomorphic figure is followed by two uncharacteristically elaborate tower designs sketched beside stanzas 47 and 48.
10. Yeats, in an elegiac mood, often recalled Sidney, as he did in 1910 after the death of Synge. In tribute, "J. M. Synge and the Ireland of His Time" (*CW4* 234; *E&I* 323) reprinted ll. 3–6 from Song VII of *Astrophel and Stella* (*WBGYL* 1931; *YL* 1917) to support Yeats's view that Synge had failed to articulate a "definite philosophy" only because he was a "pure artist." Hone asserts that Yeats trained for this essay, in May 1910, by "reading a little of Milton's prose every morning before he began to work"—Joseph Hone, *W. B. Yeats, 1865–1939* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1943), 252.
11. Two of the four Robartes-Aherne manuscripts contain lines from the poem. Because of this, and also because the poem was not originally conceived around either one of these characters, as one may read in National Library of Ireland MS 13.587(21), the poem may have preceded the prose dialogues. See, too, *YVP4* 17 and 49 n27 regarding the "Discoveries of Michael Robartes" typescript ("We have now come to Yeats's chambers and I can see by the light in his study that he is at home"; cf. *VP* 373, ll. 11–18; *CWI* 165).
12. See *AVB* 19–20, *WBGYL* 1598–99A (*YL* 1586–87A) and 1601–7A (*YL* 1589–95A); see also *WBGYL* 1090–94 (*YL* 1080–4) (much annotated), Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* and verse dialogues. On 1 December 1916, Yeats told Alexandra Schepeler that he was reading Landor while composing a letter to his "daimon," Leo Africanus (HM 28379, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; see below, note 25).
13. Many of Yeats's queries for his spirit "communicators" were about how specific people, living and dead, related to the system that evolved in this way. Some of those people were cited as examples of the twenty-eight incarnations in *A Vision*. Milton, as Harper shows (*MYV* 2 42, 93, and 170), originally stood with Horace, Dr Johnson, Flaubert, and Napoleon in Phase 21 (see *YVP1* 192–93; *YVP4* 44, 113), a slot finally occupied by Shaw, Wells, and George Moore.
14. Surprisingly, T. R. Henn's frontispiece in *The Lonely Tower: Studies in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats* (New York: Pellegrini, 1952) is not the illustration Yeats would have encountered in Palmer's book. The picture differs somewhat in content and substantially in form, being the reversal of Palmer's illustration in *The Shorter Poems of John Milton*. Although Yeats may have known this other engraving, since he was an expert on Palmer, as he was on the illustrators Blake and Calvert—see *WBGYL* 340–41, 1333–34, 2217–18 (*YL* 333–4,

- 1320–1, 2202–3), and *Y44* (1986) 286—this is not the picture that brought him to Milton’s text. For the correct image, see *YPM* 136.
15. In John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Odyssey, 1957), 74.
  16. No doubt, Athene appears because she is the goddess of wisdom. Her transfer to l. 45 in *VP* (“Athene takes Achilles by the hair”) receives comment in “Dove or Swan” (*CW13* 177; *AVA* 215). Jeffares’s speculations (*NC* 174) about the influence of “Il Penseroso” on Shelley’s “Prince Athanase, A Fragment” (1817) seem apt given the complex Yeats discloses at the outset of his poem. But emphasis on Shelley is misplaced in light of additional evidence and in light of Shelley’s poem itself, which features no tower at all, but a *soul* which had “wedded Wisdom...clothed in which he sate / Apart from men, *as in a lonely tower...*” (ll. 31–33; emphasis added). In his first revision, Yeats associated “Shelleyan” “subterranean caves,” the source of the river’s “bubbling up,” with the well “of natural instincts”—a passage excised from the poem before completion.
  17. The conceit of oil and wick in “The Living Beauty” (*VP* 333–34; *CW1* 139), a poem addressed to the young Iseult Gonne, is reminiscent of Donne’s line “We are Tapers too, and at our owne cost die.” The Donnean nature of Yeats’s metaphor seems especially apparent in *NLI* 13,587(4)—and in the fragment which joins the manuscript of “The Phases of the Moon” in *NLI* 13,587(21).
  18. The scorings in Yeats’s copy of Pater’s *Plato and Platonism* (London: Macmillan, 1893 [*WBGYL* 1549; *YL* 1538]) often mark passages or phrasings that caught Yeats’s attention. Occasionally, particularly between pp. 60 and 64 in “Plato and the Doctrine of Number,” the poet seems mostly attracted to the length of Pater’s sentences. Several marginally scored passages are accompanied by the comment “long.” One such passage, on pp. 67–68, bears the emphatic remark “style!” Obviously, such evidence reinforces a simple point Yeats confessed in “The Phases of the Moon”: that Pater’s prose style influenced his own.
  19. Kathleen Raine, “Yeats, the Tarot and the Golden Dawn,” *Yeats the Initiate: Essays on Certain Themes in the Work of W. B. Yeats* (Mountrath, Co. Laois: Dolmen Press, 1986; London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 235–44. We might recall, too, the similarity between Blake’s twenty-seven churches of the time-world (or “Mundane egg”) in *Milton* and Yeats’s twenty-eight phases of existence in *A Vision*. Raine’s “From Blake to *A Vision*” (*Yeats the Initiate*, 106–176) offers detailed insight into such complicated parallels.
  20. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 730. The Romantic poet and artist must not be far in the background, for Yeats knew well Blake’s *Milton* and Blake’s illustrations for Milton’s works. See *WBGYL* 213 and 1333–34 (*YL* 206 and 1320–1). What is more, Yeats made considerable use of Blake’s system in the 1925 edition of *A Vision*.
  21. Stan Smith, “Porphyry’s Cup: Yeats, Forgetfulness and the Narrative Order,” *Y45* (1987) 38; Warwick Gould, “A Lesson for the Circumspect”: W. B. Yeats’s Two Versions of *A Vision* and *The Arabian Nights*,” in ed. Peter L. Raciocci, *The Arabian Nights in English Literature*, (London: Macmillan, 1988), 245–6, 254 and 277.
  22. See Harper, *MYV1* 54 and 97, and *CVA* (notes) 10, on how the “28 mansions” got into the automatic script and the poem, having been marked in Chaucer and typed out by Mrs. Yeats. The text she used (hence the one followed here) was *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894) vol. 4, *Canterbury Tales*, Group F, 1117–25, 1129–34 (pp. 493–94) and corresponding notes (5:392). Cf. *WBGYL* 385–88; *YL* 376–8. In the Yeats library at the present time, the Skeat edition of Chaucer’s *The Poetical Works* (*WBGYL* 385; *YL* 376) is a 3-volume set of 1903.
  23. The text presented here is from the *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Douglas Bush *et al.* 8 vols. (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1953–82) 2:254–56. The Richard Garnett edition of the *Prose of Milton* (London: Walter Scott, 1894; see *Y44* [1986] 287) is the probable source of Yeats’s quotation. But possibly his attention was first drawn to this passage by the editor’s preface (1: xvi) in *The Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. J. A. St. John, 5 vols. (London: Bohn’s Library, 1848–54), where it is prominently featured (quoted in full from 3:194–5) as “a grand dithyrambic digression.” I am grateful to Professor John Creaser for alerting me to this possibility.
  24. The *Phaedrus* he may have consulted is in vol. 1 of a five-volume set of Plato, *The Dialogues*, tr. Benjamin Jowett (1875 [*WBGYL* 1598; *YL* 1586]). The set originally belonged to Yeats’s school friend Stephen Gwynn, and it is impossible to say when Yeats came by it. The only notes and markings in vol. 1 seem to belong to Gwynn (in *Phaedo*). The closest thing in the Jowett *Phaedrus* to Milton’s metaphor the “Towr of...*Apogaeum*” is a “steep” incline “to the top of the vault of heaven” up which the procession of the gods “march in their appointed order” (p. 453). See Donald T. Torchiana, “Yeats and Plato,” *Modern British Literature* 4.1 (1979): 5–16.
  25. See above, note 9.
  26. Yeats’s fiction was, as Raine observes, “a kind of scholarship in reverse” (“Giraldus,” *Yeats the Initiate*, 410).

- She also argues effectively that his fictional author was a composite of a number of historical sources centering upon the sixteenth-century Neo-Platonist and courtier, L. G. Gyraldus of Ferrara, rather than the twelfth-century Giraldus Cambrensis and other candidates proposed by Yeats scholars. She cites Robert's story in *AVA xviii/CW13 lix* (told second-hand by Aherne), which associates Gyraldus with Dr John Dee (see *WBGYL* 513; *YL* 501) and the alchemist Edward Kelley. Travel literature such as Charles M. Dougherty's *Wanderings in Arabia* (see *WBGYL* 550–51; *YL* 538–39), mentioned by Raine, found an avid reader in Yeats, who believed he had discovered his antithetical self during various spiritualist events and in *A Geographical Historie of Africa* (1600 [*WBGYL* 1116; *YL* 1106]) by John Leo or “Leo Africanus.” Yeats recorded both sides of their correspondence across time but found “Leo” a hindrance to experiments with Mrs. Yeats. See Arnold Goldman, “Yeats, Spiritualism, and Psychical Research,” *YO* 116–122, and Steve L. Adams and George M. Harper, “The Manuscript of ‘Leo Africanus,’” *YAI* (1982) 3–47.
27. George M. Harper, *W. B. Yeats and W. T. Horton: The Record of an Occult Friendship* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980), 35, 58–63. See also *MYV1* 10–15, 22, and *MYV2* 277–8, 344–45, and 398.
  28. See again Harper, *MYV1* 121–22 and *MYV2* 316–17, on the impact of the Platonic Horton-Locke liaison on W. B. and George Yeats; and especially Harper's interpretation of Mrs. Yeats's “symbolic” role as read from the script (*MYV2* 292) and of the tower as “symbol of conjugal union” (*MYV1* 245). See also my review “From Platonic Metaphor to Yeatsian Scripture,” *Cauda Pavonis: Studies in Hermeticism*, Spring 1989, 12–14.
  29. Milton, *Complete Prose*, 2:256.
  30. See *ibid.*, n9.
  31. Smith, in *YA5* (1987) 39, 19.
  32. Yeats's two other uses of the quotation, in 1910 and 1935, respectively, are discussed in *ibid.*, pp. 40–41.
  33. Pater, *Plato and Platonism* (London: Macmillan, 1893 [*WBGYL* 1549; *YL* 1538]), 166–7. Pater's phrase “the dialogue of the mind with itself” was drawn from Arnold's 1853 Preface to his *Poems*. The passage, on Arnold's withdrawal of *Empedocles on Etna*, specifically came to mind when Yeats referred to it, in 1936, in *OBMV* xxxiv (*CW5* 199).
  34. Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, 161.
  35. Following Yeats's discussion on the pages I cite, Yeats anticipated his cook-dough metaphor of 1918 with a similar sculptor-clay metaphor which concluded his work of mid-1917. Being “in the place where the Daimon [or the anti-self] is,” he writes, “I am full of uncertainty, not knowing when I am the finger, when the clay” (*CW5* 32; *Myth* 366). An old and not very widely accessible discussion of More's idea may be found in Gerta Huttemann's dissertation *Wesen der Dichtung und Aufgabe des Dichters bei William Butler Yeats* (Bonn: Leopold, 1929), 36–41. Yeats makes explicit use of More in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*; in “Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places” (*CW5* 47–73; *Ex* 30–70); in “Witches and Wizards and Irish Folklore” (*CW5* 74–83) and “Notes” for Lady Gregory's *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* (*CW5* 258–88); and in “My Friend's Book” (*CW5* 113–17; *E&I* 412–18).
  36. See W. B. Yeats, “*The Dreaming of the Bones*” and “*Calvary*”: *Manuscript Materials*, ed. Wayne K. Chapman (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), especially pp. xxxv–xlii, for the detailed account that I cannot afford to give here and below.
  37. Janis Haswell, “Resurrecting *Calvary*: A Reconstructive Interpretation of W. B. Yeats's Play and Its Making,” in ed. Wayne K. Chapman and Warwick Gould, *Yeats's Collaborations: YA15* (2002) 159–89.
  38. Harper argues that the alignment of Yeats's “three birds” and the play's three masked women lacked a fourth woman (possibly Olivia Shakespear) in the supposed “tetradic plan in Yeats's life.” That plan was to bring this fourth Cuchulain play into the cycle—following *On Bailie's Strand*, *The Green Helmet*, and *At the Hawk's Well*, allowing Yeats a fifth at the end of life, *The Death of Cuchulain*, twenty years later.
  39. Birgit Bjersby (Birgit [Johansson] Bramsbäck), *The Interpretation of the Cuchulain Legend in the Works of W. B. Yeats* (Darby, PA: Folcroft Editions, 1970; Copenhagen and Dublin: Uppsala Irish Studies, 1970), 35; hereafter cited as Bjersby. Bjersby actually gives “all the ghosts of the hill” rather than the manuscript's “all the goats” (see *YPM* 102).
  40. In “Cuchulain[,] the Girl and the Fool,” a vagrant dialogue in *Seven Poems and a Fragment* (Dundrum: Cuala, 1922) but not picked up in *The Tower* as the other lyrics were, The Girl turns the mirror trope around as she considers the way the hero is regarded by other men: “I am jealous of the looks men turn on you / For all men love your worth; and I must rage / At my own image in the looking-glass / That's so unlike myself that when you praise it / It is as though you praise another, or even / Mock me with praise of my mere opposite” (16, ll. 1–6; cf. *VP* 447–48 variants).
  41. The Japanese models for Yeats's first three adaptations from the Noh are roughly as follows: *Yoro* (*At the Hawk's Well*), *Nishikigi* (*The Dreaming of the Bones*), and *Awoi no Uye* (*The Only Jealousy of Emer*). *Calvary*

- seems to be tenuously modeled on *Kakitsubata*. Begun in the context of the third of these adaptations, the unfinished fifth play for dancers may have combined features of two models: that of the fisher characters and the dance of wind and wave in *Hagoromo* as well as the dialogue between Old Man and Old Woman in *Genjo*. All of these models were at hand in the Pound-Fenollosa translations. See Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound: Translations*, with an introduction by Hugh Kenner (New York: New Directions, 1963), 308–14 and 345–52.
42. In a letter from Yeats to “Dobbs” written seven days later, this time on the Lady Ottoline Morrell/Bertrand Russell social set, the term “whirlpool” was applied to a “sky bride” (or possibly “shy bride”) by the name of Miss Baker (27 November [1922]; *CL Intelix* 4219).
  43. Huddon and Duddon are rival farmers in “Donald and His Neighbors,” a tale that Yeats reprinted in *FFTIP* 299–303, giving the source as a “chap-book” entitled “Hibernian Tales,” “mentioned by Thackeray in his *Irish Sketch Book*” (1842 and later), where the story is quoted in full. The Thackeray-Yeats version was reprinted in the anthology *Irish Literature* (cited above), but Yeats seems to have known another version, “Huddon, Duddon and Donald O’Neary,” credited to Alfred Nutt and appearing in *Celtic Fairy Tales*, ed. Joseph Jacobs (1892 and later). Yeats’s poem “Huddon, Duddon and Daniel O’Leary” serves as a light-spirited epigraph to *Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends: An Extract from a Record Made by His Pupils* (Cuala Press, 1931; Wade 167), and both poem and story appear in *AVB*. See Walter Kelly Hood, “Two Occult Manuscripts,” *YO* 204–224. Possibly, in the play’s 1918 draft, the Old Man calls the Young Girl “pretty Huddon” because she is pretty and naive, like the foolish Huddon and Duddon in the folktale, who jump in a river and drown because they are persuaded that “all the sight of cattle and gold that ever was seen is there” (*FFTIP* 399). Like her mistakenly jealous sweetheart, in the end the girl jumps and drowns, too, but for love rather than money.
  44. *The Cat and the Moon*, a “Kiogen” of 301 lines intended “to come as a relaxation of attention between, let us say ‘The Hawk’s Well’ and ‘The Dreaming of the Bones,’” is not “much longer than the others” (*VPI* 805; *CW2* 897; that is, than the four “plays for dancers” published in Wade 129 and 130).
  45. See W. B. Yeats, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer: Manuscript Materials*, ed. Thomas Parkinson with Anne Brannen (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 122–23.
  46. The only parallel to silver-shod horses elsewhere in Yeats occurs in *The Unicorn from the Stars* (*VPI* 682, Act II, l. 261; *CW2* 222): “the horses themselves shod with no less than silver!” a line spoken by the beggar Johnny Bocach and possibly written by Lady Gregory.
  47. *NLI* 36,263/29, f. 35. Neither does Parkinson cite the fragment of “The Second Coming” (f. 33) though quoting from *NLI* 36,254/16 (as “MBY1”) in the Cornell Yeats edition of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*.
  48. George Mills Harper and Robert Anthony Martinich, “Sleep and Dream Notebooks: Introduction.”
  49. By 1937 (in *AVB*), the “sly ‘Introduction’” by “O. A.” had been replaced by the even more elaborate craftiness of *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (Cuala, 1928; Wade 163) and *Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends* (Cuala, 1931; Wade 167), reprinted with “The Phases of the Moon” to introduce the five books of the treatise. The poem “Desert Geometry or the Gift of Harun Al-Raschid” was also deleted.
  50. The fragment, reproduced in facsimile and transcribed in *YPM* 124, is older than the fair-hand copy (*NLI* 30,540) in W. B. Yeats, *The Tower* (1928): *Manuscript Materials*, edited by Richard J. Finneran with Jared Curtis and Ann Saddlemyer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007). Evidence in support of that claim is given in *YPM* 318–19, n52. See Jon Stallworthy, *Between the Lines: W. B. Yeats’s Poetry in the Making* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 54–86.
  51. See Wade, “Contributions to Periodicals,” 351–52.
  52. In *The Tower* (1928), Yeats said that “The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid” was a poem in “an unfinished set of poems, dialogues and stories about John Ahern and Michael Robartes, Kusta ben Luka, a philosopher of Bagdad, and his Bedouin followers” (*VP* 830; *CW1* 700). Without delving into the extant unpublished writings on the subject, Michael J. Sidnell explores the “published relics” of this “set,” which he defines as “a number of poems and plays, some notes, some stories, and *A Vision*,” and explores much the same body of Yeats’s work as I have been considering in this essay; see his “Mr. Yeats, Michael Robartes and Their Circle,” *YO* 225. Interestingly, in the same book, Walter Kelly Hood transcribes two unpublished “relics” of the set, “Appendix by Michael Robartes” and “Michael Robartes Foretells.” His essay is cited above in note 43. “Michael Robartes Foretells” features the fictitious Huddon, Duddon, Denice [*sic*], and O’Leary and might be a rejected tailpiece written for *AVB* around 1936, to follow “All Souls’ Night” and complement the introductory “Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends.” See Hood, *YO* 215–17 and 219–24.
  53. The editors of Scribner’s recent critical edition of *AVA* do not comment on this obviously comic vow but clearly grasp Yeats’s game in the post-dating of Owen Aherne’s two submissions to “May, 1925,” after Yeats’s “Dedication” of “February.” Aherne’s “date may not point to a date of composition, but it does further the fiction that Aherne wrote the essay after WB’s book manuscript was finished, so that Aherne can make reference to and

- pass judgment upon it," say editors Catherine E. Paul and Margaret Mills Harper, *CW13* 234, n28.
54. I leave it to *A Vision* editors Catherine E. Paul and Margaret Mills Harper to provide the details of these and other textual alterations made toward *AVB*. Their scholarly edition of the 1937 text is forthcoming in Scribner's multi-volume *Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*.
  55. The most interesting, thoroughly annotated copy of *AVA* in the W. B. Yeats Library (*WBGYL* 2466b; *YL* 2433c) provides "Extracts for new *Vision* to be taken from the book & as corrected here / WBY." Changes marked in this and, to a lesser degree, in three other copies are noticed in the Appendices of *A Vision* (1925), eds. Paul and Harper, *CW13* 340–52.
  56. See note 43, on Yeats's Irish sources (one of them edited by him in *FFTIP*) for the characters Peter Huddon, John Duddon, and Daniel O'Leary (also acknowledged in the verse-epigraph of "Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends"). The apocryphal Yeats poem "Huddon, Duddon and Daniel O'Leary" is wry but also perplexing in suggesting that the eponymous characters from the folktale have been applied to his fictional characters the same way a subtext applies to a text: "I put three persons in their place / That despair and keep the pace / And love wench Wisdom's cruel face" (8–10). The epigraph initiates the narrative and transitions from Pound's lyric "The Return," quoted at the end of "To Ezra Pound": "See, they return; ah, see the tentative / Movements, and the slow feet, / The trouble in the pace and the uncertain / Wavering!" Yeats's epigraph is apocryphal because subsequently deleted from the canon with only a trace left of it in "Tom the Lunatic" in *Words for Music Perhaps* (1932) and *The Winding Stair* (1933) (*VP* 528–29; *CW1* 273).
  57. See also W. B. Yeats, *The Tower* (1928): *A Facsimile Edition*, introduction and notes by Richard J. Finneran (New York: Scribner, 2004), 110. In *AVB*, Yeats recalls that his wife had originally declined to let him divulge her "share" of the work, causing him to invent "an unnatural story of an Arabian traveller which I must amend and find a place for some day because I was fool enough to write half a dozen poems that are unintelligible without it" (*AVB* 19). The tone is dismissive but there is no claim that the poem is unfinished.
  58. Paul and Harper frequently note Yeats's discrepancies from Erdman's Blake. On Yeats's limited knowledge of the pre-Socratics outside Burnet's book, see Matthew DeForrest, "Philosophical Differences and Yeats's Corroborative System in *A Vision*," *South Carolina Review* 32.1 (Fall 1999): 212–28.
  59. See, for example, Virginia Moore, *The Unicorn: William Butler Yeats' Search for Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 278; and Hazard Adams, *Blake and Yeats: The Contrary Vision* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1955; 2nd ed., New York: Russell and Russell, 1968), 240–43. In Yeats's *A Vision* (1925), Paul and Harper state that "The Mental Traveller" "is most important to the understanding of *A Vision*" (*CW13* 271), and they cite several occasions in which the automatic scripts investigated specific parallels. Like *A Critical Edition of Yeats's "A Vision" (1925)*, edited by George Mills Harper and Walter Kelly Hood (London: Macmillan Press, 1978), the documentation of Catherine Paul's and Margaret Harper's work in *CW13* suggests that Blake was profoundly influential on the whole *Vision* project in its first iteration of 1925.
  60. I find useful here Hazard Adams's term "oscillating," which he applies to the voices and arrangements of poems in *The Tower* and *Winding Stair* generally; his attention to the lyric sequences of the latter is greater than that of the former, understandably, in *The Book of Yeats's Poems* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1990), cf. 173–78 and 203–13; hereafter cited as Adams. This was due to the complication of the "Words for Music Perhaps" sequence. The appendix affirms Adams's claim that *The Tower* sequence "A Man Young and Old" begins "to presage *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*, with its sequences and aphoristic prophecies arranged deliberately without respect to 'chronology,' as the dated poems show" (173).
  61. In *A Packet for Ezra Pound*, Yeats employed a lyric called "Meditations upon Death" to mediate between the prose sections "Rapallo" and "Introduction to the Great Wheel." The poem, in two parts, became two poems in *The Winding Stair*: "At Algeciras—a Meditation upon Death" and "Mohini Chatterjee," respectively. Thus, revision involved addition as well as subtraction although neither new poem found any place in *AVB* when *A Packet for Ezra Pound* was substituted for the introductory inventions of 1925.
  62. For an account of the making of this poem and its sources, see Wayne K. Chapman, *Yeats and English Renaissance Literature* (London: Macmillan Press, 1991), 174–76 and 257 n100.
  63. *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night Rendered from the Literal and Complete Version of Dr. J. C. Mardrus and Collated with Other Sources by E. Pouys Mathers*, 4 vols. (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), 1:197 and 3:230–267 (cf. London: The Casanova Society, 1923 [*WBGYL* 258; *YL* 251]).
  64. See Moore, *The Unicorn*, 202. Foster dates it to December 1908 (*Life* 1 393–96).
  65. On the making of "Chosen" and its sources, see Chapman, *Yeats and English Renaissance Literature*, 179–84.
  66. The absence of Macrobius's *Commentary* was no doubt a matter of economy. The booklet (*WBGYL* 397; *YL* 387) originated from the library of Yeats's uncle G. T. Pollexfen and contains crib notes on authorities on the "Great Year" (on back leaf in WBY's hand) and a later draft (on back of title page) of the passage in *AVB* 243,

beginning “To the time when Marius...” (drawing on Censorinus, per a note on the endpaper of the booklet). A bibliographic reference to Macrobius and a single marginal note attributing to him fifteen thousand solar years for the completion of a Great Year suggests some acquaintance with the *Commentary* from other sources. My thanks to Warwick Gould for naming the three contributors of the Westcott volume.

67. The reference, quotation from Macrobius, and its translation are in Sturm’s letter to Yeats of 22 January 1926.
68. Listed in the catalogue of the National Library of Ireland as “Macrobius, Ambrosius Aurelius Theodosius, *Commentariorum in Somnium Scipionis* I–II [with text of ‘Somnium Scipionis’]” (shelf list 87 m C4), the formal bibliographic citation is introduced here from this copy: Ambrosii Theodosii Macrobii | Viri Clarissimi et Illustris | COMMENTARIORVM IN SOMNIVM SCIPIONIS | Liber Primus || Biblioteca | Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum | TEVBNERIANA. | — | MACROBIVS | Franciscus Eyssenhardt | — | Lipsiae | in aedibus B. G. Tevbneri | 1893 (MDCCCLXXXIII). The passage discussed by Sturm and Yeats appears (also in Latin) on pp. 530–31; the diagrams are on a foldout tipped in at p. 676.
69. This and the following English translations are from Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, translated by William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952). The discussion of diagram V occurs in II.vii, pp. 208–12. The first quotation is on p. 210.
70. Stahl, on p. 134, refers to Macrobius I.vi.18 on the soul’s protraction of its monadic to its dyadic state as a cone or, as Yeats preferred, a human gyre.
71. “Chosen” was probably written early in 1926 (*YPM* 242), around the release date of *AVA* (see Wade 149). At that time, Capricorn and Cancer were identified with “Heart” and “Loins” respectively in the diagram of the Great Wheel on *AVA* 13, as they had apparently been since their emergence in the automatic scripts of November 1917 (see *YVP1* 111, 116ff. and as summarized in the notebooks—e.g., *YVP3* 187, 202— and card files—e.g., *YVP3* 282, 296). As such they were in agreement with Macrobius’s *Commentary*.

However, handwritten notes transpose Capricorn and Cancer in two of the Yeates’ copies of *AVA* (*WBGYL* 2466 and 2466b; *YL* 2433a and 2433c) as noted in Table 2 and 3 in Paul and Harper, *CW13* 341 and 343. Subsequently, *AVB* presents the two signs reversed on the redrawn Wheel (*AVB* 81) in relation to their positions in *AVA* (cf. also Edmund Dulac’s engraving: *CW13* lviii; *AVA* facing p. xv; transposed in *SMRF* facing p. 8; *AVB* [66]). Effectively, this represents a decision to view the zodiac as running in the opposite direction, while retaining the positioning of “Head, Heart, Loins and Fall” (or, in the case of the Dulac engraving, the elemental attributions—though these were also transposed in the copy *WBGYL* 2466, see *CW13* 341). This change from a counter-clockwise to a clockwise ordering of the zodiac represents an identification with the solar aspects rather than lunar, which was appropriate to the identification of these points with positions in the precession of the solar equinox (*AVB* 254). The Rapallo Notebooks, the earliest of which date from 1928, show Yeats expending considerable effort in clarifying his understanding and exposition of the different zodiacs involved in his system. My thanks to Neil Mann for help with these details.

At the same time, the early Blakean symbols of Head, Heart, Loins and Fall were never fully integrated into or used in the system, while the diagonal cross embraces a variety of disparate ideas—not just “Head, Heart, Loins and Fall,” but also the position of the equinoxes and solstices at the center of the next civilization (*AVB* 254); the points of equidistance for all the *Faculties* (cf. *CW13* 53; *AVA* 62; *AVB* 127); points associated with the opening and closing of the *Tinctures* (e.g., *CW13* 51; *AVA* 59); and linked to the four types of wisdom, where Yeats also had doubts: “I have more than once transposed Heart and Intellect, suspecting a mistake” (*AVB* 100n), though deciding in this instance to keep the automatic script’s original attributions.

Similarly, the cardinal signs of the zodiac, especially Cancer and Capricorn, comprehend a variety of different ideas besides these crux points within the Wheel. Interestingly, beneath a theme entitled “Concerning love,” which relates to Michael Robartes’s confession about love’s dying just as it is affirmed with a crying out in rapture, Yeats inscribed several signs of Capricorn and Cancer beside fire and water symbols in NLI 13,577, a notebook bearing drafts of *Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends* c. 1929–Feb. 1930 (see *YPM* 3–5).

Matthew Gibson believes that Plato’s Myth of Er in *The Republic* is involved in “Chosen,” as in “His Bargain” from the sequence “Words for Music Perhaps,” because “The lot of love” that “is chosen” in line 1 seems to refer to Lachesis throwing down lots to souls of the dead before they choose their next life in another turn on Plato’s spindle. “Chosen” would thus be a metempsychosis-based poem, as well as about the Great Year, which was measured, before Hipparchus, by the alignment of the planets under Capricorn or Cancer.

72. Sidnell, “Mr. Yeats, Michael Robartes and Their Circle,” *YO* 117; the critic was J. Middleton Murry; his review was entitled “Mr. Yeats’ Swan Song,” in the *Athenaeum* (4 April 1919).
73. My thanks to Catherine Paul for the reference to Seán O’Faoláin, “Mr. Yeats’s Kubla Khan,” *The Nation* (4 Dec. 1929): 681. The review is available at [www.YeatsVision.com/G552.html](http://www.YeatsVision.com/G552.html).

## A VISION OF EZRA POUND

by Catherine E. Paul

When W. B. Yeats revised *A Vision*—almost making it a new work—he chose to begin the occult book with “A Packet for Ezra Pound.” This cluster of essays had first seen light in a book of the same name, published by the Cuala Press in 1929.<sup>1</sup> A sort of rumination on his new home and community in Rapallo, Italy, these essays were intimately linked to *A Vision* from their earliest draft states. On the first page of this new version of *A Vision*, then, as printed by Macmillan in 1937, Yeats writes:

I shall not lack conversation. Ezra Pound, whose art is the opposite of mine, whose criticism commends what I most condemn, a man with whom I should quarrel more than anyone else if we were not united by affection, has for years lived in rooms opening on to a flat roof by the sea. (*AVB* 3–4)

As a part of his rumination on Rapallo, such a comment makes perfect sense, but a reader of *A Vision* wonders what the firebrand American poet has to do with the system revealed by the Yeateses’ spirit guides and with the book that Yeats made of those revelations. This essay offers an answer. Despite differences between the two poets on matters of politics, poetics, and even the relationships between this world and the next, their work was mutually influential. And in the context of Yeats’s *A Vision*, Pound remains an important presence—a figure needing description, resistance, incorporation, collaboration. This essay traces the two poets’ literary relationship, Pound’s influences on *A Vision*, the ways that *A Vision* grappled with the young American poet, and offers a sense of the interrelationships between *A Vision* and Pound’s lifework, *The Cantos*.

By the summer of 1908, twenty-two-year-old American Ezra Pound had had enough of Venice. He had arrived there in May, looking to escape American academic life and become a poet, but after a fairly short stay, and having had *A Lume Spento*, his first book of poetry, printed by a Venetian publisher, he determined that he needed to be in London, where he could meet some “real people”—“Wm B. Yeats more especially especially [*sic*].”<sup>2</sup> Pound had likely known about Yeats’s poetry since his days at Hamilton College, and in 1907 he called Yeats “The Celtic Eagle” who “set a whole land singing.”<sup>3</sup> As Pound would comment later in life, “I went to London because I thought Yeats knew more about poetry than anybody else.”<sup>4</sup> And a number of Pound’s earliest published poems show Yeats’s great influence: Pound acknowledged in a note to the first poem of *A Lume Spento*, “La Fraisine,” that the poem’s metaphysical scheme (barely discernible upon reading the poem) came in part from Yeats’s poetry of his “Celtic Twilight” period.<sup>5</sup> Rarely has a young writer imagined his path to literary success with so sharp a focus on a single literary idol. But Pound was not wrong: getting to know Yeats and his circle opened up important opportunities and exposed him to texts and traditions that would be important to his writing for the rest of his career. Indeed, as Pound became more established in literary circles in London, Yeats (to whom he had been introduced by Olivia Shakespear) was always present as an

inspiration and as a figure to resist. But even as Pound was defining his own modernism, centered on reinvigorating the works of the past and making new art from them, he still recognized the significance of Yeats's poetry and aesthetics. Pound wrote to fellow American poet William Carlos Williams in May 1909 that "If you'll read Yeats and Browning and Francis Thompson and Swinburne and Rossetti you'll learn something about the progress of Eng. poetry in the last century."<sup>6</sup>

Starting in November 1913, Pound and Yeats spent the first of three winters together at Stone Cottage in Sussex, outside London. Pound was to be Yeats's secretary, but both pursued their own writing. Pound was initially skeptical about the plan, writing to his mother in November 1913, "My stay in Stone Cottage will not be in the least profitable. I detest the country. Yeats will amuse me part of the time and bore me to death with psychical research the rest. I regard the visit as a duty to posterity" (*SLEP* 25). Pound could not have been more wrong, as the time the two writers spent together was immensely profitable to their respective work and their mutual influence substantial. As Yeats described the place to his father in January 1915, "we have four rooms of cottage on the edge of a heath and our back is to the woods" (*CL Intellex* 2583, 18 January 1915; *L* 590). Pound had had plans for "a long poem" as early as 1911, but at Stone Cottage he read Browning's *Sordello* and began his *Cantos*, a sequence of poems that he would continue the rest of his life, and that features prominently in "A Packet for Ezra Pound." As Pound would remember the time later in life, his service to Yeats was "mostly reading aloud...And wrangling": he said, "The Irish like contradiction. [Yeats] tried to learn fencing at forty-five, which was amusing. He would thrash around with the foils like a whale."<sup>7</sup> Pound frequently dismissed Yeats's interest in the question of life after death, as he did in a letter to John Quinn of November 1918: "I notice with Yeats he will be quite sensible till some question of ghosts or occultism comes up, then he is subject to a curious excitement, twists everything to his theory, usual quality of mind goes" (*SLEP* 141). Still, Pound's work from the period suggests more interest in occult matters than he would admit. Yeats was drafting *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, and despite Pound's attempts to downplay it, the early drafts of "Three Cantos" (1917) show the influence of the reading in occult literature that both had undertaken. Both Pound and Yeats were discovering the Noh drama of Japan, and James Longenbach has observed an "Irish lilt" to Pound's translations of these plays, noting that through his dialectal choices, Pound wanted to show a relationship among Irish folklore, occult literature, and Noh drama.<sup>8</sup> Both poets wrote dialogues with the dead and poetic responses to war, and both poets concerned themselves with the artist's relationship to the spirits of his ancestors, whether biological or artistic. There are geometric and philosophical similarities between the gyres that would power the system of Yeats's *A Vision* and the vortex of Vorticism—which Hugh Kenner has described as "a circulation with a still center: a system of energies drawing in whatever comes near"<sup>9</sup>—that was for Pound a powerful image of the interplay between individuals, historical events, and greater knowledge. Pound's esoteric conception of modernism, whereby some hidden knowledge is needed to understand the workings of great modernist literature, may have derived from shared explorations with Yeats.<sup>10</sup>

On 20 April 1914, Pound married Dorothy Shakespear. Even after their marriage, Dorothy spent much time with her close friend and step-cousin Georgie Hyde-Lees, who would marry Yeats in 1917, with Pound as best man. The couples traveled together in Italy

in January and February 1925, when Yeats notes he finished the first version of *A Vision*. The couples met up in Sicily, and then traveled to Naples, Capri, and Rome.<sup>11</sup> Yeats wrote or reworked many sections of *A Vision* during this trip with the Pounds. In Yeats's papers at the National Library of Ireland are numerous high-quality photographs purchased during this trip, the great majority of which feature mosaics from churches and palaces that Yeats visited. These include the duomo of Cefalù, the Palazzo Reale in Palermo (including a large-format photograph of its Cappella Palatina), the Cathedral at Monreale, and the grotto of Dionysius at Siracusa. Yeats seems to have purchased every photograph sold that featured details of mosaics. In Rome, he made visits to nearly all of the medieval churches, including many that are off the beaten path. There, too, he bought photographs of mosaics from the basilicas of Santa Maria in Trastevere, San Giovanni in Laterano, and Santa Maria Maggiore, and the churches of San Marco, Sant' Agnese in Via Nomentana, San Clemente, Santa Prassede, Santa Pudenziana, and Santi Cosma e Damiano.<sup>12</sup> In *A Vision A*, Yeats centered his discussion of the Byzantine aesthetic on monuments seen during this trip:

Could any visionary of those days, passing through the Church named with so un-theological a grace "The Holy Wisdom," can even a visionary of to-day wandering among the mosaics of Rome and Sicily, fail to recognise some one image seen under his closed eyelids? (*CW13* 159; *AVA* 192)

Later he would shift his locus to Ravenna and Sicily (*AVB* 280), as that northern Italian city is more famous for its Byzantine mosaics than are the churches of Rome, but at the stage of composing the first version of *A Vision*, he was thinking of the churches he visited with the Pounds.

In his work toward *A Vision*, Yeats considered where Pound might appear in the system that he and George devised through conversation with spirit guides. A script of 30 November 1917, wonders, "Where would you put Ezra Pound?" (*YVPI* 131). Then an undated script, likely of late January 1918, considers Pound's placement in relation to that of other poets, seeing Virgil as akin to Pound as "more in the mind than in writing" (*YVPI* 286). (There is an irony here, as Pound was no fan of Virgil, calling him "a second-rater, a Tennysonianized version of Homer" [*SLEP* 87] and claiming elsewhere that the *Aeneid* "has no story worth telling, no sense of personality."<sup>13</sup>) They placed Pound at Phase 12 of the "Twenty-eight Embodiments." In May 1918, consideration of Pound and Phase 12 emphasizes the "intellectual ugliness" and "violence" of that phase (*YVPI* 453–54). The Card File summarizes this session: "Ezra & Violence" (*YVP3* 359). As described in *A Vision*, this phase is "before all else the phase of the hero, of the man who overcomes himself, and so no longer needs...the submission of others, or...conviction of others to prove his victory." A man of this phase defends his ambitions "by some kind of superficial intellectual action, the pamphlet, the violent speech, the sword of the swashbuckler" and "spends his life in oscillation between the violent assertion of some commonplace pose, and a dogmatism which means nothing, apart from the circumstance that created it." The phase also holds the opportunity for "a noble extravagance, an overflowing fountain of personal life" (*CW13* 52–54; *AVA* 61–63; cf. *AVB* 126–29).<sup>14</sup> Given the descriptions of Pound that we find elsewhere in Yeats's commentaries, and despite the negative cast that

this phase's description carries, these characteristics make for a fitting placement, which even anticipates the activities that Pound would undertake later in his career.

Pound appears again in an early draft of *A Vision*, written as a dialogue between Owen Aherne and Michael Robartes. In this draft, these fictional characters who originated in Yeats's stories of the 1890s are given the job of explaining the Yeateses' system. Aherne poses questions, and Robartes answers them, often at length. They say that they would like to visit Yeats but fear an encounter with Pound. Both Aherne and Robartes, it turns out, have met Pound before, and neither of them is fond of the young American poet. They call him "rude," "a very violent talker," having "no manners" (*YVP4* 17–18). Later in the dialogue, when Robartes places Pound in Phase 12 together with Nietzsche, he says,

I feel more sympathy with twelve where Nietzsche emerges and all ~~men may discover their superman~~. though the more violent types of the phase among whom I would be sorry to discover your enemy Mr. Pound, not transfigured but transfixed contemplate the race in some form of his collective opinion till hatred turns the flesh to wood and the nerves to wire. (*YVP4* 31)

Again, Pound is a "violent type" and the "enemy" of Aherne. By having these words come from Robartes rather than himself, Yeats can express something of the dangers of Pound's type, and readers who know of Pound's later turn to fascism and more virulent anti-Semitic remarks might recognize a sort of prescience of Pound's growing obsession with and violent opinions about constructions of race.

When *A Vision* was published in 1925, Yeats took out references to his personal friends: Lady Gregory, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, Maud and Iseult Gonne, and of course Pound (*YVP4* 48). Pound makes one appearance in this published version of *A Vision*. In "Dove or Swan," where Yeats applies his thinking about the phases to an examination of history, Pound—along with Eliot, Joyce and others—appears in Phase 23, the period beginning in 1927. This period is inhabited by many "who have a strong love and hate hitherto unknown in the arts," and who "defend their conscience like theologians," as it is a time "where the intellect turns upon itself." These persons, Yeats writes, "are all absorbed in some technical research to the entire exclusion of the personal dream." The figures in this phase are artists

who either eliminate from metaphor the poet's phantasy and substitute a strangeness discovered by historical or contemporary research or who break up the logical processes of thought by flooding them with associated ideas or words that seem to drift into the mind by chance; or who set side by side as in *Henry IV*, *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses*, the *physical primary*—a lunatic among his keepers, a man fishing behind a gas works, the vulgarity of a single Dublin day prolonged through 700 pages—and the *spiritual primary* delirium, the Fisher King, *Ulysses*' wandering. (*CW13* 175; cf. *AVA* 211–12)

Yeats stresses how far apart myth and fact have fallen in this period, and adds that "If there is violent revolution, and it is the last phase where political revolution is possible, the dish will be made from what is found in the pantry and the cook will not open her book"

(*CW13* 175; *AVA* 212). This version of Pound focuses less on the individual and more on his generation, of which Yeats does not consider himself a part. (He had described his own generation as belonging to Phase 22.) Yeats cut this passage before the 1937 Macmillan edition of *A Vision*, but the spirit of the passage would find its way into *A Packet for Ezra Pound* where Pound must bear the burden of his generation alone. If *A Vision* is a book concerned at least in part with ghosts, we do well to note the shadows of Ezra Pound lurking in the margins of its early versions.

Pound and his *Cantos* played an important role in Yeats's thinking during his time in Rapallo, so it is no surprise that he would compose for Cuala Press a book entitled *A Packet for Ezra Pound*, and later incorporate much of its contents into *A Vision*. When the Pounds settled in Rapallo, Italy, on the Ligurian Riviera in 1924, Pound quickly became enamored of Benito Mussolini, whose fascist "revolution" had started in northern Italy around the time of the First World War, coming to a visible climax with 1922's March on Rome. Pound continued to publish individual cantos, which, he suggested in the title to *A Draft of XVI Cantos* (1925), were intended to be "for the Beginning of a Poem of some Length." Pound published *A Draft of XXX Cantos* in 1930 and then three more volumes of cantos—seventy-three poems. The subject matter is unusual and diverse. *Eleven New Cantos* (1934/35) encompasses Pound's economic thinking; his more journalistic ideas about the workings of modern Europe; the cult of *amor* as in the writings of Cavalcanti; the long epistolary conversation of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams; the founding of an American central bank and the significance of the Founding Fathers to American history; and the biography of Mussolini. *The Fifth Decad of Cantos* (1937) adds the foundation of the Monte dei Paschi bank in Siena; a bit of ancient Chinese history and philosophy; a harsh condemnation of usury; and the poet presented both as an Odyssean wanderer and as able to see that to which others have become desensitized. *Cantos LII–LXXI* (1940) brings together the so-called Chinese History Cantos (LII–LXI) and the "John Adams Cantos" (LXII–LXXI). Pound described his compositional method as "ideogramic," "presenting one facet and then another until at some point one gets off the dead and desensitized surface of the reader's mind, onto a part that will register."<sup>15</sup> Pound's sense that the various elements of these poems combine to form new wholes was crucial to his evolving poetics.

In part because the Pounds were living there, the Yeatses moved to Rapallo in February 1928, seeking the rest, sun, and warmth necessary to help Yeats recuperate from illness.<sup>16</sup> Almost immediately, Yeats began writing about his life there, and reimagining a description of Rapallo and its community as the basis of a new introduction to *A Vision*. The Yeatses lived for many months in the Albergo Rapallo, along the sea, before moving to a flat at via Americhe 12-8, now Corso Colombo. W. B. and George spent time with the Pounds, who by now had a complicated marital situation. Pound's long-time lover, the violinist Olga Rudge, had an apartment not far up the mountain near the Church of Sant' Ambrogio di Zoagli, and Pound and Rudge spent significant time in Venice and organized regular concerts in Rapallo. Their daughter Mary lived with a foster-family in the north of Italy. Dorothy's son Omar (fathered by another man) lived with her mother Olivia in England, where Dorothy spent summers. For George, Dorothy Shakespear was an important presence, and we can recognize the layers of meaning in this letter Yeats wrote to Olivia Shakespear early in their stay:

Ezra & Dorothy seem happy & content, pleased with their way of life & Dorothy & George compare their experiences of infancy & its strange behaviour [*sic*], George instructing Dorothy out of her greater store. If we carry out our plans & settle here they will renew all their old friendship & to George at any rate that will be a great happiness. (*CL Intelelex* 5079, 28 February [1928])

For Yeats, Pound's company was a huge part of Rapallo's appeal, and while much had changed since their days at Stone Cottage, poetic collaboration was still possible. Yeats writes in a letter to Lady Gregory, written shortly after his arrival in Rapallo, "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, so you must not think of me as out of the saga" ([24 February 1928], *CL Intelelex* 5081; *L* 738). Pound connected Yeats with other modernists—Basil Bunting, George Antheil, Gerhart Hauptmann, Max Beerbohm. Yeats noted in a letter to George, "Ezra explains his Cantos & reads me Cavalcanti & we argue about it quite amicably" (27 February 1928, *CL Intelelex* 5085). He and Pound talked and argued about many things—including poetry, politics, the ethnographic writings of Leo Frobenius, modern music, and Wyndham Lewis's theories of modernism.

This new setting saw Yeats's revision of *A Vision*, the writing of the material for "A Packet," and a great deal of poetic experimentation. We see from a letter Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory in March 1928 that these processes were all rather intertwined: "I am working on alternate days, that is to say writing on alternate days some paragraph for 'The Vision' or for a little book I am writing for Lolly, an account of this place, & Ezra & his work & things that arise out of that" (12 March [1928], *CL Intelelex* 5089). Yeats was extremely fond of Rapallo and the opportunities it afforded. He wrote to Lady Gregory: "This is an indescribably lovely place—some little Greek town one imagines—there is a passage in Keats describing just such a town. Here I shall put off the bitterness of Irish quarrels, and write my most amiable verses. They are already, though I dare not write, crowding my head" ([24 February 1928], *CL Intelelex* 5081; *L* 738). For several years, the Yeatses spent winters in Italy and summers in Ireland, and in November 1929, Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory, "I am looking forward very much to the quiet of Rapallo and I long for the sight of a table with my papers arranged upon it and a prospect of so much writing per day" (16 November 1929, *CL Intelelex* 5311; *L* 770).

At an early stage of composing the material for *A Packet*, Yeats imagined an essay focused on a poem by the late-medieval Italian poet Guido Cavalcanti, discussing "the latest movements in contemporary literature" (1 April [1928], *CL Intelelex* 5097; *L* 739). He likely links Pound to the Italian poet because at this time Pound was trying to complete an edition of Cavalcanti's poetry, and, as Yeats wrote to Olivia Shakespear in November 1928, "He constantly comes around to talk of Guido who absorbs his attention" (23 November [1928], *CL Intelelex* 5191; *L* 748). Pound had been translating Cavalcanti since the mid-1910s, and in the late 1920s he had leads on publishing an edition in England. These prospects eventually fell through, and he finally published it in 1932 in Italy, and the Yeatses owned a copy of the edition.<sup>17</sup> Also during this time, Pound was publishing a series of essays about Cavalcanti in the American magazine *The Dial*: there, he was most interested in defining a Tuscan aesthetic, in understanding what was particular about art and writing in that place and that period. That Yeats saw in Cavalcanti's poetry a way of

addressing “the latest movements in contemporary literature”—of which Pound was his most dominant example—shows how involved he was in Pound’s work.

As published by Cuala Press in August 1929, *A Packet for Ezra Pound* has four parts. First is an essay called “Rapallo,” in which Yeats sets this town in Italy as the scene for writing. By this time, Pound was deep into his long poem, *The Cantos*, and Yeats dedicates part of “Rapallo” to trying to make sense of it.<sup>18</sup> Second in the volume appears the two-part poem “Meditations Upon Death,” not retained for *A Vision*.<sup>19</sup> The third section, “Introduction to the Great Wheel,” lays out the story of the automatic script. Yeats returns to Ezra Pound in the final section of *A Packet*, presented as a letter to Pound. This final section—and therefore the book—concludes by quoting Pound’s poem “The Return” (1912).<sup>20</sup> In some ways this letter seeks to justify *A Vision* to a friend and fellow poet who might be loath to accept it. Indeed, Pound had long been skeptical about Yeats’s investment in occult experimentation, calling the project of *A Vision* “very very very bug-house.”<sup>21</sup> As its own volume, this collection of four seemingly disparate things—things that seem randomly compiled into one envelope—offers Yeats’s attempt to understand the relationship between his system for encompassing heavens and earth, and the literary moment of which he considered himself a part.

We are most familiar with this book as the opening section of the 1937 revised version of *A Vision*. There it acts as a preface, replacing the more fantastical fiction about the origins of the Yeatses’ system that had opened the first printing, published in a small edition by T. Werner Laurie. That original opening had couched the system in a complicated layering of tales about characters from *The Thousand and One Nights*, prefatory material supposedly written by and about characters from Yeats’s own fiction, and a woodcut portrait of the fabricated author of the material that Yeats claims only to compile. “A Packet for Ezra Pound,” though itself a compilation, offers a different introduction. “A Packet” situates *A Vision* in the expatriate modernist community in Rapallo, asking readers to see the book as a parallel to Pound’s *Cantos*, about which long series of innovative poems Yeats admits some confusion, saying, “I have often found there brightly printed kings, queens, knaves, but have never discovered why all the suits could not be dealt out in some quite different order” (*AVB* 4). As we shall see, Yeats seems to have similar concerns about his own *Vision*.

Yeats had begun revising *A Vision* in mid-1926, during the same time that he was reading works by such thinkers as George Berkeley, Plotinus (as translated by Stephen MacKenna), Alfred North Whitehead, and Oswald Spengler.<sup>22</sup> Increasingly the pages of his notebooks are filled with rewritings of the various sections of *A Vision*. In all cases, there is a concern with the exactness and correctness of terminology, diagrams, geometry, and the interrelationships of various parts of his system. The same notebooks in which Yeats was revising *A Vision* contain the early drafts of the material that would become “A Packet for Ezra Pound.” Although Yeats eventually abandoned the plan to focus on Cavalcanti, he kept Pound as a centerpiece of the essay that became “Rapallo.”<sup>23</sup> In this essay, of course, we find the mention of Pound that I quoted in this essay’s introduction. Given Pound’s growing interest at this time in Benito Mussolini, Italian fascism, and economics, it is not hard to imagine the quarrels that Yeats describes in his mention of Pound’s presence in Rapallo. And given the vehemence with which Pound tended to make claims—whether about politics, art, poetry, money, criticism, passports, music, usury, little magazines, or

copyright—it is hard to imagine what issue he might commend or condemn *without* the vehemence that Yeats had identified with Pound as early as the automatic script. And for Pound, issues of art, economics, and politics are never separate: as he would write in *Guide to Kulchur* (1938), “...the one thing you shd. not do is to suppose that when something is wrong with the arts, it is wrong with the arts ONLY. When a given hormone defects, it will defect throughout the whole system.”<sup>24</sup> His interest in the ways that art and culture were being used by Mussolini to fortify the fascist state, meant that he brought his political and economic concerns into his thinking about poetry and the arts.<sup>25</sup>

In “Rapallo,” Yeats attempts to make sense of Pound’s *Cantos*, still very much in process. Yeats’s drafts of the essay show him working and reworking his description of Pound’s “long poem,” a text with which he was neither the first nor the last to have trouble:

There will be no plot, no chronicle of events, no logic of discourse, but two themes, the Descent into Hades from Homer, a Metamorphosis from Ovid, and, mixed with these, mediaeval or modern historical characters. He has tried to produce that picture Porteous commended to Nicholas Poussin in *Le chef d’œuvre inconnu* where everything rounds or thrusts itself without edges, without contours—conventions of the intellect—from a splash of tints and shades; to achieve a work as characteristic of the art of our time as the paintings of Cézanne, avowedly suggested by Porteous, as *Ulysses* and its dream association of words and images, a poem in which there is nothing that can be taken out and reasoned over, nothing that is not a part of the poem itself. (AVB 4)

In so saying, Yeats acknowledges Pound’s range of models and parallels, and also Pound’s own sense of poetry from his Imagist days. But Yeats also expresses uncertainty about Pound’s goals and approach, commenting, as already noted, that he might delight in the cards laid before him without seeing why they “could not be dealt out in some quite different order” (AVB 4). Indeed, Pound’s own conception for the long poem changed frequently during his life. Sometimes he imagined it as a follow-up to Browning’s *Sordello*, and other times as a modern reworking of Dante’s *Commedia*, and at still other times he resisted an overarching structure, calling it only “a poem including history.”<sup>26</sup>

Yeats is clear about the problems with Pound and his attitudes. As he wrote to Lady Gregory in April 1928, the opening essay of *A Packet* “takes up the controversy and explains Ezra Pound sufficiently to keep him as a friendly neighbour...” (CL *Intelex* 5097, 1 April 1928; L 739). Yeats’s thinking about Pound derives at least in part from his reading of the British painter, sculptor, and writer Wyndham Lewis, who Yeats notes “attacked Ezra Pound and Joyce in *Time and Western Man*, and is on my side of things philosophically” (L 739). Pound, he says in that letter, “has most of Maud Gonnet’s opinions (political and economic) about the world in general, being what Lewis calls ‘the revolutionary simpleton’” (L 739). By framing his critique of Pound in terms borrowed from Lewis, Yeats is continuing his rumination on this next generation of modernists from the passage cut from *A Vision A* about the historical Phase 23. Yeats’s engagement with Lewis makes it into a footnote in the published text of “A Packet,” though the critique of Pound is more oblique. There are strong similarities between the description of Pound’s work in “A Packet” and that in Yeats’s “Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*” (1936),

where he describes Pound as “mid-way in an immense poem in *vers libre* called for the moment *The Cantos*, where the metamorphosis of Dionysus, the descent of Odysseus into Hades, repeat themselves in various disguises, always in association with some third that is not repeated” (*CW*5 192; *OBMV* xxiv). Yeats notes that “Like other readers I discover at present merely exquisite or grotesque fragments,” and that in order to follow along with Pound’s own conception of the poem, he must “suspend judgment.” He further describes the work as having “more style than form,” and describes it as “constantly interrupted, broken, twisted into nothing by its direct opposite, nervous obsession, nightmare, stammering confusion.” He offers a similarly tangled list of descriptors for Pound: “he is an economist, poet, politician, raging at malignants with inexplicable characters and motives, grotesque figures out of a child’s book of beasts” (*CW*5 192–93; *OBMV* xxiv–xxv). In February 1939, Pound wrote to Hubert Creekmore, referring either to the ideas in “A Packet” or in the “Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, and saying, “God damn Yeats’ bloody paragraph. Done more to prevent people reading *Cantos* for what is *on the page* than any other one smoke screen” (*SLEP* 321). These disagreements between the poets about the virtue of clarity, the relationships between style and form, the interaction of personality and history, and how exactly one is to represent myth mark the distinctions between their poetics, and Yeats’s critique of the *Cantos* is as much about the kind of writer he aims to be as it is about how to perfect Pound.

But even if Yeats has problems with Pound, he still acknowledges the American’s power as a poet. Reflecting on a confusing, almost mathematical description of the *Cantos* that Pound had “scribbled on the back of an envelope,” Yeats commented that he found

that the mathematical structure, when taken up into imagination, is more than mathematical, that seemingly irrelevant details fit together into a single theme, that here is no botch of tone and colour, all *Hodos Chameliontos*, except for some odd corner where one discovers beautiful detail like that finely modelled foot in Porteous’ disastrous picture. (*AVB* 5)

This realization of a larger structure to the *Cantos*—a structure that only makes sense “when taken up into imagination”—allows for meaning and beauty beyond the seeming chaos of the poems’ welter of detail. Yeats’s idea of “*Hodos Chameliontos*,” a phrase meaning “the Path of the Chameleon,” appears prominently in *The Trembling of the Veil* to suggest the experience of being lost taken from his reading of a cabalistic manuscript (*CW*3 215; *Au* 270). Elsewhere in *A Vision*, he uses the same phrase to explain the confusion facing those of his generation: “Our generation has witnessed a first weariness, has stood at the climax, at what in *The Trembling of the Veil* I call *Hodos Chameliontos*, and when the climax passes will recognize that there common secular thought began to break and disperse” (*AVB* 299–300; cf. *CW*13 173 & *AVA* 209). By applying that language here to Pound’s literary situation, he likens Pound’s poetic project to his own attempts to create order out of the hidden knowledge revealed in the automatic script.

Yeats’s assessment of Pound’s poetry is more extensive in the Cuala version of *A Packet*, as that volume contains a final section of “Rapallo” that would be omitted from the 1937 *Vision*. In this section, Yeats describes rereading Pound’s poetry, now that *Personae: The Collected Poems* (1926) had recently been published.<sup>27</sup> The poems in *Personae* are pieces *not*

included in *The Cantos*—early, pre-*Cantos* poems, translations, and shorter works that stand on their own. Yeats writes of reading poetry again after time spent focused on *A Vision*, noting that “at first it was faint like an old faded letter, and then an excitement that I had not felt for years” (*PEP* 7). In this context, he recognizes the strength of Pound’s poetry, as he could now assess it in *Personae*:

In this book just published in America are all his poems except those Twenty-seven Cantos which keep me procrastinating, and though I had read it all in the little books I had never understood until now that the translations from Chinese, from Latin, from Provencal, are as much a part of his original work, as much chosen as to theme, as much characterised as to style, as the vituperation, the railing, which I had hated but which now seem a necessary balance. He is not trying to create forms because he believes, like so many of his contemporaries, that old forms are dead, so much as a new style, a new man. Again and again he breaks the metrical form which the work seemed to require, or which, where he is translating, it once had, or interjects some anachronism, as when he makes Propertius talk of an old Wordsworthian, that he may pull it back not into himself but into this hard, shining, fastidious modern man, who has no existence, who can never have existence, except to the readers of his poetry. (*PEP* 7–8)

That what he finds in these shorter poems provides a necessary balance to “the vituperation, the railing,” frames Pound’s literary character in terms very much taken from *A Vision*. He emphasizes that Pound’s technical innovation occurs not for its own sake but for the purpose of new creation—an assessment with which Pound agreed when he wrote in Canto 81, in a line that does what it describes, “To break the pentameter, that was the first heave.”<sup>28</sup> Yeats further tries to understand his own relationship to Pound’s generation of modernists, a group to which he does not really belong or fully admire, but whose importance he recognizes:

Syngé once said to me “All our modern poetry is the poetry of the lyrical boy,” but here, in spite of all faults and flaws,—sometimes that exasperation is but nerves—is the grown man, in “Cathay” his passion and self-possession, in “Homage to Sextus Propertius” his self-abandonment that recovers itself in mockery, everywhere his masterful curiosity.

“Go, my songs, seek your praise from the young and from the intolerant,  
Move among the lovers of perfection alone.  
Seek ever to stand in the hard Sophoclean light...”

March and October, 1928. (*PEP* 8–9)

By closing the essay with the entirety of Pound’s short poem “Ité,” first published in *Poetry* in November 1913 and then in *Lustra* (1916), Yeats lets Pound’s verse speak for itself—much as he does when he quotes from “The Return” at the end of “A Letter to Ezra Pound”—insisting that remnants of these short poems be present to balance out his

critique of *The Cantos*. And given the connections that *A Packet* suggests between these poems and *A Vision*, he allows an even greater connection between his own work and that of his younger American friend.

Yeats devotes an entire section of "Rapallo" to an image of Ezra Pound feeding Rapallo's stray cats. Pound "knows their histories," Yeats writes, alluding to Pound's long interest in felines. His letters frequently contain sketches of cats, references to their behavior and tendencies, and those written to his wife Dorothy and his longtime lover and companion Olga Rudge often open with a greeting of "mao" (like "meow"), a representation of the feline voice. But Yeats suggests that he thinks Pound "has no affection for cats" but rather feels an affinity with them. For Yeats, the real importance of Pound's attention to the cats—a tendency he shared with Maud Gonnet—is the insight it offers into his relationship with people:

I examine his criticism in this new light, his praise of writers pursued by ill-luck, left maimed or bed-ridden by the War... Was this pity a characteristic of his generation that has survived the Romantic Movement... some drop of hysteria still at the bottom of the cup? (*PEP* 5; *AVB* 7)

This sense that Pound identifies with the cast-offs fits both Pound's own self-conception as a revolutionary outcast and Yeats's concern that Pound's politics, like Maud Gonnet's, would lead him astray.

The middle essay of "A Packet" tells the now famous but then surprising story of the automatic script as the origin of *A Vision*. This essay closes with a rumination on the question of whether Yeats believes what his book contains. As it was published in the Cuala edition of *A Packet*, Yeats explores this question partly through a reference to the poetry of Giacomo Leopardi, as translated by Pound:

I will never think any thoughts but these, or some modification or extension of these; when I write prose or verse they must be somewhere present though not it may be in the words; they must affect my judgment of friends and of events; but then there are many symbolisms and none exactly resembles mine. What Leopardi in Ezra Pound's translation calls that "concord" wherein "the arcane spirit of the whole mankind turns hardy pilot"—how much better it would be without that word "hardy" which slackens speed and adds nothing—persuades me that he has best imagined reality who has best imagined justice. (*PEP* 32–33)

Where in the first draft he noted "yet it is all a myth," now he concludes "but then there are many symbolisms and none exactly resembles mine"—a formulation that focuses far more on differing interpretations and methods of representation. Present here, too, is Yeats's lingering frustration with Pound and his poetics: even as he uses Pound's translation, he disagrees with it. Still, this way of thinking about the relationship between reality and justice he places in literary conversations with Pound. As Yeats revised the passage for *A Vision B*, however, he left Pound and turned instead to other modernists whose engagement with form he can recommend without an aside:

To such a question [of belief in the actual existence of my circuits of sun and moon] I can but answer that if sometimes, overwhelmed by miracle as all men must be when in the midst of it, I have taken such periods literally, my reason has soon recovered; and now that the system stands out clearly in my imagination I regard them as stylistic arrangements of experience comparable to the cubes in the drawing of Wyndham Lewis and to the ovoids in the sculpture of Brancusi. They have helped me to hold in a single thought reality and justice. (*AVB* 25)

Where the reference to Leopardi via Pound enabled a realization about reality and justice, here Yeats makes himself more the modernist by likening his system to the abstracted representations of Lewis—whom we already knew he admired—and sculptor Constantin Brancusi, both seen as emblems of modernist art. All references to “myth” are gone, replaced by the hard lines and forms of modernist experimentation. But in all versions, the question of belief persists. From the juxtaposition of Yeats’s notebook entries and drafts of what would become *A Packet* and then *A Vision*, we can see how some extra-systemic elements—in this case the conversation of Ezra Pound that he foregrounds in the beginning of “Rapallo” and his sense of his own relationship to the modernist movement—help shape the thinking behind *A Vision*. But we also see how those violent quarrels with Pound helped cement Yeats’s views in opposition to Pound’s and in concord with other modernists. And it becomes clearer why so much of *A Packet for Ezra Pound* was included as a new sort of preface to *A Vision*.

Ezra Pound becomes central again in the final section of *A Packet*, presented as a letter to Pound. In some ways this letter seeks to justify *A Vision* to a friend and fellow poet who might be loath to accept it. It is no wonder: Pound said later in life about Yeats’s writings during the Rapallo years that he “tried for God’s sake to prevent him from printing a thing,” adding that “All he did was print it with a preface saying that I *said* it was rubbish.”<sup>30</sup> Yeats’s letter couches itself in terms of Yeats’s and Pound’s personal and literary relationship, opening, “Do not be elected to the Senate of your country” (*AVB* 26)—even though there are few things Pound would have preferred to having his own government require his expertise. Pound settled for such a role in Italy, noting that Italy “is the first country I ever had a city invite me to shout in,” adding that “the fact that I have been asked...is something.”<sup>30</sup> Pound loved the opportunity to shout, and even more, the *invitation* to do so. During the 1930s, Pound corresponded with members of the fascist party’s political and cultural hierarchy, with the goal of building a culturally strong Italy, which he believed necessary not only to Italy’s imperialist aims, but to peace and stability in Europe. Pound tried to convince Americans of the rightness of the fascist model, and his *Jefferson and/or Mussolini: L’Idea statale, Fascism as I Have Seen It* (1935) offered an introduction to Italian fascism, Mussolini’s achievements, and the Italian system’s benefits more broadly. These matters were also important to his *Cantos*. For Yeats, unlike Pound, “those few generalities that make all men politicians” are impossible to reconcile with the making of poetry.

Still, Yeats knew that this Pound he knew in Rapallo was the same poet who had written “The Return” in 1912, and Yeats closes the final section of *A Packet* by quoting that poem in full (*AVB* 29–30). Yeats could see in Pound’s earlier, Imagist poetry not just technical mastery, but also the ability to make art out of his political and spiritual beliefs.

For Yeats, this poem illustrated his own hypothesis, expressed in *A Vision*, that “every two thousand and odd years something happens in the world to make one [scale of a balance] sacred, the other secular; one wise, the other foolish; one fair, the other foul; one divine, the other devilish” (*AVB* 29). In this closing section, Yeats is asking for Pound’s acceptance of *A Vision*’s model of the universe, of history, of human personality, and of the relationships among living and death. By using Pound’s poem, and by suggesting that it offers an image of the balance he sees at play—a balance similar to that he had found in Pound’s own poetry—Yeats argues for a parallel between his work and Pound’s.

In a way, Pound assented. Even after Yeats died in 1939, he would continue to be a strong presence in Pound’s poetry. In Pound’s *Pisan Cantos* (1948), Yeats figures as a memory so powerful as to take on an almost ghostly embodiment. The situation of these poems’ writing was unusual. Starting in 1940 and continuing through the Second World War, Pound gave radio addresses from Rome, urging Britain and the United States not to fight against Italy. At the end of the war in 1945, Pound was arrested for treason, and, at age fifty-nine, incarcerated at the Disciplinary Training Center at Pisa for about six months. At a point in the writing of his *Cantos* when he was supposed to have ventured up out of hell, through purgatory and have paradise in his sights, Pound instead found his world in ruins, bearing not only his own captivity and news of Mussolini’s capture and murder, but also the bombing of many of the sites around Italy he held sacred. The poems that would become *The Pisan Cantos* were written during his captivity at Pisa. They began as an attempt to stave off madness and the loss of memory, and they bring together memories from Pound’s past, political issues he still believes to be important, the day-to-day life of the DTC, and his concerns about identity and writing. *The Pisan Cantos* describe the loss of loved ones and friends, loss of monuments to bombings, loss of political dreams, loss of artistic tradition, loss of opportunities, loss of youth, loss of freedom, and, worst of all, the fear of losing memory and all that it contains.

Yeats appears frequently in these poems, as Pound quotes from the Irish bard’s poetry and passing remarks. Among other losses, ends of eras, and memories, Pound remembered Yeats, Stone Cottage, and Yeats’s poem “The Peacock,” written there in November 1913:

What’s riches to him  
That has made a great peacock  
With the pride of his eye? (*VP* 310; *CWI* 120)

Even as Yeats’s poem imagines the peacock in the pride of his eye, and offers art as its own reward, it connects to the landscape of Ashdown Forest, with reference to “wet rocks and heather” (l. 8). Dorothy Pound remembered the heath around Stone Cottage as covered with heather and called it “a drippy kind of place.”<sup>31</sup> Pound’s Canto 83 offers not just echoes of Yeats’s poem, but an image of Pound’s memory of living with Yeats as he composed. Always attentive to the cadences of spoken language, Pound gives a somewhat parodic rendering of Yeats’s brogue and of his exaggerated recitation:

so that I recalled the noise in the chimney  
 as it were the wind in the chimney  
 but was in reality Uncle William  
 downstairs composing  
 that had made a great Peeeeeacock  
 in the proide ov his oiye  
 had made a great peeeeeeeacock in the...  
 made a great peacock  
 in the proide of his oyee

proide ov his oy-ee  
 as indeed he had, and perdurable

a great peacock aere perennius[...]  
 at Stone Cottage in Sussex by the waste moor  
 (or whatever) and the holly bush  
 who would not eat ham for dinner  
 because peasants eat ham for dinner  
 despite the excellent quality  
 and the pleasure of having it hot

well those days are gone forever (ll. 163–184)<sup>32</sup>

In Pound's canto, the images and language of Yeats's earlier poem are transformed into pure sound and personality, so that readers get less a sense of the poem's meaning, than of Yeats's voice, his writing process, his presence as a roommate. The story of poetic composition blends with images of the site as a powerful place of memory, and even such mundane details as what kind of food they ate combine to create a sense of being there, of writing there, and of having lost those days. As *The Pisan Cantos* try to stave off the further loss of memory or even the fears of losing one's mind, they frequently point to what is already gone—"Stone Cottage in Sussex by the waste moor / (*or whatever*)..." (my emphasis). This canto includes numerous other lacunae, expressed with this same phrase "or whatever," as if those details are already gone. But Pound offered a more positive sense on forgetfulness in *Guide to Kulchur*. "Knowledge is NOT culture. The domain of culture begins when one HAS forgotten-what-book."<sup>33</sup> The power of these memories, then, lies not in what has been lost, but in why they are remembered. So, we find elsewhere in Canto 83 such lines as "the queen stitched King Carolus' shirts or whatever" (l. 11) or

and you might find a bit of enamel  
 a bit of true blue enamel  
 on a metal pyx or whatever  
 omnia, quae sunt, lumina sunt, or whatever (ll. 16–19)

and a couple lines later



explicit evocation of Pound—not unlike the summonings that close the volume in “All Souls’ Night”—demands the presence of the younger poet, whose dismissal of Yeats’s occult tendency Yeats dismisses in turn with his emphasis on their arguments. While Pound haunted the margins of the first published version of *A Vision*, in this new version he could be foregrounded because of Yeats’s new understanding of the interrelationships of their literary ventures. Yes, Pound discounted the value of the very methods the Yeatses used to gather the material for *A Vision*, but what he made in his Cantos and what Yeats made in *A Vision* were not ultimately that different. And perhaps the material in “A Packet for Ezra Pound” that positioned Yeats’s volume with respect to other modernist literature provided a necessary balance to the explicit story about the origins of the system in the automatic script. Together, these various ways that Pound matters to *A Vision* gesture to how very different the 1937 version of the book was from its previous published incarnation.

### Notes

- 1 Throughout this essay I use punctuation and typeface to distinguish between these two versions, referring to the prefatory material of *A Vision* as “A Packet for Ezra Pound” and to the volume published by Cuala Press as *A Packet for Ezra Pound*.
- 2 Ezra Pound to Homer Pound, 7 July [1908], in *Ezra Pound to his Parents: Letters 1895–1929*, ed. Mary de Rachewiltz, A. David Moody, and Joanna Moody (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 120. Pound had expressed a similar intention in a letter to his mother of June of the same year (118).
- 3 A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet; A Portrait of the Man & His Work, Volume I, The Young Genius 1885–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 99.
- 4 Donald Hall and Ezra Pound, “The Paris Review Interview,” *The Paris Review* 28 (Fall 1962), reprinted as “The Art of Poetry, No. 5” (2004), 15.
- 5 In a note published with the poem until 1920 or so, Pound comments that:

“When the soul is exhausted of fire, then doth the spirit return unto its primal nature and there is upon it a peace great and of the woodland

*“magna pax et silvestris.”*

Then becometh it kin to the faun and the dryad, a woodland-dweller amid the rocks and streams

*“consociis faunis dryadisque inter saxa sylvarum.”*

Janus of Basel.

Also has Mr. Yeats in his ‘Celtic Twilight’ treated of such...

- K. K. Ruthven, *A Guide to Ezra Pound’s Personae* (1926) (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 158.
- 6 Ezra Pound, *Selected Letters, 1907–1941*, ed. D. D. Paige (New York: New Directions, 1971), 8. Hereafter *SLEP* in text.
- 7 Hall and Pound, “The Paris Review Interview,” 8.
- 8 James Longenbach, *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 47–48.
- 9 Hugh Kenner’s description of “a Vortex,” *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 239.
- 10 For more detail on this period, see Longenbach, *Stone Cottage*.
- 11 For greater detail about their itinerary, see Russell Elliott Murphy, “‘Old Rocky Face, look forth’: W. B. Yeats, the Christ Pantokrator, and the Soul’s History (The Photographic Record),” *YAACTS14* (1996): 69–117.
- 12 NLI MS 40,590 and 40,591. Yeats also kept photographs from the Vatican palaces, the Capitoline museum, the Museo delle Terme, and Castel Sant’ Angelo.
- 13 Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays*, ed. T. S. Eliot (1954; New York: New Directions, 1968), 215. I am indebted to Peter Liebrechts for reminding me of these references.
- 14 On Pound’s presence in this phase in early drafts see *CW13* 250 n129.
- 15 Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938; New York: New Directions, 1970), 51.
- 16 For the specifics of Yeats’s illness and the decision to recuperate in Rapallo, see R. F. Foster, *Life* 2 353–61

- and Ann Saddlemeyer, *BG* 379–421.
- 17 For the details of this book's publication, see Donald Gallup, *Ezra Pound: A Bibliography* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1983), 152–54. Further references to Gallup's bibliography will be cited using Gallup's reference numbers. See *WBGYL* 364.
- 18 Since the Stone Cottage days, Pound had continued to publish individual cantos, which, he suggested in the title to *A Draft of XVI Cantos* (1925), were intended to be “for the Beginning of a Poem of some Length.” Early volumes were printed in small, illuminated fine-press editions—*A Draft of XVI Cantos* with Three Mountains Press in January 1925 and *A Draft of the Cantos 17–27* with John Rodker in September 1928 (Gallup A26 and A29). By the time this material was compiled into *A Vision B*, Pound had also published *A Draft of XXX Cantos* (1930), *Eleven New Cantos, XXXI–XLI* (1934), and *The Fifth Decad of Cantos* (1937)—fifty-one poems (see Gallup A31, A37, A43). Pound also published these poems in periodicals, individually or in small groups; for instance “Cantos XLII–XLIV” appeared in *The Criterion* in April 1937 (Gallup C1401). Since Yeats says in *A Vision B* that “There are now forty-nine,” we must imagine that if he was not mistaken, he was basing this number on a conversation with Pound about poems written and/or forthcoming.
- 19 “Meditations Upon Death” was a late addition to the work, written in early February 1929. The two parts would later be split into two separate poems: “At Algeciras—a Meditation upon Death” and “Mohini Chatterjee.” In *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems* (Wade 168), the first poem was titled “A Meditation written during Sickness at Algeciras.” See *VP* 493–94 and 495–96.
- 20 “The Return” was first published in *The English Review* in June 1912 and then in Pound's volume *Riposte* in the same year (Gallup C47 and A8).
- 21 Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound* (New York: Delta, 1988), 462.
- 22 Yeats's letters from 1926 expound on his reading. His own copies of some of these works—such as Spengler's *Decline of the West* (*WBGYL* 1989; *YL* 1975) and Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* (*WBGYL* 2274; *YL* 2258)—are heavily annotated.
- 23 For details of Yeats's consideration of the Cavalcanti subject, and his reasons for abandoning it, please see my “Compiling *A Packet for Ezra Pound*,” [forthcoming in *Paideuma* 38].
- 24 Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, 60.
- 25 Catherine E. Paul, “Italian Fascist Exhibitions and Ezra Pound's Turn to the Imperial,” *Twentieth-Century Literature* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 64–97.
- 26 Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1934; New York: New Directions, 1960), 46.
- 27 Gallup A27.
- 28 Pound, *The Cantos*, 13th printing (New York: New Directions, 1995), 81:538. Further references to Pound's *Cantos* will similarly be cited by Canto number and page number.
- 29 Hall and Pound, “The Paris Review Interview,” 10.
- 30 Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound's Economic Correspondence, 1933–1940*, ed. Roxana Preda (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 130.
- 31 Longenbach, *Stone Cottage*, 51.
- 32 Pound, *The Cantos*, 83:554.
- 33 Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, 134.
- 34 I deal with Pound's treatment of these carvings in Santa Maria dei Miracoli (Venice) in “Italian Fascist Exhibitions and Ezra Pound's Turn to the Imperial,” 81–83.
- 35 Pound, *The Cantos*, 83:549.

## REFLECTED VOICES, DOUBLE VISIONS<sup>1</sup>

by Margaret Mills Harper

### I

In the autumn of 1917, after years of frustration in both romantic and religious questing, Yeats found a good measure of fulfillment in both realms. He gave up hope of marrying either Maud Gonne MacBride, the woman whom he had desired, of whom he had despaired, and about whom he had made love poetry for decades, or her daughter Iseult Gonne, the subject of a messy emotional interlude that had begun the previous year. A quick turn led Yeats to Georgie, or George, Hyde Lees, a young member of his English set, who had been interested when the poet had approached her several years earlier, and she now returned the attention. The two were well matched in intelligence and strength of will, as well as artistic and spiritual inclinations, though the age difference was sharp. By 1917, she was ready to commit herself to a risky chance at happiness with a husband who seemed challenging enough to suit; he was convinced that an *annus mirabilis* was in his stars, if he could but grasp it.<sup>2</sup> They both may have been right: as it happened, challenge, revelation, and a measure of happiness were both finally at hand.

After initial difficulties that threatened to destroy the new marriage along with the psychic well-being of both partners, by the end of the year all seemed thrillingly well. The turn came in the midst of a traumatic honeymoon, when Yeats was physically ill and near emotional breakdown, caused in large part by the sense that he had made a potentially ruinous mistake. During the crisis, George Yeats tried and succeeded in producing automatic writing, a type of mediumship well known in spiritualist circles, in which the writer touches a pen to a sheet of paper and empties her mind as if she were engaging in formal meditation. Inexplicably, sometimes the pen moves. This is the moment of mystery, the moment that, in retrospect as well as on the immediate occasion, may provoke either ridicule or true belief. It has done both as the tale of the automatic writing has been told and retold in Yeats studies. For the Yeateses, the mysterious event caused neither full-blown belief nor dismissal. Rather, it impelled them to further investigation. The writing, and the almost obsessive inquiry, lasted for several years of almost daily work, during which messages purporting to be from disembodied communicators from realms of spirit brought thousands of bits of information, information that was questioned, trusted, distrusted, and elaborated upon. Gradually, it coalesced into a philosophic and religious "system," which Yeats eventually compiled into his strangest book, *A Vision*. The work lessened in intensity during the mid-1920s, when Yeats's writing of *A Vision* seemed well in hand, and the couple settled into a companionable partnership; but they resorted to automatic writing well into the next decade, if only to check on a stray detail for the book or its revised version. George tired of the activity before Yeats; beside the ongoing occult work, she was rearing children, acting as secretary, bookkeeper, and nurse to her often ill husband, and organizing any number of household moves. Automatic writing is hard on its practitioners: that it was potentially dangerous was a commonplace in the contempo-

rary spiritualist press. "Much power is needed for this work," one source explains, "and it is drawn from the mediums themselves and not from the spirit people. I speak of physical power—not mental—and only those whose health is good, and whose body is strong, should ever attempt this work."<sup>3</sup>

At first, George wrote seemingly disconnected words and phrases, for the most part in large rounded letters sloping down sheets of paper, a far cry from her normally neat and angular hand. On one of these sheets, a large word "NO," a response to a question presumably spoken by her husband, is followed by a prophetic sentence: "I give you philosophy to give you new images you ought not to use it as philosophy and it is not only given for you—"<sup>4</sup> The philosophy that arrived did indeed provide Yeats with images, a wealth of them, which he used in his creative work for the rest of his life, but any analysis of the automatic experiment must recognize how inextricably personal as well as abstract the Yeatses' project was. In fact, part of the genius of that project is its determined blend of daily activity and intellectual or imaginative structures. Two word-loving occultists had rushed into marriage, and they came to know each other, build their joint lives, and justify them in an oddly appropriate way: through psychomantic writing.

Beginning on 5 November 1917, the automatic sessions were carefully dated and identified as to which of the many spirit "communicators" was speaking, as well as the precise location in physical reality. As the couple moved from the Ashdown Forest Hotel, where they spent their honeymoon, to other homes and temporary lodgings, in Ireland, England, and elsewhere, they took their esoteric work with them. The communicators came along, in all their varied glory: controls, guides, mendacious frustrators, secondary personages from other lifetimes, and behind them other spirits, *Daimons*, and a whole complicated array of presences and essences. Reading the documents, one cannot but be impressed at the Yeatses' extraordinary diligence in sorting it all out.

As time went on, they found ways to make their work more efficient. The script almost always retains some free-flowing discourse, for the most part at the beginnings of sessions. However, as time passed, an increasingly urgent need to organize makes itself felt. The Yeatses numbered questions and answers, and worked to have the messages give them the information they needed, pressing for complete answers or suggesting topics, especially once the foundations of the system were in place and the couple were looking for details to fill in charts, lists, or ideational symmetry. After the first fortnight, they recorded questions in one book and answers in another. The questions are now in Yeats's hand, suggesting a refinement that presumably saved George from having to shift gears from one mental state to another as she took down phenomenal questions and then waited for noumenal answers. As the months passed, George's automatic handwriting also altered. In script from early sessions, large rounded letters that are very unlike her normal hand underscore the alterity of the automatic state, but as the supernormal experience becomes increasingly integrated into the Yeatses' "normal" lives, George's automatic hand came to look no different from the one she used to write letters or make notes.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes, though, George remained both automatist and scribe. She was also typist, diagrammist, and co-"codifier" as the amount of script became large enough to be unmanageable without efforts to summarize, describe, and arrange the elements of the underlying "system" that the partners believed from very early on to underlie the individual messages.

Beginning in 1920, the various methods of reception underwent a major change, as Yeats recorded in a notebook, under the heading "New Method": "George speaks while asleep" (*YVP3* 9). In fact this "new method" consisted of a number of methods, all involving George in a sleep-like state, during or after which she would speak.<sup>6</sup> Later, she or Yeats would write down what they recalled, or they would have a conversation that elaborated on the ideas consciously. They also experimented with discussions of dreams, joint meditations, or even, "now & then," revelations "from vision" (*YVP3* 75). The communicators were by now felt to be present in the Yeatses' daily life as well as the automatic one, and messages crossed paths through waking and sleeping states. For example, a notebook entry in George's hand, from the same spring of 1920 when the first change in method was tried, notes that the communicator would now use the couple's rereading to further his own formulations: "There was to be a new method. We were to read over sleep accounts & Dionertes would then develop the subject" (*YVP3* 21). This discussion continues with an argument about whether this development would occur over many days or in one exposition ("no no no I said I would write *in once* the entire subjective after life state," the voice insisted). These new methods, perhaps appropriately, as they increasingly blurred the lines between normal and supernormal states, were accompanied by signs like smells and sounds, from flowers and burnt feathers to whistles and trumpets.

By the end of the experiment, the Yeatses had spent years working devotedly to take fragmentary pieces of data and assemble them into a system to explain truths about the universe, history, and individual lives—not to mention how the mysterious communicators themselves might be explained. Despite attempts (such as the sleeps) to ease some of the burden of the automatic writing, George was often overloaded. For her, the end of the affair was as exhausting as the beginning, though it had provided fascinating productivity and a successful creative and conjugal partnership. For her husband, the years of intense concentration on the occult system had also resulted in a number of poems, plays, and expository prose, not to mention a systematic philosophy that sustained him for the rest of his life. Yeats recalled much later, in the words of a poem, his "Gratitude to the Unknown Instructors" and their redemptive system: "What they undertook to do / They brought to pass" (*VP* 505; *CWI* 258).

Despite the monumental status of Yeats as a literary and historical figure (and because of that status, among other reasons), the part played by his mediumistic wife in some of his most important works and ideas tended for many years to be understated or misrepresented, although the publication of Saddlemyer's definitive biography is doubtless changing matters for the better.<sup>7</sup> It has generally been known that George was the source for many of the ideas that occupied her husband's time and creative energy in his astonishingly productive late years, and it is also no secret that she was a woman of dauntingly independent intelligence;<sup>8</sup> yet she and her work remain occluded in Yeats studies.<sup>9</sup> This indistinctness has long interested me. George Yeats has tended to be overshadowed in Yeats studies and the popular imagination by other influential women like Maud Gonne MacBride and Lady Gregory. Many readers over the years have assigned her biographical importance but little literary relevance other than the oddity of having functioned as medium in the occult revelations that she and her husband received. In turn, the spiritual knowledge that the Yeatses believed they gained through automatic writing and other related methods is often acknowledged for having inspired certain poems and plays, but

tends not to be interpreted as having much critical value. Yet the famous Irish poet and his work were both changed utterly by a young Englishwoman with magical interests, a gift for automatism, and a quietly imposing intelligence. As Terence Brown puts it, since the start of the script, "Yeats's own creative work had been increasingly dependent on a collaborative engagement with his wife's mediumistic powers."<sup>10</sup> Her work affected his, most profoundly in the 1920s and 1930s, decades during which he produced his best writing.

George Yeats hid her labors from public view. In fact, especially in the years between Yeats's death in 1939 and her own in 1968 she was one of the most powerful makers of the myth of the poet that ignores her. She hand-picked scholars who would write about material in her possession and supervised what they saw with great care.<sup>11</sup> In particular, she kept unpublished and for the most part unseen the more than 3,600 pages of the automatic script and related documents stored in a chest in her house on Palmerston Road in the Rathmines section of Dublin.<sup>12</sup> These papers reveal her making of the system, the hybrid of psychological, astrological, geometric, historical, and spiritual theory that lies behind *A Vision* (1925 and 1937).<sup>13</sup>

She was anything but a passive medium during the proceedings, a supposedly empty vessel whose hand was guided across the page by "controls" from the other world. Such a highly idealized figure, derived from the popularization of the spiritualist movements of the nineteenth century in North America, England, and elsewhere, was common. However, the Yeatses were too familiar with the large and varied bodies of writing about and direct experience of spiritualism, which regularly tried to counteract this stereotype, to be determined by it.<sup>14</sup> Their practice was at least as informed by notions of joint adeptship, including the idea of an occult marriage. The Yeatses' sense that they were chosen to accomplish profound spiritual work together is echoed in a number of variants in occult tradition on the idea of superhuman agents working with a couple or group of human recipients, whose power would thus be greater than that of someone working alone.<sup>15</sup> Their daily ritual of writing together quickly assumed a form of its own, with unique patterns of questions and responses, the development of intricate relationships among the personalities of the participants (the human partners as well as their many spirit collaborators), and increasingly subtle considerations of the facets of their personalities and conscious or subconscious minds that were causing the ideas and images of the system to emerge. The system was not, in the words of the control and the guide<sup>16</sup> for 9 April 1919, "pre-existent in anima mundi," that is, already formed in the collective memory of humanity, waiting for discovery. Rather, "all the bones are *in* the world," not the astral plane. Nor is the being fully fleshed there either. The whole is formed thus: "we only select & our selection is subordinate to *you both*—therefore *we* are dependent on you & you influence our ability to develop & create by every small detail of your joint life" (*YVP2* 240, emphasis original).<sup>17</sup> In other words, the system is both personal and collaborative, the necessary product of what George Yeats called in a notebook entry the "Wisdom of Two" (*YVP3* 146).<sup>18</sup>

The Yeats who presents *A Vision* and has a secondary role as a character in some of its bewilderingly prominent framing stories and poems is in fact several Yeatses, sliding between subject and object positions, who refer to each other in complex ways that are uncertainly and simultaneously serious and comic. Moreover, *A Vision* is two books, separated in time by some eleven years, which refer to each other in terms that are equally slippery and equally performative. A duality or multiplicity of subject makes itself felt

throughout this/these work(s), in points of view, rhetoric, the relation of framing material to what is inside the frames, and within the content of the system itself (so that one gyre becomes two at the least touch, for example). This dramatic doubling and multiplying, no less integral to the book than it has been maddeningly difficult for many readers, may be analysed also in terms of the joint endeavor that was its inception and elaboration.

I also stretch the plain meaning of the term “book” to include the messy, necessarily unfinished book of the system, of which a fraction appears in the printed work, as well as various poetic, dramatic, and prose texts that are related to it. A personal book—I am tempted to quote Yeats out of context and call it “the book of the people,” two of them, at any rate—also exists in the vast amount of material in the *Vision* papers related to the Yeateses’ intimate lives. To see George Yeats’s work properly requires looking at all of these “books,” a task that requires replacing the idea of a final, public, and written document that has a recognizable individual as its author with something less fixed temporally or spatially than what is often meant.

There is a further complication for any editorial or critical project involving the automatic script, of course. To assign the communications written by the hand of George Yeats to her volitional authorship is to ignore the spirit communicators, difficult as they are to reckon with. Barthes’ *mort de l’auteur* is almost too cute a phrase to describe a project whose “authors are in eternity,” to use one of Yeats’s favorite quotations from Blake.<sup>19</sup> Should they be granted any status besides that of fiction, self-delusion, or fraud? Should they be regarded as distinct from George? or from her husband? What meaning should we assign to the fact that both partners believed that they had independent existence as well as depending on the Yeateses’ joint psyches for their abilities? How does their existence sit with various social and cultural phenomena, such as conventions of authorship, technologies of representation or communication, or political ideologies, which are also present as determinants of the spirits’ energies?

Simple dismissal of all these spirit collaborators in the name of scholarly or common-sense rationality is also unacceptable. George was not a fool, nor did she suffer fools willingly, a fact to keep in mind when analyzing her occult work. Indeed, one mark of her sanity, as of her husband’s, might be their willingness to engage in activities that challenged them, whether or not they might be thought foolish to doing so. As Terry Castle has noted in a similar context, a supernatural event experienced collectively raises epistemological and rhetorical issues that may multiply difficulties for a skeptic bent on discrediting its objective validity. The need to explain such an experience away may well embroil skepticism in “its own kind of folly—[a] debunking ‘mania,’ or compulsion to disprove,” so that “to disbelieve...is to risk losing oneself in an alienating welter of evidence and counterevidence.”<sup>20</sup> The force of such a desire to disprove should not be underestimated. Through several generations of Yeats scholarship, discussion of the Yeateses’ occult experimentation stills tends to begin, and often to end, at the question, Did they, or Do you, believe it?—with lines between camps drawn on the basis of the answer to the latter. The Yeateses themselves were by no means distracted by such compulsions.

Saddlemeyer’s detailed psychological account of what might have happened in the nightly sessions draws attention to the heterogeneous sources of what she suggests may have been self-hypnosis. Saddlemeyer also points to two interesting facts: that George herself apparently used the critical word *fakery* in association with her first attempt at

automatic writing; and that she was keenly aware that, having done so, the word would damage her reputation. As she told A. Norman Jeffares, "the word 'Fake' will go down to posterity" (*BG* 103). Interestingly, George's use of the term occurred in the context of working with Yeats scholars who took the script seriously (notably Virginia Moore and Richard Ellmann) and were working to understand its elaborate ideas as such, hardly efforts they would have made if they thought that George had simply made everything up. On the contrary: her honest admission added to the complexity of the affair.

The issue was not new to the Yeateses' script, of course. It was a common theme in psychic research. In June 1911, for example, Yeats mused in an address before a like-minded audience that "Like every other student of the subject [spiritualism], I have been bewildered by the continual deceits, by the strange dream-like manifestations, by the continual fraud." He continues:

Why, e.g., does Miss "Burton" when she is entranced commit ingenious frauds which deceive not only the sitters but Miss Burton when she is awake?... Why is it that when Albert de Rochas asks his sensitives to go back into past lives & tell him who they were they can sometimes describe scenery, names families even, that they have never heard of in their waking state, & yet claim to be people whose existence can be disproved? Why this mixture of reality, of messages that seem to come precisely as they say they do from the dead, with messages that but express the thoughts of the living?

He goes on to propose complex interplays between mind and reality, comparing psychic phenomena with dreaming and hypnosis. Two further comments in particular seem almost to foretell these issues as they are raised in the automatic script. First, Yeats suggests, "the dead are simply dreaming souls, souls suggestable from without or from within, when they go to seances they are constrained by us when we question them, for every question is a suggestion. It suggests an answer. And that we would only get from them the truth in our own sense of the word." Second, "They are all phases of the dissolution of the fixed personality."<sup>21</sup>

William James also addresses the issue of fakery in "The Last Report: The Final Impressions of a Psychical Researcher," written in 1909. James suggests bearing in mind that "In most things human the accusation of deliberate fraud and falsehood is grossly superficial. Man's character is too sophisticatedly mixed for the alternative of 'honest and dishonest' to be a sharp one." Later in the essay, James addresses automatic writing in particular:

I have come to see in automatic writing one example of a department of human activity as vast as it is enigmatic. Every sort of person is liable to it, or to something equivalent to it; and whoever encourages it in himself finds himself personating someone else... Our subconscious region seems, as a rule, to be dominated by a crazy "will to make-believe," or by some curious external force impelling us to persuasion.<sup>22</sup>

The *Vision* documents take this observation one step further to claim not only that every person is "liable" to such a phenomenon, but that it is in fact essential. The *Mask*, one of

the four *Faculties* whose interactions describe each human being, is defined as “something put on and worn: a form created by passion” (*YVP4* 15) in order “to reveal or conceal individuality” (*YVP1* 262; *YVP3* 164) “as a protection or revelation of the soul” (*YVP3* 145, 163) or, finally, “to unite us to ourselves” (*YVP4* 15; *CW13* 18; *AVA* 18; *AVB* 82), in various rephrasings, which suggest in their repetition how important the idea is.

From an intellectual point of view, oppositions between the material and the supernatural in Yeats's work are complicated by the arrival of the spirit communicators of the automatic script. It is just this unmanageable eruption of spirits into the Yeatses' daily life and writing, however, that makes these documents exciting. Among other things, they are indices of significant and widespread aesthetic and philosophical trouble with writing and the real. Such trouble haunts a number of modernist texts, but the Yeatses' experiment dramatizes it in especially bold ways. For example, voices here are not merely standard terms in literary critical discourse, signs of an orality or bodily immediacy imagined as lost from Western literary culture. Nor are they synecdoches only for the uncanny, that lack of fit between an imagined perceptible world and an unimaginable real so common in the modern period, and so commonly expressed through the instability of texts.<sup>23</sup> The communicators of the script intrude into historical and textual analysis no less than they did into the lives of the people who summoned them. They complicate a number of polarities, for example, of material versus spiritual worlds, the individual will as opposed to machine-like automatism, agency as male or female, and conscious or unconscious sources of knowledge. They point to the inadequacy of formulations that feature such neat oppositions. We might think of them as a third term that makes the Yeats couple, and their joint production, possible.<sup>24</sup>

One of the last notebook entries that the Yeatses made in their years of elaborating the system together contains a particularly rich explanation of the “incredible experience,” meaningful, as the documents are generally, in its attribution and symbolic resonances no less than at the surface level of information. “When I asked how they could adapt themselves to our language and limitations,” Yeats recalls, “he said it was plain I did not understand the nature of communication through Interpreter”—that is, George, the medium who outgrew her original title. In a glorious *mélange* of writerly confusion, Yeats was here dictating to his wife a message he had heard from her lips earlier, when she was “asleep” (whatever state that may have been). George wrote the name of Dionertes in parentheses at the start of the entry to indicate to whom “he” refers, but did not need to indicate who was meant by the “I” of the paragraph she was taking down as secretary. Then she enclosed in quotation marks her own—Dionertes'—Yeats's exact words: “She finds the words, we send the wave & she as it were catches it in a box[?]” (*YVP3* 102). The metaphors are significant. Does finding words imply invention or revelation? Are the wave energy and the box a sort of spiritual version of an electric transformer (reminiscent of a number of nineteenth-century theories about psychic phenomena)? If the system is caught in a box, does George play the role of scientist or stage magician by trapping it in words? Does Yeats play the role of Pandora when he writes *A Vision* and opens the box in public? Does he play Aladdin when he traps inspiration in verse? (In a letter to Dorothy Wellesley, years after the script and the marriage had waned in intensity, Yeats repeated the striking figure, noting that “The correction of prose, because it has no fixed laws, is endless, a poem comes right with a click like a closing box.”<sup>25</sup>)

## II

An analysis of the Yeatses' automatic writing or the compositions derived from it needs to take account of some of the presuppositions that the texts imply before going very far. No less significant than the questions of beliefs brought by readers or author to Yeats's magical works are questions begged by genre. Different kinds of texts deliver different sorts of messages. That is to say, considerable networks of predetermined information exist in the categories themselves, for example, of religious or literary, philosophical or personal, poetic or technical discourses. Of course, categorization raises other familiar questions, and the boundaries between kinds are not always distinct. It is often less simple than it appears to determine what markers make a sacred text recognizably different from a secular one, or the extent to which philosophy or history is poetic or fictional. Moreover, a single text can happily blend more than one kind of discourse, drawing attention, for example, to the personal quality of its matter as well as its general claims.

For *A Vision*, genre has been problematic from first to last. Indeed the history of the book's reception might reasonably be written as a history of argument over what kind of thing it might be.<sup>26</sup> Nor did its author tend to diminish the confusion. Writing to the prospective publisher Werner Laurie in 1923, Yeats suggested that Macmillan would probably release it from his contract with that company "as the book is entirely unlike any other work of mine and will not appeal to the same public. When you see the specimen pages you may reject it on the same grounds" (13 March 1923, *CL Intelix* 4300). His next letter voices his concern more openly, as well as the generic difficulty:

I send you the first big bundle of my new book. I send it with alarm & shall not be surprised if you will have nothing to do with it. Here & there—in certain chapters passages of the analysis of the 28 phases into which I divide human life there is perhaps good writing but good writing is not my object, & Part 1 (for instance) can only be very dry and tec[h]nical. My object is the exposition of certain symbols.

There is a public for a book of this kind but you may not think it your public. (7 September 1923, *CL Intelix* 4364)

The problem of an audience is a recurring concern in this correspondence, with good reason.<sup>27</sup> Generic expectations are of prime importance in the business of selling books: people buy new works based on the kind of writing they know that they like or want. Yeats was keenly aware of such practicalities and knew that this book would probably confound the literary, aesthetic, and political expectations of his carefully nurtured public. He also knew that he had on his hands a hybrid, different in kind from one section to another. At one point, he even toyed with the idea of printing some parts in a smaller typeface, in italics, or perhaps in red ink, to help "the reader's mood," since then "he would know when to expect beauty of form, or my attempt at it, and when to expect mere explanation" (to Laurie, 11 September 1924, *CL Intelix* 4649).

The difficulty continued through the preparation of the second edition as well. Yeats wrote to Harold Macmillan in March 1934 that he would send the copy of the revised

*A Vision* “in a week or two.” Trying to pave its way, the author explained, “It is a book which will be very much wanted by a few people—I get letters already asking for it—but will puzzle the bulk of my readers.” Nonetheless (asking for the impossible), Yeats told Macmillan, “I want it to be taken as a part of my work as a whole, not as an eccentricity. I have put many years of work into it” (9 March 1934, *CL Intelex* 6019). Macmillan replied favorably to Yeats (although offering a royalty rate that was lower than usual until the book had sold 2,000 copies), but nine months later, after a visit from Yeats, he wrote a worried letter to Yeats’s agent A. P. Watt. Surely, Macmillan complained, “you will realize that the subject matter of the book is one that makes a very limited appeal. To most ordinary minds it appears to be quite mad, and I cannot believe that the sale will be anything but a very small one. I rather gathered from Mr Yeats that he shared this view.”<sup>28</sup> So he did. In May 1937, while correcting proofs for the second version, Yeats wrote to Edith Shackleton Heald about *A Vision* (which is “not to be confused with its first edition published years ago”): “This book is the skeleton in my cupboard. I do not know whether I want my friends to see it or not to see it. I think ‘Will so-and-so think me a crazed fanatic?’ but one goes on in blind faith. The public does not matter—only one’s friends matter” (*L* 888–89).

Whether the book is “mad” and its author “a crazed fanatic” is a question of whether the book makes claims that it can demonstrate to the satisfaction of its readers—and one complexity of *A Vision* is that it makes competing claims. A significant part of the book’s strangeness results from a number of mixed signals about what sort of messages it contains. This phenomenon was, of course, immediately obvious. One of the first reviewers of the revised edition, Mary Colum, wrote in the pages of *The Forum and Century* in April 1938 that Yeats “flings in the face of the public one of the most fantastic constructions of the intellect that has ever been produced, a remarkable medley of astrology, spiritualism, philosophy, Hermetic wisdom, poetry, credulity, and necromancy”—yet “he is willing to admit, too, that the mysterious instructors of *A Vision* may also be ‘created beings,’ an invention of his dream life.”<sup>29</sup> Luckily, though, some of the generic confusion can be lessened for contemporary readers by making a few critical distinctions between the two versions of the book, while remembering that although the second edition is to some extent a new book, it also to some degree contains the older book within it. In other words, the skeleton in Yeats cupboard should be regarded as not one but at least two related skeletons, a piece of information that should make it a little easier to sort through the jumble of bones.

In purpose and form the second *A Vision* is very different from the first. The revision was not merely a clarification or elaboration: the book changed in kind between 1925 and 1937. In order to appreciate the shift from one *Vision* to the next, it may be instructive to recall that *A Vision* is not the only occult text that underwent such reworking. It is worth comparing the revision of *A Vision* with two other texts begun in similarly ambiguous and engaging experiences: the unpublished manuscript titled “Leo Africanus” and the monograph *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, which grew from the experience with a mysterious entity whom Yeats came to identify as an anti-self. Both pairs of texts, “Leo” and *Per Amica* and the two versions of *A Vision*, represent movement in time from an encounter (to whatever extent imaginary) with a non-corporeal world in the form of voices or written communication toward retrospective synthesis in a published product. Both also travel a distance

away from discursive immediacy and toward the kind of transcendental appropriation with which Yeats was more comfortable, the tonal mastery that he had for years practiced in his other occult essays. For both pairs, the former text, the least finished, can be greatly intriguing, and I find it unfortunate that most readers of Yeats encounter *Per Amica* and the second edition of *A Vision* and not their quirky predecessors. The later works, and not their odder cousins, have been easily available.<sup>30</sup> This fact has limited not only appreciation of the unusual events out of which the books arose but perhaps even interest in the books themselves, at least for those readers who might prefer the rawly emotional and concrete earlier texts to the smoothly allusive *Per Amica* and the philosophical 1937 *A Vision*, with their confident and sly narration and their impersonal tone.

*Per Amica* is often regarded as a kind of preface to *A Vision*, a simpler (and, many claim, superior) version of the ideas fleshed out more elaborately in the later book. The opening paragraphs of Yeats's introduction to the 1937 *A Vision* endorse such an attitude, and *Per Amica* is indeed the jumping-off point for the first two numbered questions in the automatic script, one by Yeats and one by George as if the newlyweds had discussed before the session began the idea of organizing the rather formless script to carry further the ideas sketched out in that book (*AVB* 8 & *YVPI* 65). Broadly considered, the system explodes into multiplicities the duality of the 1917 monograph. For example, four *Faculties*, then four *Principles* beyond them, replace the self and anti-self of the earlier book; and the "two realities, the terrestrial and the condition of fire," in *Per Amica* shift to relative states in *A Vision*, dependent upon opposition and expressed in expanding and contracting gyres, renamed Destiny and Fate (*CW5* 25; *Myth* 356 & *CWI3* 109; *AVA* 129).

Indeed, *Per Amica* is not only a predecessor but in some ways a prophecy. A Prologue addressed pseudonymously to a woman whom Yeats would have married ("Maurice" or Iseult Gonne) represents the book as arising from conversations between the two of them, foreshadowing the birth of *A Vision* in the automatic script. The famous opening poem of *Per Amica*, "Ego Dominus Tuus," is set at the foot of Ballylee, the Norman tower in Galway whose purchase as the Yeatses' symbolic home would not be finalized until a year and a half after the final draft of the poem was complete. The professed themes of the monograph, the existence of Daemons ("Anima Hominis," the title of the first of two linked essays) and a supernatural source of common images ("Anima Mundi," the parallel title for the second essay), are an elaborate set of explanations for the messy mechanics of direct encounters with a spiritual world; *A Vision*, similarly, draws the lines and curves of its system over an obsessively researched and questioned direct encounter.<sup>31</sup> The final sections of *Per Amica* mention the return of the self from the Daemonic realm as occurring in the winding motion of gyres that do not appear until *A Vision*, even using the distinctively Yeatsian word *pern* to describe it (*CW5* 31; *Myth* 364). As a whole, *Per Amica* shares in the emotional stock-taking that is a prominent theme of the winters that Yeats spent with Pound at Stone Cottage, feeling his age and the age of the world as it moved into war. During this period Yeats wrote the first installment of his memoirs, the ghost play *The Dreaming of the Bones*, the play *The Hawk's Well* with its prominent conflict between youth and age, and the poems of *Responsibilities*.<sup>32</sup> *Per Amica* reads as "half a prayer or desperate plea for some outward sign of regeneration," as Lawrence Lipking has described it.<sup>33</sup> It features a poet at midlife hoping for continued inspiration, a man used to his life and habits

of thought longing for connection with history through a Great Memory and with what is alien to his finite self through a Daemon, who “comes not as like to like but seeking its own opposite, for man and Daemon feed the hunger in one another’s hearts” (*CW* 5 11; *Myth* 335). Read in the context of the automatic script, which began a few months after publication, it is hard not to feel that Yeats’s prayer was answered.

However, if *Per Amica* is a prayer, it is more a public than a private one, the measured convictions of a well-known poet in mid-career, not for many moments or very intensely revelatory of personal loneliness or grief. The book is filled with a generalized subjectivity even when the first person singular is used. The Daemon, the mysterious Other, is evoked by conscious fabrication of a mask, but it is the mask, that famous Yeatsian aesthetic concept, and not the supersensual Other, which receives the emphasis. At times the Daemon is sensed involuntarily in fleeting moments that are immediately appropriated by the man into his own desires: “I am in the place where the Daemon is, but I do not think he is with me until I begin to make a new personality, selecting among those images, seeking always to satisfy a hunger grown out of conceit with daily diet” (*CW* 5 31; *Myth* 365–66). Yeats allows his readers few glimpses of another relation although he evokes it at key moments, such as the present-tense admission near the end of the book that “yet as I write the words ‘I select,’ I am full of uncertainty, not knowing when I am the finger, when the clay” (*CW* 5 32; *Myth* 366). Another such resonant moment occurs in a section when hero and mask, two concepts that are Yeatsian trademarks, converge, and the hero, having donned the mask, “knew another’s breath came and went within his breath upon the carven lips and that his eyes were upon the instant fixed upon a visionary world: how else could the god have come to us in the forest?” (*CW* 5 11; *Myth* 335).

Even so, the rhetorical question gives away the public nature of this discourse. Richard Ellmann is correct in characterizing *Per Amica* as an evasive maneuver, a way of presenting a supernatural theory as “an extended and elaborate metaphor” to forestall objections to its metaphysical qualities. According to Ellmann, Yeats in *Per Amica* “seems not so much to convince the reader as to take him in.”<sup>34</sup> The monograph does work to incline that reader to agreement through lush, imagistic prose, using anecdotes and quotations from poets or Henry More in lieu of declarative linearity. In an early unpublished draft of *Per Amica* Yeats complained of his early style “where there was little actual circumstance, nothing natural, but always an artificial splendour,” but it is hard to see that this prose has traveled far from the elaboration of a work like “Rosa Alchemica” or, for that matter, “Magic.”<sup>35</sup> Yeats, the old conjuror, is up to his old tricks. Probably the most famous statement in *Per Amica* is the assertion that “We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but out of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry” (*CW* 5 8; *Myth* 331). Yeats did make poetry out of quarrels with himself, but his prose was not generally so lucky. Certainly *Per Amica* is not, for all its sensuous beauty. Even when Yeats endorses doubt and the sacrifice of pleasant self-deception in the paragraph that follows the quotable sentence above, the argument is couched in impersonal terms: “We must not make a false faith by hiding from our thoughts the causes of doubt, for faith is the highest achievement of the human intellect, the only gift man can make to God, and therefore it must be offered in sincerity” (*CW* 5 9; *Myth* 332).

Compare the preceding sentence with the following passage from the “Leo Africanus” manuscript from which the former was derived:<sup>36</sup>

Even the wisdom that we send you, but deepens your bewilderment, for when the wisest of your troop of shades wrote you through the ignorant hand of a friend "Why do you think that faith excludes intellect. It is the highest achievement of the human intellect, & it is the only gift that man can offer to god. That is why we must leave all the winds of time to beat upon it[,] you but sought the more keenly to meet not your own difficulties but the difficulties of others. Entangled in error, you are but a public man, yet once you would put vague intuition into verse, & that insufficient though it was might have led you to the path the eye of the eagle has not seen. ("Leo," 28)

Not only is the passage vivid with imagery, figuring "the winds of time" beating upon human faith, Yeats as "entangled in error," and the road he has not taken being "the path the eye of the eagle has not seen"; it is also self-revealing in ways that Yeats would use to great effect later.

The authorial voice is direct, castigating and demanding to be heard. Yet the authority upon which the voice draws seems at first glance to rest upon the slimmest of supposition. The author is identified with the source of disembodied vocal messages given during a series of séances, which may or may not be from a spirit, who may or may not be who he claims to be, written through the conscious intention of Yeats, who may or may not believe that he is ventriloquizing. The spirit is ostensibly that of Leo Africanus, the sixteenth-century travel writer and adventurer Al-Hassan ibn-Mohammed al-Wezar al-Fasi, who was summoned mediumistically in séances beginning in 1912 (after a false start in 1909) and who developed into a figure that Yeats conceived as a kind of *alter ego*, a symbolic opposite.<sup>37</sup> By late 1916, when the private essay was written, Yeats was sufficiently convinced of the value of Leo as a guide to engage in an experiment with highly significant ramifications for his later work: to suspend authorial control and write as if through the personality and agency of another.<sup>38</sup>

The essay is in the form of two letters, one from Yeats to Leo and the other from Leo to Yeats, written at Leo's suggestion "as from him to me," as Yeats remembered the request. "He would control me if he could in that reply so that it would be really from him" ("Leo," 13). The canceled words are significant, as is a canceled passage from the opening section of the essay: "If I would write out my difficulties in a letter addressed to you as though you were still living in the east & then wrote another letter in your hand you would see to it that the second letter was but in seeming mine. I should be overshadowed in my turn" ("Leo," 21). The process of writing the letters would put Yeats in the borderland between traditional Western authorship, presided over by the strong myth of the stable self, and the uncharted territory of writerly mediumship, with its resonances of femininity, darkness, the irrational, and the non-Western.

The words are still Yeats's, of course, for all of his attempt to free them from his own governance. The dream of freedom from self occurs only within the framework and volition of that self; the Other exists as such only because of the subject that places it in an imagined location outside that identified with the subject. Yeats remained skeptical of his own efforts to replace conscious with anti-self as he wrote. The essay is full of his doubts: "~~I think probable~~ I am not convinced that in this letter there is one sentence that has come from beyond my own imagination but I will not use a stronger phrase...there

is no thought that has not occurred to me in some form or other for many years" ("Leo," 38–39). Nonetheless, the essay is distinctly bold and direct in comparison with Yeatsian public prose, a tonal quality which (paradoxically, given that two personages speak) derives from a less multiple authorial self than a work like *Per Amica*. In splitting himself for the two parts of the essay, the persona who writes each part is less multiple than the chameleon Yeats of the later work, who drifts into danger when he focuses on sincerity, from which he has escaped hitherto only by the "theatrical, consciously dramatic" donning of a mask.

The increased separation of Yeats from Leo ironically accompanies more rhetorical engagement than these other experiments. In dialogue with a (perhaps) independently existing anti-self rather than declaration through an invented mask, Yeats speaks from a more engaged, less distanced location; his overt splitting of psychic and spiritual self results in less fragmentation of authorial self. The knowledge of *Anima Mundi* and the influence of spirit "secondary personalities," the major themes of the "Leo Africanus" essay, are written into the authorial subject.<sup>39</sup> As Leo puts it, for the spirits as well as for Yeats, "our message [is], as it were built in the whole structure of our body & our mind" ("Leo," 29). In this regard, "Leo," and not *Per Amica*, is the most significant predecessor of *A Vision* as well as Yeats's later work in its shadow, because the unpublished letters and not the more commonly known text lay the groundwork for the great experiment, to use the phrase from the monograph, in "quarreling," in which it is a question not so much of whether one holds a position against others or argues internally but of whether a position that is not one's own is entertained. Leo's ambiguous status as neither demonstrably self nor Other adds to his value, for he, like George's communicators and perhaps George herself, cannot be pigeon-holed as friend or frustrator, bringer of agreement and ease or the shock of the new and unassimilable.<sup>40</sup>

Almost all criticism of *A Vision* refers to the second edition, a state of affairs that is probably appropriate given Yeats's patent endorsement of that text rather than the earlier version. His 1937 introduction confesses as much:

The first version of this book, *A Vision*, except the section on the twenty-eight phases, and that called "Dove or Swan" which I repeat without change, fills me with shame. I had misinterpreted the geometry, and in my ignorance of philosophy failed to understand distinctions upon which the coherence of the whole depended, and as my wife was unwilling that her share should be known and I to seem sole author, I had invented an unnatural story of an Arabian traveller which I must amend and find a place for some day because I was fool enough to write half a dozen poems that are unintelligible without it. (*AVB* 19).

It is quite appropriate to be wary of Yeats's confessions in this essay—I would not want to accept without hesitation, for example, the assertion that his only reason for continuing and in fact adding to the outlandishness of the fantastic story of Michael Robartes, the mysterious Arab tribe, and all its other trappings was so that readers could understand a few poems more easily. Nevertheless, years of revision and plans to include the second edition in the collected works projects of his late years, as well as numerous letters suggesting that the first edition was unfinished, all encourage readers to focus on

that book rather than the much rougher earlier work.<sup>41</sup> So does the 1925 *A Vision*: in the dedication Yeats admits, "I could daresay make the book richer, perhaps immeasurably so, if I were to keep it by me for another year, and I have not dealt with the whole of my subject, perhaps not even with what is most important" (*CW13* lv; *AVA* xiii) and hints that more is to come: "Doubtless I must someday complete what I have begun" (*CW13* lvi; *AVA* xiii). Moreover, the first version was "horribly expensive," suitable for a piece of drawing-room-tabletop art but hardly for a widely read book.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, in some respects the 1937 *A Vision* seems to reveal more of the spiritualistic collaboration that lies behind the book than the 1925 edition, which hides the fact of George's automatic writing behind an elaborate and transparently false story of old books, chance discoveries, and a strange nomadic sect from the Arabian desert. By 1937, Yeats had added new prefatory material including an introduction telling the story of the automatism as well as a long tale, "Stories of Michael Robartes and his Friends: An Extract from a Record Made by his Pupils," which subsumes the hoax material of 1925 into a seemingly allegorical if highly unusual fictional experiment.<sup>43</sup> The "Stories," about "a group of strange disorderly people on whom Michael Robartes confers the wisdom of the east," as Yeats described it to Dorothy Wellesley (*L* 859), have baffled critics both of *A Vision* and of Yeats's fiction ever since. The introduction is not without its ambiguities, either. The story of the automatic script and other experiments is told years after the fact, with the luxury of recollection and the concomitant blurring of fact into the fabrications of memory. Yeats has had time to make sense of his "incredible experience," to put it in a larger context than he could have done in 1925. To some extent, distance may provide clarity, but the essay also tells more about Yeats in the 1930s than necessarily re-creates the events of 1917 and beyond with a high degree of accuracy. The 1937 introduction, like the book in general, is a public repackaging of material that was much closer to the private experiences of the Yeatses in the first edition.

The journey from "Leo Africanus" to *Per Amica* includes a movement away from emotional engagement with an Other and toward the appropriation of that otherness into an authorial self whose multifaceted nature contributes to its assertions of power. The distance from the 1925 to the 1937 version of *A Vision* covers similar ground. In 1925 the discourse contains within it traces of someone else, mediated though that presence is by a number of factors. In other words, George's active participation is still traceable there, and so are the voices of the various controls and guides of the automatic script. By 1937 the text has been reworked into a book whose author contains vacillations and variations within himself, whose analysis of history uses its own historical moment as part of its authority, and the very form of whose book also illustrates the ideas of interlacing cones and alternating movements.<sup>44</sup>

The change results in a more masterful presentation: in 1925 the authority for the system is hidden, and Yeats presents himself as responding to initiatives that he does not explain except through obvious fictions. The book is riddled with omissions, statements without contexts (including unattributed quotations, usually from the script), and abrupt shifts of subject. Generally speaking, the focus in 1925 is more personal, sexual, and psychological than philosophical, social or historical.<sup>45</sup> The book is also more lyrical, by which I mean that it is more dependent upon image than explanation and more likely to follow associative than logical progression, although the 1937 book is more literary, in

that it is aimed at Yeats's literary public and not a small coterie of fellow occultists. Significantly, the 1925 book is dedicated to "Vestigia," the Golden Dawn motto of Moina (Mrs. MacGregor) Mathers, the widow of the founding Chief of the Order; in 1937 the book is prefaced by an emotive essay about and a public letter to Ezra Pound.<sup>46</sup> In 1937 the authority for the system is not the now freely mentioned communicators but the motions of the gyres, a more impersonal source. The system is situated smoothly in a long history of ideas, buttressed by statements from the numerous philosophers Yeats read in the years between the two editions, and organized more clearly thanks to the years of refinement since the first edition. In 1937 the spirits no longer play the role of the hidden teachers; they too take their place in the wheels upon wheels, which become not only the subject-matter but processes that affect all things: ideas, author, the times in which the book was composed, and the times to come.

Moreover, and crucially, Yeats accrues power to himself by setting the wheels in motion formally and intellectually. He is again the mage, the knower, and even the mover of those gyres, in the important sense that it is he through whom their creative representations have come. The gyres not only foreordain but also depend on Yeats's knowledge, creative expression, and interpretative exposition. The 1937 *A Vision* knows that it will be read as part of the oeuvre of a major literary figure. It anticipates being read and analyzed; it expects to be influential; it looks to contribute to the posthumous assessment of Yeats as the book of his life and work becomes a historical document.

Appropriately, its final words are magisterial.<sup>47</sup> The three parts of the conclusion contain a summing up of Yeats's age and the turbulence of the times, a transcendence into knowledge by means of a mysterious *Thirteenth Cone* beyond the unceasing cones of the intelligible system, and final, very Yeatsian rhetorical question: "Shall we follow the image of Heracles that walks through the darkness bow in hand, or mount to that other Heracles, man, not image, he that has for his bride Hebe, 'The daughter of Zeus the mighty and Hera shod with gold'?" (*AVB* 302). "Then I understand," Yeats comments; "I have already said all that can be said," and now what "shall we" choose, man or image? The only authority above this wise man, who knows what questions to ask to send readers on their way, is that *Thirteenth Cone*. It "can do all things and knows all things," but "has kept the secret" of the consequences of its freedom (*AVB* 302). Nonetheless, it is Yeats who knows of it and who informs us of its secrecy. The secret is less powerful for being available as a subject of his discourse, just as the communicators and George Yeats are also diminished by their change in status from 1925 to 1937, from concealed sources of truth to characters in a story by Yeats about the beginnings of his book.

Two of the most commonly quoted passages from the 1937 edition both contribute to the hegemony of the impersonal gyres as a vehicle for their poet-expositor in this version of *A Vision*: the statement that Yeats makes at the beginning of the tell-all introduction that the communicators came to give him "metaphors for poetry" and a passage from the end purporting to answer the question of "whether I believe in the actual existence of my circuits of sun and moon":

To such a question I can but answer that if sometimes, overwhelmed by miracle as all men must be when in the midst of it, I have taken such periods literally, my reason has soon recovered; and now that the system stands out clearly in my

imagination I regard them as stylistic arrangements of experience comparable to the cubes in the drawing of Wyndham Lewis or to the ovoids in the sculpture of Brancusi. They have helped me to hold in a single thought reality and justice. (AVB 25)

Both “metaphors for poetry” and “stylistic arrangements of experience” are rhetorical pauses for effect and also convenient ways to deflect a question about occult truth into the safer territory of art.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, the automatic script from which the first phrase derives was not located among the rest of the manuscripts, and it has long been assumed that Yeats invented the words, putting them in quotation marks as if quoting the instructors but instead reporting from faulty memory, wishful thinking, or imperious afterthought. Such an action is compatible with the 1937 *A Vision*, but the truth is slightly more complex. In the original context, Yeats appears not as powerful bard but as humbled student. The script from which the phrase was taken was filed, or misplaced, among the manuscript pages of the *Packet for Ezra Pound*, for which it has been used. In this record of an early session, the unnamed instructor(s?) tells Yeats that the “mystical work” is filled with images and their meanings, but the spirits “will not do your work for you you must think things out for yourself.” Although “they are anxious to get through,” the messages would come, “but never clearly always in images not understood till later.” Yeats was clearly told that it would be “good” “if you don’t set up as a philosopher,” that it would “be the end of it & her” if he did not use the script “for art only.” To an unrecorded question, George wrote “NO” in large letters, followed by the genesis of Yeats’s famous remark in his introduction written a decade later: “I give you philosophy to give you new images you ought not to use it as philosophy.” The next words complete the thought: “and it is not only given for you yes.”<sup>49</sup>

Virginia Moore records a conversation with George Yeats that corroborates the distancing from the original context of the “images” or “metaphors” remark, although neither Moore nor her informant take the further step, implied in much Yeats criticism, of appropriating both images and forms for the poet alone:

Though shying a little from the subject—understandably, for she has been hounded—she told me in 1952 that, whereas, in the beginning, Yeats (and presumably herself) did think the messages spirit-sent, and therefore proof of communion between the living and the dead, he saw them later as a dramatized “apprehension of the truth.” If not from the dead, from whom, from what, this “truth”? From their own higher selves.<sup>50</sup>

Such claims that the system is useful for metaphor or image and stylization or dramatization are to some degree counterbalanced, for example, by strange stories in other sections of the 1937 introduction (which are not cited nearly as often) of sounds, smells, and such materializations, and by the presence in both editions of *A Vision* of direct quotations from the script, which imply volitional speech by the presence of the punctuation itself. Nevertheless, just as the difference between “Leo” and *Per Amica* is the contrast between direct encounter and suggestive essay, the two versions of *A Vision* are also distinct in kind as well as in level of polish. The one is closer to reportage, an account by an author who

later remembered being “overwhelmed by miracle”; the other presents much of the same material but at a distance from its feathered glory, as the measured thoughts of an old man turning the symbols over in his mind while readying himself for posterity.

The 1925 *A Vision* is not written for a crowd. In comparison with the ending of the 1937 book, the last two numbered sections of the first edition, a short paragraph called “The Herring Fishers” and a final statement entitled “Mythology,” are as modest a conclusion as Yeats ever wrote. “The Herring Fishers” contains almost an apology and a hesitant question:

Much of this book is abstract, because it has not yet been lived, for no man can dip into life more than a moiety of any system. When a child, I went out with herring fishers one dark night, and the dropping of their nets into the luminous sea and the drawing of them up has remained with me as a dominant image. Have I found a good net for a herring fisher? (*CW13* 206; *AVA* 251)

The final paragraph is a statement of purpose that ends with a sentence in which Yeats’s will is literally buried in the modal verb, in a play on the older, strong meaning of *willan* and blurring of a distinction between subjunctive and optative moods in English: “That we may believe that all men possess the supernatural faculties I would restore to the philosopher his mythology” (*CW13* 207; *AVA* 252). Does this *would* indicate tentative hope, slight inclination, urgent wish, or active intention? The amount of choice that Yeats has in the matter is left obscure.

Perhaps the submerging of the authorial will in language that casts not so much a spell as a net, with the intent less to control than to discover, is appropriate for the quirky 1925 *A Vision*, imperfect and disjunctive, present as if it claims to be a revelation of preternatural truth but also countering that claim in a number of ways, such as citing as authority for its information an obviously fictional and oddly humorous story or suggesting that its author is inadequate to his task (“Having the concrete mind of the poet, I am unhappy when I find myself among abstract things” [*CW13* 104; *AVA* 129]). Yeats ends this book which he knew was unfinished by depicting himself hoping to catch something in the luminous sea and relying not on his own well-defined mask but on herring fishers who are as indefinable as the skilled adults he went out with as a child. The fishers have some of the defamiliarized, and therefore desired, “cold and passionate” quality of the central figure in the poem “The Fisherman.” The fish may partake of the magic of longing that characterizes the fish-become-glimmering-girl in “The Song of Wandering Aengus.” As it often does in Yeats’s work, the sea, along with pools, wells, and watery depths, symbolizes the unfathomable as well as the *Anima Mundi*, that store of collective memory and knowledge that is often described as a reservoir. Yeats plays the child in the automatic script more than once, and both husband and wife are like children at different moments in the thinly disguised autobiographical poem “Desert Geometry or the Gift of Harun Al-Raschid” that opens Book II of the 1925 book. In rhetoric and in images, the first *A Vision* registers the uncertainty of a book without the kind of authorship to which its famous author was accustomed. It may even be a book that argues against the authorship of its writer. At the very least, it complicates the idea of individual, willed creativity as well as suggests that the magisterial Yeats, for all his decades of spiritual and

aesthetic explorations and all his experience in writing out of that experience, could not control his material.

This lack of control is far from merely a weakness in the book. Indeed, the earlier *A Vision*, like the "Leo Africanus" letters, has as both a defining quality and an abiding theme the unsettled relationship between authority and authorship, and the equally dynamic relationship between creativity and externally originating truths. The book is shot through with structural and topical issues that might be described, using its terms, as the relative positions of *Will* and *Mask* (that is, authority and the fictive construct "author"), *Creative Genius* and *Body of Fate* (that is, invention and discovery), on the Great Wheel. These conjunctions and oppositions are best understood by directing attention to the complex genesis of the text, since the reception/creation of the automatic script and other documents was an embodiment or dramatization of them.

### Notes

1. This essay, Parts I and II, is adapted from the "Introduction: 'She finds the words'" and "First Interlude: Double Visions: Two Manuscripts and Two Books" of my book *Wisdom of Two: The Spiritual and Literary Collaboration of George and W.B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); hereafter *WOT* in text.
2. See Elizabeth Heine, "'W. B. Yeats' map in his own hand," *Biography* 1, no. 3 (1978): 37–50 at 48.
3. The author is presumably William Morris, an authority on the value of life-affirming work, speaking through the medium May Hughes. His practical advice from beyond the grave continues: "Those who are weak, or unfit, will find themselves much depleted after an hour of writing and will, in time, become sick and ill. Do not allow a friend from the spirit side to use you for this form of communication for more than fifteen minutes at a time, and never when the vitality is impaired by sickness, or ill health of any kind," [May Hughes], *From Heavenly Spheres: A Book Written by Inspiration from William Morris; Poet, Socialist and Idealist Who Passed on—October 3rd, 1896* (London: Rider, [1936]), 73.
4. The first scripts had been assumed to be lost. However, I suspect they are the ten sheets of manuscript filed amid drafts of the introduction to the second edition of *A Vision* (in which Yeats misquotes the phrase "to give you new images" in his famous version of the story), NLI MS 36,260/4; see also *CVA* notes 3. The Introduction, part of "A Packet for Ezra Pound," recalls:  
 On the afternoon of October 24th 1917, four days after my marriage, my wife surprised me by attempting automatic writing. What came in disjointed sentences, in almost illegible writing, was so exciting, sometimes so profound, that I persuaded her to give an hour or two day after day to the unknown writer, and after some half-dozen such hours offered to spend what remained of life explaining and piecing together those scattered sentences. "No," was the answer, "we have come to give you metaphors for poetry." (*AVB* 8)
5. The clearest changes in handwriting coincide with the change in her title from "medium" to "interpreter" after Anne was born in February 1919. The automatic script for the first session after the birth, 20 March 1919, opens with free comments, including: "No longer the medium...different name / Interpreter" (*YVP* 200), and by June she was no longer running words together on the page and also started to record the questions; see *WOT* 137–39.
6. The state seemed like sleep in this realm but waking in the other, the Yeatses learned in one of many messages that suggest the complicated levels of consciousness as well as relationship and authority that were presumably at play. On 1 July 1920, according to an entry in George's hand (but Yeats's voice) from the notebook of "sleeps" which they were keeping, the message was cut short because, according to the control Ameritus, the "Interpreter went to sleep. Meaning of course that he found her asleep, instead of merely sleeping to me, waking to him. He then explained that when she turned away from me she could no longer hear him. This was because she associated him with me. I asked if he came more through me than her. He said no" (*YVP* 3 28).
7. Ann Saddlemyer's *Becoming George: The Life of Mrs. W. B. Yeats* appeared in 2002 from Oxford University Press.
8. Aside from the voluminous automatic script, relatively few autographs of George Yeats have been published, but witness the letters to her friends Dorothy Shakespear and Ezra Pound (Ann Saddlemyer,

- "George, Ezra, Dorothy and Friends: Twenty-Six Letters, 1918–59," in *YA7* [1990] 4–28), as well as the record contained in the Pound-Shakespear correspondence: ed. Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz, *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909–1914* (New York: New Directions, 1984).
9. This situation has been changing in the last couple of decades. Besides Saddlemyer, see Terence Brown, *The Life of W. B. Yeats: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); Brenda Maddox, *George's Ghosts: A New Life of W. B. Yeats* (London: Picador-Macmillan, 1999), published in the USA as *Yeats's Ghosts: The Secret Life of W. B. Yeats* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999); and David Pierce, *Yeats's Worlds: Ireland, England, and the Poetic Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995). See also Bette London, *Writing Double: Women's Literary Partnerships* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 179–209; and Frances Wilson, *Literary Seductions: Compulsive Writers and Diverted Readers* (London: Faber, 1999), 219–26. My own "The Medium as Creator: George Yeats's Role in the Automatic Script," in *YAACT6* (1989) 49–71, and "The Message is the Medium: Identity in the Automatic Script," in *YAACT9* (1991) 35–54, also argue for George Yeats's importance as collaborator of the system and its assumptions.
  10. Brown, *Life*, 261.
  11. See Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* Chapter 21, "Seekers and Friends," for a discussion of George Yeats's role in the first generation of Yeats scholarship following the poet's death in 1939.
  12. Before the publication of the *Vision* papers, the most careful attempt to go through the holographs and typescripts was made by Curtis Bradford (he recounts his experience in the essay "George Yeats: Poet's Wife," *Sewanee Review* 77 [1969]). Stacks of manila envelopes representing attempts at sorting fell into disarray from years of handling and duplication. Before papers were donated to the National Library of Ireland in 2000, the envelopes comprised a sort of textual-archeological site, with strata deposited by various scholars who had studied the manuscripts inside them. Along with the handwriting of Yeats and George appeared that of Bradford, Richard Ellmann, Kathleen Raine, and George Harper, among others. See Connie K. Hood, "A Search for Authority: Prolegomena to a Definitive Critical Edition of W. B. Yeats's *A Vision* (1937)" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1983; UMI 8319325).
  13. The 1925 edition was actually sent to subscribers on 15 January 1926, although the colophon is dated 1925 (Wade 149).
  14. In 2005, a search under *Spiritualism* in the British Library catalogue resulted in 685 hits for books and journals printed before 1975. A number of these are guides to the practice, and they routinely offer advice similar to that of E. W. and M. H. Wallis, *A Guide to Mediumship, and Psychical Unfoldment* (London: Friars Printing Association, [1903]). Part 2 of the guide, "How to Develop Mediumship," is firm on the topic of passivity, asserting that a medium should "intelligently cooperate with, rather than render blind obedience to, the spirits":
 

We unhesitatingly affirm that it is not necessary that mediums should regard themselves as mere "conduits" through which the spirits are to pour just whatever they choose. Nay, we go further, and claim that if mediumship is to be lifted above the plane of mere sensationalism, mediums must study their own powers, and learn to provide the conditions requisite for their own unfoldment, so as to exercise a determining influence over the results and share the responsibilities as well as the pleasures and spiritual benefits accruing from the co-operative association. (p. 111)
  15. Yeats stresses the importance of the magical convocation in his ill-fated essay "Is the Order of R. R. & A. C. to remain a Magical Order?" written to prevent the fragmentation of the Golden Dawn in 1901 (*YGD* 259–268). Prominent among the examples of an occult marriage were the fourteenth-century couple Nicholas Flamel and his wife Pernella, whose alchemical successes had witnessed a revival of attention, especially in France, since the eighteenth century. Yeats used their story (sometimes confusing it with the romantic legends associated with the thirteenth-century Raymond Lully) as a symbol for the relationship he hoped for between Maud Gonne and himself, in the Cuala Press edition of *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910; *VP* 253); see *YGD* 161 n55. Moina and MacGregor Mathers were another example, and it is perhaps significant that Yeats dedicated *AVA* to her. See references *SB* 163 and *Mem* 49–50.
  16. The instructors were most often of these two types. Controls have more or less human names (like Thomas or Ameritus), which often evoke various etymologies, though they are seldom self-explanatory. The communicators are almost always male (except for two brief visits from Epilamia, who presided over automatic script after the sleeps had begun [*YVP3* 44–45]). Controls seem to wield more authority than the less articulate guides, which, like Shakespearean fairies, have names taken from nature (the four that regularly appear, Apple, Fish, Leaf, and Rose, also, as Saddlemyer notes, are "notably reminiscent of Willy's early poetry," *BG* 112). A notebook entry in George's hand from 1920 defines the difference between guides

- and controls: "Guides are called by such names as leaf Rose etc while spirits who have been men are given such names as Thomas Dionertes etc—" (*YVP3* 19).
17. Actually, by this time the Yeatses' "joint life" included a third person, their infant daughter Anne, as the communicators noted: "The system is *not* preexistent—it is developed & created by us by you two or three now from a preexisting psychology." For more on the Third Daimon, associated with Anne Yeats, see *WOT* Chapter 5.
  18. See also a guide's description of the "wisdom from 2 people" (*YVP1* 185).
  19. William Blake, *Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 825.
  20. Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 213. Chapter 11 of this study examines *An Adventure*, the well-known account of an apparition of Marie Antoinette seen in 1911 by Charlotte Anne Moberley and Eleanor Jourdain. *An Adventure* excited a number of energetic rebuttals. The Yeatses were fascinated by the book, which is mentioned several times in the automatic script, to the extent of corresponding with and meeting the authors while in Oxford; see *MYV1* 78–79, 224–25; *MYV2* 67–68, 424 n29. *A Vision B* invokes the work to explain aspects of the afterlife and haunting: "See *An Adventure* (Faber & Faber). This anonymous book was the work of two women, one the Head of St. Hugh's College, Oxford, the other her predecessor. It describes with minute detail a vision of Marie Antoinette and her Court, and of the gardens of the Petit Trianon as they were before the Revolution, and the research that proved the vision's accuracy. The two ladies walking in the garden of the Petit Trianon shared the same vision. I have confirmed, as far as the meagre records permitted, a similar vision in my own family, and Sligo pilots and Galway farmers have told me of visions that seem to reproduce the costumes of past times" (*AVB* 227n). See also *CW13* 286–87 n126.
  21. Remarks delivered to the Ghost Club, 7 June 1911 (BL Add. MS 52264).
  22. William James, *William James on Psychical Research*, ed. Gardner Murphy and Robert O. Ballou (New York: Viking, 1960), 312 & 322.
  23. See the Preface to Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (London: Palgrave, 2002), ix–xiv.
  24. I am borrowing the formulation of Marjorie Garber, *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).
  25. 8 September [1935], *Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley*, ed. Dorothy Wellesley (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 24.
  26. Graham Hough would disagree: he begins his analysis of the book with its genre, since it is "the end we understand most easily." According to Hough, *A Vision* is an apocalypse (*The Mystery Religion of W. B. Yeats* [Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984], 89–90). Harold Bloom agrees, calling it an apocalypse or a "Gnostic scripture" (*Yeats* [Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1970], 270). Northrop Frye retained a serious interest in the book in terms of the genre he called an anatomy ("Yeats and the Language of Symbolism," in *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology* [New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1963], 218–237; "The Rising of the Moon," in *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth and Society* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976], 245–274). Frye's approach has been elaborated on by Hazard Adams, "Symbolism and Yeats's *A Vision*," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 22 (1964): 431 and *The Book of Yeats's Vision: Romantic Modernism and Antithetical Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 3; and Steven Helmling, *The Esoteric Comedies of Carlyle, Newman and Yeats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Other critics of Frye's generation tend to treat *A Vision* as a sort of strange reader's guide, useful for explaining otherwise opaque references in the poems, a "system of references" (Cleath Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1939], 176) or a "symbology" (Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats* [New York: Macmillan, 1954], 163). Other studies stress its use as a guide to Yeats's aesthetics more generally, a "visual pattern...transformed into a philosophical or metaphysical system" (Giorgio Melchiori, *The Whole Mystery of Art* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960], 3), a myth or an allegory about poetics. See e.g., M. I. Seiden, *William Butler Yeats: The Poet as Mythmaker* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1962), 13, and Helen Vendler, *Yeats's "Vision" and the Later Plays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 29. Michael J. Sidnell stresses the phantasmagoric, calling the book a "vast imaginative construction" unifying Yeats's poetry, fiction, and philosophy (*Yeats's Poetry and Poetics* [London: Macmillan, 1966], 108).
  27. Laurie was not sure that the intended print run of 500 would sell, although he wrote to Yeats on 18 August that he did not mind that some orders were being canceled. Yeats wrote back to assure him that "Your letter was not unexpected. I think however that you will sell the 500" (22 September 1924, *CL Intelix* 4650). As

- it happened, Laurie did increase the run to 600, and the copies sold out, but the response to the book was (predictably) minimal.
28. Unpublished letter to H. Watt of A. P. Watt & Son, 31 December 1934. BL Add. MS 55003. Quoted in Finneran, "On Editing Yeats: The Text of *A Vision* (1937)," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 19, no. 1 (1977): 119–134, at 120–21.
  29. Mary M. Colum, "Life and Literature: The Individual vs. Society," review of *A Vision*, *Forum and Century* 99 (1938): 214–15.
  30. The situation is changing for *A Vision*, at least, with the publication of the two versions in Scribner's *Collected Works* series, edited by Catherine E. Paul and myself. In fact, until *A Vision B* (Volume 14 of the *Collected Works*) appears, *A Vision A* (Volume 13 of the *Collected Works*, which appeared in 2008) is probably the more readily available version.
  31. "Daemon," the spelling of the first edition (Wade 120; USA, Wade 121) and *Essays*, volume 4 of the *Collected Edition* (London: Macmillan, 1924 [Wade 141]), adopted by William H. O'Donnell as the copy text for *CW5*, was subsequently changed to "Daimon," the spelling used in both versions of *A Vision*, where the word is also usually italicized. I retain *Daemon*, without italicization, to refer to the figure of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*.
  32. See the accounts of 1913 and 1914 in Foster, *Life1* 502–531. For the best account of the creative outcome of the time spent with Pound, see James Longenbach, *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) and, specifically with respect to *A Vision*, Catherine E. Paul's essay "A Vision of Ezra Pound" in this volume, 252–262.
  33. Lawrence Lipking, *The Life of the Poet: Beginning and Ending Poetic Careers* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 49.
  34. Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 199.
  35. Quoted in Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats*, 305.
  36. Steve L. Adams and George Mills Harper, "The Manuscript of 'Leo Africanus,'" *YAI* (1982) 3–47. Hereafter referred to as "Leo" in the text.
  37. See Foster, *Life1* 464–67, and the introduction and notes in "Leo" for accounts of the relationship between Yeats and Leo.
  38. The composition is dated by Foster, *Life2* 72.
  39. On the concept of *Anima Mundi* in Yeats, see Christopher Blake, "The Supreme Enchanter: W. B. Yeats and the Soul of the World" (Ph.D. dissertation, Georgia State University, 1997 [UMI 9813105]). The term, deeply associated with *Per Amica* and Yeats's life before his marriage, seldom appears in the script. In December 1917, Yeats approached the topic, asking if his ideas about life after death were correct, but was told that "Anima mundi is too vague" (*YVPI* 153). On another occasion Thomas objected after Yeats used the phrase in a question, replying "I hate that term" (*YVPI* 234).
  40. Leo is the name given to the chief "frustrator" of the automatic script; see *WOT* Chapter 5.
  41. For textual histories of the revision, including its intended place in the two abortive editions of Yeats's complete works, Macmillan's Edition De Luxe and the edition proposed by Charles Scribner's Sons of New York, see Finneran, "On Editing Yeats," and especially Hood "A Search for Authority" and "The Remaking of *A Vision*," *YACTS1* (1983) 33–67. See also letters to Olivia Shakespear (*L* 695), Edmund Dulac (*L* 699–700), and Frank Pearce Sturm (*FPS* 93).
  42. Foster cites a letter to "an importunate correspondent" from Yeats lamenting the "horribly expensive" price (£3.3.0) and also its unfinished status: "It is only a first draft of a book & intended for students of Plotinus, the Hermetic fragments & unpopular literature of that kind" (letter to Ignatius MacHugh, 28 May [1926], cited *Life2* 313).
  43. In reality, the way for the 1937 edition had been paved in the public mind (or at least that portion of it purchasing art press books) by the publication of the new framing material separately. *A Packet for Ezra Pound* was published by the Cuala Press in 1929, the *Stories of Michael Robartes and his Friends* in 1931. However, 1937 marked the widely distributed Macmillan edition of the book as a whole.
  44. On the fictional author "Yeats" and the form of his book, see Adams, *The Book of Yeats's Vision*.
  45. On the differences between the two versions, see especially Barbara L. Croft, "Stylistic Arrangements": *A Study of William Butler Yeats's "A Vision"* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1987), and Seiden, *William Butler Yeats: The Poet as Mythmaker*.
  46. For this and other points of comparison between the two versions, see Alan S. Marzilli, "Masking of Truth in W. B. Yeats's *A Vision*: A Comparison of the Two Editions in Relation to the Original Automatic Experience" (MA thesis, Emory University, 1993).
  47. This magisterial quality is paralleled by the archly conservative political stance that Yeats often took in his

last years. *A Vision B* recalls the fascism of the 1930s, as Stephen Spender was the first to notice. The 1925 book is as different in this regard as 1920s fascism was from later embodiments (Spender, review of *A Vision*, *The Criterion* 17 [1938]: 536–37). See the introduction to *CW13*, especially xliiv–xlv, and Claire V. Nally's essay "The Political Occult: Revisiting Fascism, Yeats and *A Vision*" in this volume, 329–343.

48. George Yeats told Donald Pearce that her husband's posturing was meant to be read ironically: that the reference to Brancusi, whose work did not impress Yeats ("all those ovoids...seemed to put him off"), "is made with a certain amount of humor, you see—which you earnest Americans never seem to catch!" (Donald Pearce, "Hours with the Domestic Sibyl: Remembering George Yeats," *Southern Review* 28 [1992]: 494).
49. NLI MS 36,260/4; see above, note 4.
50. Virginia Moore, *The Unicorn: W. B. Yeats' Search for Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 277–78. Chapter 6 of Anne Saddlemeyer's biography, *Becoming George*, is the most informed and well-reasoned account of the experience and what each of the recipients believed to be happening (*BG* 105–133).

## YEATS'S *VISION* AND THE FEMININE

by Janis Haswell

W. B. Yeats insisted that “the mystical life is the centre of all that I do & all that I think & all that I write” (*CLI* 303).<sup>1</sup> This essay will explore what that mystical life entails, in terms of Yeats's beliefs, values, and attitudes, as they pertain to issues of gender, and more specifically, Yeats's valorization of the feminine. I have argued elsewhere that *A Vision* (1937) diminishes the importance of gender compared to its antecedents: the automatic script and *A Vision* (1925), a position also argued by Margaret Mills Harper and Elizabeth Butler Cullingford.<sup>2</sup> With that diminution in mind, we can ask the following questions: given that Yeats's perception of “a universal masculine & feminine in soul” (*YVPI* 109) shaped the core of his theosophy, what did his occlusion of gender accomplish (or attempt to accomplish) in the second edition of *A Vision*? Are his more strategic representations and uses of gender true to his vision of the feminine, and more fundamentally, how is gender infused into his symbolic system?

### Yeats's View of the Feminine

In the years before his marriage, Yeats associated the female with magic and mystery, since he believed that women were naturally in harmony with nature and her secrets—closer to the body, a privileged position indeed since Yeats believed that “all power is from the body,” at least in Western culture, and that “religion and magic insist on power and therefore on body” (*CW3* 356; *Au* 481). Moreover, the body of a woman is like the words of a poet: “subtle...complex...full of mysterious life” (“The Symbolism of Poetry,” *CW4* 120; *E&I* 164).

Yeats claimed women are also sensitive to the bond between natural and supernatural, which “are knit together” (*CW5* 210; *E&I* 518). In fact, Yeats envies the way women are in tune with the presence of spirits. When it comes to embracing and understanding ancient lore, “women come more easily than men to that wisdom,” Yeats laments (“The Queen and the Fool,” *Myth* 115; *M2005* 77). There is a kind of madness to such wisdom, he goes on to acknowledge. Fools may have it, but women “do get of a certainty” an intuitive kind of insight about ultimate reality: “glimpses of much that sanctity finds at the end of its painful journey” (*Myth* 115; *M2005* 77). Through his experience in the Theosophical Society and the Golden Dawn, along with his study of Irish folklore and his friendships with country folk who were in tune with spirits, Yeats came to envy a woman's supposed intuitive insight, “as if the darkness had been cut with a knife.” Such insight into the metaphysical is a miracle that is “mostly a woman's privilege” (*CW3* 161; *Au* 185).<sup>3</sup> Women ostensibly recognize the mystical life and command it, none better than Yeats's own wife, who gathered up an “entire web of influences” in her automatic writing (*CW3* 355; *Au* 481).

A woman's connection to the supernatural means that she cannot be the mere personification of body and its limitations. In Yeats's philosophy, women are symbols of two realms meeting: the soul descending and the body ascending. For Yeats, the feminine transcends mere physical beauty and cannot be mastered, even by the poet who conjures

its essence. Yeats rejects the assumption that beauty emerges only under the artist's gaze. Beauty is objective; it is intimately and perpetually bound to divinity. It is a mask that reveals, as Yeats summarized in his study of William Blake, the "unveiled eyes of eternity" ("William Blake and His Illustrations to the Divine Comedy," *CW4* 103; *Ec&I* 139).

What happens, then, when feminine and masculine meet? The feminine brings to sexual relations natural strengths that the masculine could achieve only through much labor. Completion requires the Other. But differences between the two undoubtedly and unavoidably create conflict. When a man listens, he meets another's thoughts "with a rival thought" unlike a woman "taking up what one said and changing [it], giving it as it were flesh and bone" (*Mem* 87). A man desires a woman, but a woman desires the desire of a man (*VP* 807; *CW1* 601).<sup>4</sup> In a sexual relationship, a man and woman cannot achieve perfect friendship ("a placid country where Consolation has her dwelling"). Rather, sexual love is a battlefield "where shadows war beside the combatants" ("John Sherman," *CW12* 17).

### Gender in the Automatic Script

Even this short gloss reveals principles that are deepened and clarified during the years of automatic writing in the first years of the Yeatses' marriage. It is no accident that gender is one of the most dominant subjects in the script, since George Yeats was determined to help shape her husband's understanding of his stormy history with Maud Gonne and gradually accept the suitability of his marriage to George. The amount of text in the automatic script dedicated to unraveling the psychological, mystical, and sexual course of W. B. Yeats's life is formidable, and only partly attributable to Yeats's obsession with Maud Gonne. As the script unfolds, it is clear that George Yeats is leading him, not merely placating him.

Obviously, it was in George Yeats's best interest to affirm the validity of their legal marriage, since it was not the first marriage of W. B. Yeats's life: he had committed himself to Gonne in a spiritual union years before.<sup>5</sup> In the automatic writing process, the guides reveal that his union with George Hyde-Lees is unique and proper precisely because it is *sexual*. Thus, rather than minimize her husband's brooding inquiries into his previous relationships, George Yeats fuels his interest by exploring both the role of those relationships in his life and their contrast to his present marriage, a marriage that plays into the hands of a spiritual and sexual design not of the poet's making.

There are literally hundreds of pages in the automatic script (particularly in materials from 5 June 1918 to 20 March 1920, found in *YVP2*) that explore the importance of sexual relations—between man and *Daimon*, man and sweetheart—in this life, in discarnate stages, and in subsequent incarnations. Early on in the writing sessions, W. B. Yeats sought that primordial knowledge of the origins of male and female. On 12 January 1918 he asked: "Can you tell me what makes a soul incarnate as man or woman?" (*YVP1* 250). The spirits refused to answer. Yeats persisted on 19 January: "Can you go into what decides sex." The spirits replied: "No | Much further on" (*YVP1* 271). On February 6 the spirit guide "Rose" was sent to describe the origin of sex (*YVP1* 338), but it is more than a year later when the issue is finally explored. On 6 April 1919 Yeats asked a simple question and received an even simpler answer:

Is daimon of opposite sex to ego.  
Yes. (*YVP2* 235)

The guides further reveal that a man's *Daimon* uses all the faculties (senses) of the body, but particularly the sixth sense, which is sexual (*YVP2* 243). Through the sixth sense, W. B. Yeats's *Daimon* collects ideas from George Yeats's (and vice versa) in ordinary sex relations "in accordance with the unity & harmony of the moment" (*YVP2* 249). The connection of *Daimon* to sexuality is absolute: "Have we no consciousness of daimon apart from sex?" "None," the guide replies (*YVP2* 259).

While men and women become conscious of the *Daimon* only in sexual relations, their lives are manipulated by the *Daimon* during Initiatory and Critical Moments.<sup>6</sup> *Daimons* use these moments for their own purposes, with Initiatory Moments functioning as overtures leading up to the Critical Moments when a man's life or a woman's life is significantly changed. During Initiatory Moments the *Daimon* shocks the self, "luring" it through a sequence of events from inaction and abstract dreaming to objective emotion and action (*YVP3* 194). The lure to a man is always a woman, for the *Daimon* must entice another *Daimon* to itself in order to be sexually activated. That is, because *Daimons* have no senses of their own, they can be sexual with other *Daimons* only through contact with their human hosts (*YVP2* 245). In this way, the sexual life (the sequence of Initiatory Moments before a Critical Moment) "is a perpetual drama, which has for its real theme the nature of the unborn child, for whom the daimons have laid their plans" (*YVP3* 115). The drama of temporal life is thereby composed of sexual experiences involving a man, a woman, and their *Daimons*.

Thus the marriage of W. B. and George Yeats had been orchestrated by the design of their *Daimons*, for their *Daimons'* own sake. Equally significant is the fact that the Yeatses' union had made possible the *revelation* of *Daimonic* activity. Several months into the automatic script sessions, W. B. Yeats asked the spirits about the source of their knowledge (whether to placate his doubts about the entire process or validate the universality of the information). The spirits were clear that the solar/lunar system is not "preexistent":

it is developed and created by us & by you two or you three now from a preexisting psychology – all the bones are *in* the world – we only select & our selection is subordinate to *you both* – therefore *we* are dependent on you & you influence our ability to develop & create by every small detail of your joint life. (*YVP2* 240)

For W. B. Yeats, this explanation clarified why other philosophers and poets had not happened upon the same answers in their search for ultimate truth. Their own lives determined the structure of the symbolic system, the images employed, and the pattern of oppositional configurations. The lunar/solar system springs from two individuals, united by their common occult interests, now tied to each other in matrimony, and with a child in the womb.

Thus while Maud Gonne spoke of "that lovely world which we so seldom see but that must be for some future time" (*G-YL* 62), George Yeats was creating with W. B. Yeats a metaphysical system that emphasizes the here and now and opens up human spiritual consciousness through sexuality. Here Yeats develops (or corrects) his earlier sense of man and *Daimon* offered in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, where he describes the love/hate relation of man with *Daimon* as analogous to sexual love: "Then my imagination runs from Daemon to sweetheart, and I divine an analogy that evades the intellect...[A]nd I even wonder if there may not be some secret communion, some whispering in the dark between Daemon and sweetheart" (*CW5* 11–12; *Myth* 336). Analogy gives way to ontology in the contra-sexual *Daimon*.

Indeed, new wisdom is generated only when there is an "equal balance" of contraries (instinct and emotion, male and female; *YVP2* 289), and there is "equal balance in sexual intercourse" (*YVP2* 289). Occult and personal desires are fulfilled simultaneously. The *Daimon* cannot function outside of the sexual faculty, performs most fully in the act of sexual intercourse (is "fed," as the guides express it) and is recognized only in sexual relations. It is no accident that poems written during the years of automatic scripting sessions (especially "Solomon to Sheba" and "Solomon and the Witch") dramatize the union of the sacred and the sexual, joined to generate a condition of emotional completion and philosophic wisdom.

The critical revelation that emerges from the automatic script materials concerns the contra-sexual *Daimon*, which makes "universal masculine & feminine" first and foremost principles of the human psyche, where the male or female host wars with the female or male *Daimon*, who is the arch-enemy and yet "part of me" (*YVP2* 211). To the extent that the relationship between a man and a woman is passionate, it "reproduces the relation of man and *Daimon*," who "face each other in a perpetual conflict or embrace. This relation (the *Daimon* being of the opposite sex to that of man) may create a passion like that of sexual love" (*CW13* 25; *AVA* 27).

The script materials deepen and affirm Yeats's sense of the feminine. In fact we might argue that within Yeats's theosophy there is a consistent emphasis on the need of masculine for feminine: "It is the purely instinctive & cosmic quality in man which seeks completion in its opposite" (*YVPI* 65), the spirits instructed Yeats. But developed in far more detail is the unitive power of sexual relations: "two complete opposites never unite except in man & woman" (*YVPI* 68). Note that while Yeats uses terms like "antithesis" and "opposition," his meaning is more precisely captured by Blake's notion of "contrary." Life "is the contact of contrasts," the spirits insist (*YVPI* 406),<sup>7</sup> and "contraries are positive" because they involve an interconnection or "correspondence" (*YVP2* 292).<sup>8</sup>

Sexual union also symbolizes the harmony that comes when *antithetical* man (between Phases 12 and 18) permits the *Daimonic* mind "to flow through the events of his life" (*CW13* 26; *AVA* 28), resulting in a state Yeats called Unity of Being, when contraries are united and antinomies are balanced in "Complete harmony between physical body intellect & spiritual desire" (*YVP2* 41). Yeats summarizes: "I see in it [the natural union of man and woman] a symbol of that eternal instant where the antinomy is resolved. It is not the resolution itself" (*AVB* 214, cf. *AVB* 52). Indeed, only angels enjoy a "conflagration of the whole being" (*L* 805).<sup>9</sup>

In terms of human experience, feminine and masculine relate to each other in asymmetrical complementarity, and here Yeats connects his view of gender with his exploration of the four *Faculties* and twenty-eight phases of the moon. In the temporal order, gender is known only through its phasal manifestations, which for Yeats meant ever-shifting ratios of masculine and feminine principles coexisting in the same personality. As masculine (or sun) waxes, feminine (or moon) wanes, there is "a narrowing and a widening"—making the critical feature the presence and interchange between the two rather than the constant state of either one. The twenty-eight phases signify the interaction of masculine/feminine both in personality types and in historical periods, thus illustrating how masculine and feminine are continually in action, ultimately identifiable only in terms of their relational opposition to the other in a union that remains fluid and ever-changing.

Because conflict promises completion (*YVPI* 65) and unity (*YVPI* 68), Yeats came to regard evil not as a straining of opposites (as he did in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*) but as

the cessation of conflict in a permanent state of calcifying asymmetry. When man seeks his own consciousness (the light) to the point of suppressing the dark of his *Daimon*, she will “seek to quench that light in what is to man wholly darkness” (*CW13* 25–26; *AVA* 28). Yeats clarifies the evil of permanent imbalance later in the text: “In our system also it is a cardinal principle that anything separated from its opposite—and victory is separation—‘consumes itself away.’ The existence of the one depends upon the existence of the other” (*CW13* 108; *AVA* 134). Without the feminine, Yeats would be left only with the harsh sun, the timid sun.<sup>10</sup> But in fact the feminine has driven him from his “self made prison” (*YVP3* 194) to experience freedom (*YVP2* 19) and unity (*YVPI* 68).

### The Degendering of *A Vision*

Even before the automatic script sessions ceased, Yeats began the tedious process of synthesizing his mystical revelations in an essay published in a limited edition as *A Vision* (1925). In his dedication to Moina Bergson Mathers (“Vestigia”) of the 1925 edition of *A Vision*, Yeats confesses that he has not “dealt with the whole of my subject, perhaps not even with what is most important, writing nothing about the Beatific Vision, little of sexual love...” (*CW13* lv; *AVA* xii). Even so, Yeats’s sense of gender dynamics in *A Vision A* are substantive. The masculine/feminine relational opposition is not simply one in a series; it is the foundation upon which all other oppositions, both real and symbolic, are generated:

I see the Lunar and Solar cones first, before they start their whirling movement, as two worlds lying one within another—nothing exterior, nothing interior, Sun in Moon and Moon in Sun—a single being like man and woman in Plato’s Myth, and then a separation and a whirling for countless ages, and I see man and woman as reflecting the greater movement. (*CW13* 121; *AVA* 149)

Almost immediately after publication of this limited edition, however, Yeats lamented what he recognized as its flaws: “I see now that section XII Book IV in *A Vision* [“The Spirits at Fifteen and at One”] should have been the most important in the book & it is the slightest & worst. It must be reworked and the whole system ‘symbolized in a study of the relation of man and woman.’”<sup>11</sup> It is clear from the second edition of *A Vision* (1937) that his critical reaction to the 1925 edition is even more negative. Yeats laments that the first version “fills me with shame”; he had misinterpreted the geometry and “in my ignorance of philosophy failed to understand distinctions upon which the coherence of the whole depended” (*AVB* 19). Subsequently, Yeats would systematically eliminate from *A Vision B* sections wholly dedicated to either biographical allusions (as in “The Gift of Harun Al-Raschid”<sup>12</sup>) or to the sexual dynamic between man and *Daimon* (“The Daimon, the Sexes, Unity of Being, Natural and Supernatural Unity”).<sup>13</sup> Altered, too, are the multiple sections involving the fictional characters of Owen Aherne and Michael Robartes (“Introduction” and “The Dance of the Four Royal Persons”).<sup>14</sup> These deletions suggest that Yeats might have been chagrined by the personal/sexual focus of the 1925 edition. After a decade of marriage and healthy distance between himself and the *agon* he experienced with Maud and Iseult Gonne, he had reached a personal and poetic maturity. His need for *A Vision* had changed to a more philosophical/historical meaning instead of a sexual/personal focus.

Even so, *A Vision B* reflects those same fundamental convictions about the feminine that are found in the automatic script. The ultimate reality “falls in human consciousness...into a series of antinomies” (*AVB* 187). Concord (or love) and discord (the principle of separation or difference) are the principal pairs, but so too are objective and subjective, masculine and feminine, male and female. These antinomies are “Dying each other’s life, living each other’s death” (*AVB* 68). Whatever a man gains originates “from conflict with the opposite of his true being” (*AVB* 13). Indeed, sexual love is the most important event in life, “for the opposite sex is nature chosen and fated” (*AVB* 88). The symbols in the Great Wheel (itself “an expression of alternations of passion” [*AVB* 211]) “can be thought of as the symbols of the relations of men and women and of the birth of children” (*AVB* 211). As in earlier materials, the marriage bed is still “the symbol of the solved antinomy” (*AVB* 52; cf. *AVB* 214), but not the resolution itself, which is Unity of Being (*AVB* 89). Thus for Yeats the sexual union of man and woman “has a kind of sacredness” (*AVB* 214).

### *A Vision Reframed*

Yeats explained his frame for *A Vision A*, with stories involving Owen Aherne and Michael Robartes, in this way: “I had invented an unnatural story of an Arabian traveller which I must amend and find a place for some day because I was fool enough to write half a dozen poems that are unintelligible without it” (*AVB* 19). This invention was the result of a conspiracy between W. B. Yeats and George, because “my wife was unwilling that her share should be known, and I to seem sole author” (*AVB* 19).<sup>15</sup> Paradoxically, in *A Vision B* Yeats retains both the story and the characters, but for a different purpose. His introduction—two initial sections of *A Vision B*—addresses Ezra Pound and attempts to situate the symbolic system *philosophically*. The third section of *A Vision B*, the “Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends: An Extract from a Record Made by His Pupils,” situates the symbolic system *aesthetically* by reframing his *Vision* with the specter of Leda.

Michael Robartes and Owen Aherne were old friends of Yeats. Years earlier, the poet had used them as personae embodying oppositional tendencies from his own psyche and would continue to use them as contrary figures in his “phantasmagoria.”<sup>16</sup> As a man of action and a Christian believer, whose faith looked to an authority outside (rather than within) himself, Aherne is by nature *primary*/objective, a follower and disciple rather than a visionary. He is comfortable with abstractions and the written word.<sup>17</sup> Robartes is placed at Phase Eighteen (along with George Yeats; *YVPI* 149); he is *antithetical* or subjective, a man not of faith but of imagination,<sup>18</sup> not of thought but of contemplation.<sup>19</sup> The relationship between Aherne and Robartes serves as an explicit enactment of contraries. Aherne, as *primary* man, cannot see himself from within, but “as if he were somebody else” (*VP* 824; *CWI* 659). Robartes, as *antithetical* man, sees “all reflected within himself” (*VP* 824; *CWI* 659, note to *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*). One is pulled outside himself through his objective faith, the other grounded in his personal fulfillment in (alternately) pleasure and aesthetics. These life-long friends could be at times bitter enemies and function apart most of their lives. Even so, they are inseparable by complementarity and fate. Their alliances and estrangements form a sort of gyre—a cycle of the interactions of objective and subjective men, and by extension, of the *Tinctures* themselves.

In *A Vision B*, Robartes and Aherne appear in "Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends." As we will see, the Aherne/Robartes frame allows Yeats to dramatize the complementary relationship of *Tinctures* and phases apart from references to male and female. Thus the frame is emblematic of the overall degendering of *A Vision B*, an observation that does not, however, diminish the function of this section. In "Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends," Yeats deploys his full arsenal of parody, humor, and irony. He spoofs his own fictional explanation for the script in *A Vision A*.<sup>20</sup> More importantly, he enacts the choices and roles of the two women in his life—Maud Gonne and George Yeats—and through them condenses in a series of narratives a representation of how *primary* and *antithetical*, man and woman, dance their inevitable dance.

"Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends" are narrated by one John Duddon (an artist), who gathers with his friends Denise de L'Isle Adam (lover of first Duddon, then Huddon) and Peter Huddon (a soldier and Duddon's patron) in Regents Park. They are joined by Daniel O'Leary, Robartes's chauffeur (to whom they tell their stories), and later by Aherne and Robartes. Duddon describes Aherne as "stout and sedentary-looking, bearded and dull of eye," but Robartes he finds "lank, brown, muscular, clean-shaven, with an alert, ironical eye" (*AVB* 37).

Some critics pronounce "Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends" a failure. For instance, William O'Donnell comments that the volume has no merit despite its "extravagant characters and emotions."<sup>21</sup> Others bypass it for meatier sections of *A Vision B*, finding it "a witty and somewhat cryptic phantasy."<sup>22</sup> I suggest that Yeats used "Stories" to embody in the relationships of these characters the very symbolic system he describes in the main text of *A Vision B*. That is to say, "Stories" holds the key to understanding Yeats's view of human personalities and history and therefore serves as the epitome of his view of how gendered beings—as well as self and *Daimon*—operate and relate to each other. Seeing these patterns is difficult since Yeats tells a series of interlocking stories. These narratives seem disconnected and isolated, yet in the end they are inextricably bound together.

Let us start with the inner, core story told by Robartes himself. Reminiscent of his account in *A Vision A*, Robartes tells his companions of a turbulent love affair with a ballet-dancer in Vienna. He speaks of "her coldness and cruelty" that became "in the transfiguration of the body an inhuman majesty" (*AVB* 38). He tried to change her, but in the end they shared only mutual enmity. Leaving her, he cohabited with an "ignorant girl" in the same city, who found Giraldus's 1594 *Speculum Angelorum et Hominum* in a cupboard left there by an unfrocked priest who disappeared with a troop of gypsies. A surprising chain of events, to say the least. This mistress, too, left him, causing Robartes to reflect ruefully on his past loves: "I have always known that love should be changeless and yet my loves drank their oil and died—there has been no ever-burning lamp" (*AVB* 40). Caught up in the "irrational bitterness" of love, Robartes left Europe to pray at the Holy Sepulcher, but found no solace there. This, too, proves a fortuitous choice. In Jerusalem an old Arab came to him and identified the drawings in *Speculum* as the doctrine of his tribe: the Judwalis or Diagrammatists (*AVB* 41). Robartes joined the tribe, seeking their secret knowledge. What he discovered is yet to be revealed, both in the following pages of *A Vision* and to his pupils.

Like a series of concentric cycles, the four disciples have their own stories to tell,<sup>23</sup> each one involving Aherne and Robartes. The first story is told by Daniel O'Leary, who had

literally run into the rescuing arms of Aherne as he fled a theater, having thrown his boots at the actors in a production of *Romeo and Juliet* (he missed). What must seem to readers as an impulsive, inconsequential act is a watershed event for O'Leary, who seeks the courage (defined as "self-possession in an unforeseen situation") to evoke moments of intensity in his life (AVB 34–35). As Duddon tells his story, it becomes evident that he, too, committed an impulsive act—using his walking stick to strike the head of a man that he believed to be Huddon, his rival. Rather than doing something "magnificent," as he thought at the time, Duddon realizes he has wounded an innocent old man—Aherne, it turns out, who asks his assailant to join him that evening with his friends (AVB 36). The sub-text for both these stories is that Aherne had been sent by Robartes to meet them at these critical, passionate moments. O'Leary explains that Robartes "sees what is going to happen, between sleeping and waking at night, or in the morning before they bring him his early cup of tea" (AVB 35).

Denise then explains that she assumed her name after reading the play *Axel*, by Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, a decadent-symbolist depiction of the love between Axel and Sara, who commit suicide so that their love will never fade (AVB 42). Nestled within this story is another narrative about her relationship with Duddon. While he has no problems consummating affairs with Huddon's castoffs, he is impotent ("a coward") with Denise even though she has invited him to her bed. She tells him: "I love you because you would not be shy if you had not so great respect for me" (AVB 43). The point, Denise insists, is not that she is Huddon's mistress, but that Duddon is the love of her life (AVB 44).

As if on cue, Robartes then introduces the pupils to John Bond and Mary Bell, whose narratives form an outer circle around the stories told by Duddon, O'Leary, and Denise. Their story, like the others, involves long years of connections and coincidences. Mary Bell had married an older man retired from the Foreign Office and master of a wealthy family estate. They were happy but childless. After some nine years of marriage, she met John Bond (an expert in migratory birds) in the south of France. After fleeing from each other through several cities, ironically encountering each other in every location, they accepted their fate. Mary conceived Bond's child but returned to her wealthy husband, since her lover was penniless. When Mr. Bell was near death, he asked to consult with Bond (as a curator at the Dublin Museum) on cuckoos—his life's work. He had many in cages, but had tried to no avail to "persuade them to make nests" (AVB 48). The birth of his son gave Bond new hope. But even the cleverest of the cuckoos would make no structure out of matches, twigs and moss. Mr. Bell asks Bond if he will carry on his work. But at that moment Mrs. Bell announces that a cuckoo has indeed built a nest—she has just found it on the grounds. Her husband cries, "Now let Thy servant depart in peace" (AVB 49). Indeed, he dies that night and at the funeral Mary meets Aherne, sent by Robartes who had dreamed of the intimate events between herself and Bond.

Robartes convinces her to take on a new task, and Bond will care for the estate and their son until her return. And the task? Mary Bell takes from an ivory box a blue egg the size of a swan's, the lost egg of Leda that had come to Robartes in the Far East. She is chosen "by divine wisdom for its guardian and bearer" (AVB 51). Denise argues that she should have been asked to guard the egg, "for I am taller, and my training as a model would have helped" (AVB 53). But her objection is ignored, for "only the visionary" has the right to deal with this divinely generated egg.<sup>24</sup> Duddon's account of the event ends with a summary of Giraldus's wisdom and Robartes's reflections on love and death.

What does this ensemble of characters represent, and how does their meeting connect to Yeats's description of the Great Wheel that follows? William O'Donnell sees Denise as a Helen of Troy figure and draws a parallel between Mary Bell and Maud Gonne, and by extension, Mr. Bell and Gonne's lover Lucien Millevoeye, all based on Gonne's real-life love of birds.<sup>25</sup> His interpretation is strengthened by the fact that Iseult Gonne's symbol was a bird.<sup>26</sup> I would counterargue, however, that Denise is a thinly veiled figure for Maud Gonne, who took up with other lovers even though Yeats (like Duddon) was her spiritual spouse.<sup>27</sup> Though statuesque and theatrically trained, Maud is not selected as the mother of the new age. Instead, the married woman, George Yeats / Mary Bell, is chosen.<sup>28</sup> Even here, in this "cryptic phantasy," are allusions to Yeats's private life and love relations, packaged publicly in these displaced representations.

The presence of birds and emphasis on nests is puzzling at first. In the automatic script there were numerous references to birds, often three in number, that signified the women in Yeats's life: Maud and Iseult Gonne, and George Yeats (*YVPI* 32).<sup>29</sup> Cuckoos might be important simply because they are brood parasites, laying their eggs in the nests of other birds, which then raise the fledgling cuckoos. However, I believe that Yeats is suggesting a broader possibility: that Mary Bell provides the answer that her husband has sought his whole life. She discovers a cuckoo's nest and delivers the blessed news, or pretends to. Just as George Yeats was the medium for wisdom beyond the physical world, thus realizing the poet's life's work, so too Mary Bell speaks the words that allow her husband both to be at peace with his marriage and to pass from this world in peace.

We can also recognize the principles of human sexual relations (as developed in the automatic script) emerging in the individual narratives of these characters. The love relationships here are conflicted, without a doubt. Denise loves Duddon but sleeps with Huddon, Mary Bell raises John Bond's child but stays with her elderly husband through his final days. Robartes speaks of the final animosity between himself and the ballet-dancer. Men and women seem to be like oil and water, yet they are not antinomies (as they appear to Robartes) but contraries like human and *Daimon*.

The random and coincidental events that shape the lives and fortunes of these characters show the *Body of Fate* at work. The intimate rendezvous between John Bond and Mary Bell is seen by Robartes, and their future is fated. Yet the *Will* is also at work: Daniel O'Leary and John Duddon take action in their search for moments of passionate intensity. While the pupils as types are two-dimensional (Huddon as the blunt man of action, Duddon as the cowardly artist, Denise as the *femme fatale*), note that when Robartes asks each of them what they want to talk about, they all seek something other than their professions (or natures). Denise will not speak of Love, nor Duddon of Art, nor Huddon of War. They each need a contrary (a *Mask*) to become what they ought to be. Yeats defines personality as the *Will* analyzed in relation to the *Mask* (*CW13* 19; *AVA* 20; cf. *AVB* 86). Personality, he insists, "no matter how habitual, is a constantly renewed choice" (*CW13* 18; *AVA* 18; cf. *AVB* 84). The fruit of contrary strife and interaction can be seen in the relationship of Aherne and Robartes. While Robartes accuses Aherne of remaining the same—imprisoned in his Christian beliefs—Aherne is tempted by the other man's mystical wisdom and savors being "but a free man for a moment" (*CW13* lxiii; *AVA* xxii).<sup>30</sup>

Finally, Yeats allows a glimpse of the "Moments of Crisis" to break through in the narrative of Denise de L'Isle Adam. She remembers the exact moment of the precise day:

“between twelve and one on the 2nd June last year,” “because on that night I met the one man I shall always love” even though Duddon is not able to consummate sexual union (*AVB* 42). This is a life-altering event, a Critical Moment when Denise learns “that admiration is not necessary to love” (*YVP2* 330). Duddon, for his part in this first of his critical encounters, desires to be chosen (*YVP2* 330).

Whether they be concord and discord, *primary* and *antithetical*, objective and subjective, solar and lunar, or male and female, Yeats's contraries in *A Vision B* operate consistently in terms of the automatic script and *A Vision A*. They are complementary, Blakean contraries, not binary negatives. They need each other for completion. They need each other for their function and identity. They are bound by attraction and by strife, but only together do they experience what Yeats calls the power of the terrestrial condition where (and where alone) “the extreme of choice [is] possible, full freedom” (*CW5* 25; *Myth* 356).

Perhaps tongue in cheek, or even enjoying a private joke, Yeats draws this remarkable group of characters at the same moment to the same place, Robartes's home, now the hub and center of a potentially history-altering event. Robartes has lived years as a solitary but hosts in his temporary “nest” a momentary family that will allow Mary Bell to mother another's egg (a swan egg, significantly). Thus the “Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends” are not intended to camouflage the origins of the symbolic system but to connect to “Leda” in the closing sections of *A Vision B*.

### Leda and Her Egg

Love relationships, passionate acts, prophetic dreams and isolated individuals are all brought together under Robartes's roof—the man who calls the universe “a great egg that turns inside-out perpetually without breaking its shell” (*AVB* 33; cf. *CW13* lxiv & 142; *AVA* xxiii & 175). In the Platonic tradition, the egg serves two purposes. First, as a sphere it symbolizes eternity and infinity as well as life and rebirth. The egg also serves as an image of the original unity of male and female, when (according to Plato) they enjoyed the wholeness that men and women seek to regain over the course of their earthly lives.<sup>31</sup> But just as sexual union is the symbol of the “solved antinomy” but not the solution itself (*AVB* 52), the egg is a symbol of ultimate reality that, in itself, cannot be known.<sup>32</sup> There may be times, however, when such unity is *felt*, as described in “Among School Children,” when the speaker (Yeats at sixty) remembers a tale told by Maud Gonne (his Helen, that “daughter of the swan” with “a Ledaean body”) about a tragedy from her childhood:

...and it seemed that our two natures blent  
 Into a sphere from youthful sympathy,  
 Or else, to alter Plato's parable,  
 Into the yolk and white of the one shell. (*VP* 443; *CW1* 220)

“Among School Children,” which follows “Leda and the Swan” in *The Tower* (separated by a single poem), creates an image of “both nuns and mothers” who foster children without being able to foresee their future or fate. The speaker is now “a comfortable kind of old scarecrow”—unimaginable to the mother who held him on her lap. But “even daughters of the swan can share / Something of every paddler's heritage” (*VP* 444; *CW1* 220). Infant

to scarecrow, paddler to swan, bole to blossom of the chestnut tree: all are stages in the continuum of terrestrial existence.

In the same way, Mary Bell cannot foresee the future of this unhatched egg nor the fate unleashed upon the world when the new "paddler" emerges. Not so with Leda's first two eggs and her offspring that shaped history: Helen ("The broken wall, the burning roof and tower") and Clytemnestra ("Agamemnon dead").<sup>33</sup> In Yeats's words, "Love and War came from the eggs of Leda" (*AVB* 67). Leda's third egg, like the cuckoo's, will be hatched by another, having come into the nest of Michael Robartes. And just as the other two eggs worked to the destruction of the classical age, this new hatchling will emerge to advance the coming subjective age—the antinomy of the Christian epoch. It is entirely fitting, therefore, that "Leda" opens the section of *A Vision B* entitled "Dove or Swan."

Written seven years before "Stories of Michael Robartes," the "Leda" poem marks the fruition of the Robartes preamble. Joined by the image of the egg, "Stories" and "Leda" bookend Yeats's extensive explanation of the workings of *Tinctures* and phases. Much like "Stories," "Leda" represents how the *Tinctures* operate (male and female, objective and subjective) but on a historical level—when civilizations come to an end. But "Leda" (like the characters in "Stories") personalizes the oppositional dynamic of the Great Wheel. The "brute" has a name, the victim a face. Ages and cultures rise and fall—not from mechanistic forces, but from selfish desires (Zeus) or personal choices (Mary Bell). The supernatural world, Yeats insists, "can only express itself in personal form, because it has no epitome but man" (*CW3* 201; *Au* 248).

In depicting the mythic story, Yeats opts for the version of Leda as an unwilling victim. Zeus's rape of Leda enacts a condition of disproportion: the divine brutalizes the human, the masculine/*primary* dominates the feminine/*antithetical* to the point of diminishing her will and her dignity. There is no "equal balance" of contraries that should characterize sexual intercourse (*YVP2* 289). I have argued elsewhere that Leda is victimized both by Zeus and the narrator/seer, who is unable to transcend his solar/objective nature and understand Leda's feminine/subjective experience.<sup>34</sup> As seer, the narrator foresees the consequences of this event: "The broken wall, the burning roof and tower / And Agamemnon dead" (*AVB* 267). He registers the physical violence and the perverted design of the swan. Yet in the face of such horror, the seer is confounded by Leda herself. How can her "terrified vague fingers" push the swan away, the narrator wonders. Certainly she must "feel the strange heart beating where it lies."<sup>35</sup> Is this only a moment of violence, or is it a moment of illumination for the woman? In one sense, the question is possible only because the seer remains on the outside of Leda's experience, objective and detached. His very objectivity pulls a veil across the woman's experience.

Here we understand why Yeats depicts rape and what he means in doing so. The seer needs Leda's perspective; he needs to be in touch with the antithetical principle in order to achieve complete understanding of the past, present, and future.

Recall now O'Leary's description of Robartes, the man who "sees what is going to happen, between sleeping and waking at night, or in the morning before they bring him his early cup of tea" (*AVB* 35). In his role as seer, Robartes functions as a counterpoint to the narrator in "Leda." He has a vision of Mary Bell and John Bond in their romantic rendezvous. That is, he knows they have coupled (like this narrator knows Zeus and Leda were conjugally engaged). He then "sees" Mary's future (chosen "by divine wisdom") in

terms of her role in mothering Leda's egg. As *antithetical* man, the danger is that Robartes might see "all reflected in himself" (VP 824; CW1 659) and so reduce Mary Bell's life to his own purpose. But there is no evidence of violation here. She (like George Yeats) freely embraces this historic task.

There is, of course, a more important parallel. Yeats, too, is a seer, particularly in the "Dove or Swan" section of *A Vision B*. He seeks to read the present in order to foresee the future. When he looks at contemporary events, he sees exactly what the narrator in "Leda" sees: brutal violence and powerless victims. As he ponders the ruin of his own age, Yeats recognizes a familiar story from the classical world:

In practical life one expects the same technical inspiration, the doing of this or that not because one would, or should, but because one can, consequent licence, and with those "out of phase" anarchic violence with no sanction in general principles (CW13 175; AVA 212; deleted in AVB).

But there is a difference in how (or what) they see. The "Leda" narrator will not access the feminine because he is too objective, too solar. As an *antithetical* poet, Yeats is not so limited because he transcends his own time, with its materialistic "murderousness"—an age when men "own nothing but their blind, stupefied hearts" (VP 370; CW1 163; CW5 3; *Myth* 324). Yeats escapes from such a "self made prison" by being open to the feminine (YVP3 194). Or more precisely, he embraces the feminine, both as a real, eminent feature of temporal reality and as the fabric of his own bi-gendered psyche. Although Yeats is not "of Ledaean kind" (VP 444; CW1 220), he can still empathize with the feminine, enjoying a "blent" perspective impossible for the seer in "Leda" to attain. Underscored is the importance of wholeness, of complete vision that comes only when masculine and feminine are open to each other and free to function as complements. Yeats also demonstrates the consequences when objectivity and masculinity are unleashed and unrestrained, and gender relations are reduced to irresolvable enmity.

In his essay "Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places," Yeats draws attention to Plutarch's vision of daimons ("souls of enlightened men") returning to the earth as "schoolmasters of the living" (CW5 65; *Ex* 59). W. B. and George Yeats are thus among school children in their quest in the automatic script for mystical wisdom. So schooled, gender interaction became the bedrock of Yeats's marriage, of his symbolic system, of his vision of the human experience, and of *A Vision B*.

What might his view of gender offer to contemporary feminist perspectives? Yeats advances a bold kind of feminism for this day. Yeats does not see masculine and feminine as separate subjectivities, nor are they static, essentialist attributes. Instead, masculine and feminine are described as complementary actions performed in relation to each other—inseparable, fluid, adamant in their bond.<sup>36</sup> Because of the dynamic quality of these contraries, the human being is not trapped in a monolithic experience, a single-sexed mind, a static state of being. The self, Yeats argued, is a constantly renewed choice, a choice exercised culturally, spiritually, rhetorically, that works toward freedom and completion. These are heady purposes for any poet's lifework. But freedom and completion are possible when men and women are open to their bi-gendered natures.

The implications of a gendered Daimonology are profound. As a male, Yeats is an integrated and complex human being, reflective of that androgynous whole in the tradition of Platonic and Hermetic lore. United to his *Daimon*, he is never solely male, for she engages him in passionate and ceaseless contact with the feminine embedded within his own being. Yeats's understanding of this union opened doors to a new kind of poetry, what I have called his "double-voiced verse" (see especially the series "A Woman Young and Old" and Crazy Jane) wherein he could, out of his own nature, speak in the voice of a woman.<sup>37</sup> The presence of his contra-sexual *Daimon* gives him the authority to write as a woman, a radical notion that spills over into fundamental issues of philosophy, metaphysics, psychology, and sociology.<sup>38</sup> The function and identity of masculine and feminine cannot be manifested or identified apart from the other. As contraries/complements, masculine and feminine will experience conflict, true, but are the only path to harmony (e.g., Unity of Being). Masculine and feminine are equal in value, although the subjective female can see this more easily than the objective male.<sup>39</sup>

What I find increasingly compelling in Yeats's worldview is affirmation of the self, his unyielding sense of each individual as an "entire being" with his/her own unified identity. "No human soul is like any other human soul," he writes (*Myth* 68; *M2005* 46). No matter which of the twenty-eight phases he lives,<sup>40</sup> whether he returns as a man or a woman, Yeats is still Yeats: "I am still I" (*YVP2* 330). Human beings are sites of tremendous truths: "The wholeness of the supernatural world can only express itself in personal form, because it has no epitome but man..." (*CW3* 201; *Au* 248). Just as individual human beings signify the supernatural, the concrete other is the only legitimate subject of love (*Ex* 400; *VPI* 806; *CW2* 698).<sup>41</sup> It is one's lover who "divines the secret self of the other" and refuses "to believe in the mere daily self" and so creates the *Mask*, the self one strives to be (*CW3* 343; *Au* 464).

Gender is central to Yeats's world view. It comprises the "great movement" of the spheres that shapes history and civilizations as well as relations between men and women, human host and Daimon. The warring attraction between those great complements—"universal masculine & feminine in soul"—evokes the paradoxical tensions and creative energies of temporal existence. "For the first time I understand human life," Yeats wrote as he worked through his drafts of *A Vision* (*L* 644). Such understanding was, for Yeats, grounded in gender.

## Notes

1. In a letter to John O'Leary in July of 1892.
2. Janis Tedesco Haswell, "The Sexual Dynamic of Yeats's *Vision*," *YAACST12* (1994) 102–118; Margaret Mills Harper, *Wisdom of Two: The Spiritual and Literary Collaboration of George and W. B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996).
3. In the particular instance that Yeats narrates, his own contemplation of a symbol yielded mental images he could not control. But his thoughts "came slowly" (*CW3* 161; *Au* 185).
4. This note to *The Wind Among the Reeds* is drawn from Coleridge's *Table Talk* (23 July 1827): "The man's desire is for the woman; but the woman's desire is rarely other than for the desire of the man." See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Table Talk II*, ed. Carl Woodring (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 70. The idea was used by W. B. Yeats in various places, such as in his essay "Discoveries": "...deliberate beauty is like a woman always desiring man's desire" (*CW4* 198; *E&I* 271, "The Tree of Life"). Also cited *WWB1* 281.
5. Their spiritual union dated back to 1898. In a letter to Yeats on 26 July 1908, Gonne described her dream of that union: "We melted into one another till we formed only *one being*, a being greater than ourselves who felt all & knew all with double intensity..." She rejected Yeats's view that their spiritual marriage would

increase physical desire: "This troubles me a little—for there was nothing physical in that union—Material union is but a pale shadowed compared to it..." (*G-YL* 257). On 12 November 1909 she reminded him: "the love whose physical realization we deny here will unite us in another life" (*G-YL* 282).

6. From March to June 1919 the bulk of the automatic script dialogues was dedicated to exploring the Moments of Crisis. Initiatory and Critical Moments are "the expression of the [Great] Wheel in the life of sexual passion" (*YVP3* 111). Individuals experience several Initiatory Moments (originally called Impregnating Moments), whereby they are freed from deception (*YVP2* 350). The two Critical Moments of life complete the "moral rescue" (*YVP2* 329) that begins with the Initiatory Moments. The function of Critical Moments is to eliminate cruelty and deception from relations of passion (*YVP3* 113) and can culminate in what Yeats called the *Beatific Vision* (*CW13* 140; *AVA* 172). Moments of Crisis occur by necessity with no apparent means of escape. They describe intense and most often painful experiences (what Yeats calls "shock") that serve the hidden purpose of the *Daimons* and force the individual to undergo a process of self-illumination. Because the object of the Moments of Crisis is spiritual revelation, sexual relations might be unhappy, but they are not "permanently tragic" (*YVP2* 317).
7. Yeats is instructed that by "contrasts" the spirits mean "contraries" (*YVP1* 406).
8. Having studied Swedenborg, Yeats was familiar with his sense of complementarity, as explained in *The Delights of Wisdom Pertaining to Conjugal Love* (1768) tr. A. H. Searle (London: Swedenborg Society, 1891 [*WBGYL* 2050; *YL* 2038]), section 56; Pastor Becker quotes a passage from this in *Seraphita* as a part of a lengthy digest of Swedenborg's doctrines, see Honoré de Balzac, tr. Clara Bell, *Seraphita* (London: J. M. Dent, 1897 [cf. *WBGYL* 106; *YL* 106]), 64: "The Lord took the beauty and the grace of man's life and infused them into woman. When man is disunited from this beauty and elegance of life, he is austere, sad, or savage; when he is reunited to them, he is happy, he is complete." In gender theory, the closest approximation of Yeats's vision of gendered interdependence is Ivan Illich's concept of "ambiguous complementarity" wherein male and female "fit" each other like left and right hands, although they see through different eyes, think, speak, and love in disparate ways. See Ivan Illich, *Gender* (New York: Pantheon Books 1982), 76. See also Wayne Chapman, "Authors in Eternity: Some Sources of Yeats's Creative Mysticism," *YAI5* (2002) 288–312.
9. Written to Olivia Shakespear, 21 February 1933. See Yeats's "Supernatural Songs" for Ribh's vision of spirits who do not touch, "but whole is joined to whole; / For the intercourse of angels is a light / Where for its moment both seem lost, consumed" (*VP* 555; *CW1* 290). Yeats borrows from Swedenborg's philosophy, which describes the marriages of angels, which produce no children but unite the understanding of the man with the will of the woman. They become one flesh on earth and one spirit in heaven. See Swedenborg, *Conjugal Love*, sections 44 ("Second Memorable Relation") and 19; Balzac, *Seraphita*, 64–65.
10. Curtis Bradford, *Yeats at Work* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), 6.
11. Cit. Connie K. Hood, "The Remaking of *A Vision*," *YAACTSI* (1983) 37.
12. The poem opens Book II in *A Vision A*. It encapsulates the very purpose of *A Vision A* by posing the question: what is the source and nature of absolute truth sought for centuries by the greatest philosophers? The poem narrates Kusta ben Luka's insight, one discovered with the help of his new bride: the highest truths and deepest mysteries of reason and faith are contained in and expressed through the lover's body. Wisdom of the body (in this case, the female body specifically) transcends mere book-wisdom because it does not vanish like words traced in the sand. Nor does it petrify from neglect like the manuscripts of Parmenides nor slip from the hands of indifferent, lovelorn youths who consult the love songs of Sappho. The wisdom of the body withstands the shifting sands of a changing world, as the subsequent section of *A Vision A* suggests. In the opening pages of *A Vision B*, Yeats retells the story of his wife's experience in "A Packet for Ezra Pound" in a way that seems to elide George's contribution to the philosophic system Yeats is about to unveil.
13. In the section of the 1925 edition entitled "The Gates of Pluto," Yeats extends this interaction between male and female into his description of the afterlife. Yeats describes the correlation between the four *Faculties* and the four *Principles* of the departed soul (*Husk, Passionate Body, Spirit* and *Celestial Body*) interacting as the soul works its way through its six stages. Yeats spends a great deal of time describing how men and women must revisit their loves in the process he calls *Shiftings*. The purpose of *Shiftings* is a moral one—to "exhaust good and evil themselves," which can only be done by separating what truly belongs to the *primary* or *anti-theoretical* self "from that which seems to" (*CW13* 190; *AVA* 230). The stage brings back the total spectrum of sexual relationships, from light loves that involved only passing experiences of pleasure or pain, to strong loves that encompassed happy or tragic circumstances (*CW13* 190; *AVA* 231). As the soul grapples with these past loves, it enters into a state of intellectual ecstasy wherein truth turns the "most horrible tragedy" into "a figure in a dance" (*CW13* 190; *AVA* 231). Men and women are thereby vehicles of each other's advancement into a more integrated, spiritualized state that is signified by Yeats's favorite

- image of wholeness, the dance itself. In the 1937 edition, Yeats again describes the stages of afterlife but does not mention the importance of interaction between the sexes during *Shiftings*. It remains a stage of moral purification but is not tied directly to coming to terms with past lovers.
14. "The Gates of Pluto," which follows "Dove or Swan" in *A Vision A* (a section retitled "The Soul in Judgment" and repositioned before "Dove or Swan" in *A Vision B*), contained intrusions or corrections to Yeats's text attributed to Aherne. These were also deleted or recast as notes.
  15. In her biography of George Yeats, Ann Saddlemyer argues that George, by nature a reserved person, did not want to be regarded by the public as a freak if the truth of the origins of the system became widely known (*BG* 406). Minimizing her role might deceptively position W. B. Yeats as sole author, but it successfully veils the script experiments and thereby avoids an explicit defense of the spirit guides and mystical experience (405).
  16. See Paul and Harper's detailing of the background of these characters that Yeats defined "more as principles of mind than as actual personages" (*VP* 803, note to *The Wind Among the Reeds* [1899]; cit. *CW13* 221–22 n31). Aherne may have been based on Lionel Johnson, Robartes on MacGregor Mathers (*CW13* 221–22 n31 and 222–23 n36) or on George Russell (*CL2* 60 n3). Yeats himself says that the names Robartes and Aherne came from two friends, one of whom was recently returned from Mesopotamia (*VP* 821, notes to *Later Poems* [1922]). He remembers reading the name "John Aherne" in a list of men involved in a disturbance at the staging of *Playboy of the Western World* (*VP* 825). The name "John" here is confusing, but Yeats noted that "John Aherne is either the original Owen Aherne or some near relation of the man that was" (*VP* 821). The phase of Robartes is also debated. See n30.
  17. Hazard Adams, *The Book of Yeats's Poems* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1990), 128.
  18. In the notes for *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), Yeats called Robartes "the pride of the imagination brooding upon the greatness of its possessions" (*VP* 803).
  19. Adams, *The Book of Yeats's Poems*, 127.
  20. Yeats both extends and renounces the deception in the closing pages of "Stories" by concluding the chapter with a letter addressed to Yeats himself from John Aherne, Owen's brother. This Aherne has preserved his brother's diaries along with the record made by Robartes's pupils and Duddon's narrative. He also possesses Yeats's own unpublished book on the symbol system based on the automatic script. Aherne explains the automatic writing experiment as "as process of remembering" (*AVB* 54).
  21. William O'Donnell. *A Guide to the Prose Fiction of W. B. Yeats* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 139, quoting Yeats's 1930 diary (*Ex* 333).
  22. Morton Irving Seiden, *William Butler Yeats: The Poet as a Mythmaker 1865–1939* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1975), 108.
  23. Huddon, whose life's work is war, is virtually silent and does not offer his own narrative.
  24. F. A. C. Wilson, "Patterns in Yeats's Imagery: *The Herne's Egg*," *Modern Philology* (August 1957), 48.
  25. *A Guide to the Prose Fiction of W. B. Yeats*, 140, 141.
  26. In a letter to Olivia Shakespeare, W. B. Yeats made the symbolism clear: "[George] got a piece of paper, and talking to me all the while so that her thoughts would not affect what she wrote, wrote these words (which she did not understand) 'with the bird' (Iseult) 'all is well at heart'..." (*L* 633).
  27. Matthew DeForrest notes that just as Denise selects Huddon (the warrior) as her lover, Maud Gonne married MacBride rather than the artistic Yeats. See "Stories of Michael Robartes," *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 18: 2 (1992), 53.
  28. This "task" commissioned by Robartes points back to the messages of the spirit-guides in the automatic script, foretelling that the new Messiah will come somewhere between the years 2000 and 2100. According to the spirits, the avatar would have a father and a mother and would be physically born, like Christ himself (*YVP1* 483). The avatar would be from the "fifth generation" of a family associated with the mountain of Ben Bulben. This is significant—Yeats himself being from the "fourth" generation of such a family. Yeats struggles to clarify their message:  
 You mean that a spiritual being is about to manifest not necessarily through one two or 3 people, perhaps through many, & that the completion of this philosophy through self & medium [W. B. and George Yeats] is part of this beings work. (*YVP2* 70).  
 The spirits answer: "Yes." That is, the dialogues conducted between W. B. and George Yeats and the spirit guides, as well as the subsequent system discovered by this inquiry, will prepare the way for the new avatar. Moreover, this new Messiah will be *their* physical child, a son born to them, marking the fifth generation of W. B. Yeats's family to have grown up near the mountain of Ben Bulben (*YVP3* 83, 338).
  29. Alternately, the third might be Lady Gregory, Olivia Shakespeare, or Florence Farr rather than George

(*YVP1* 525–26 n112). Since these are cuckoos and not water birds, they would generally be associated with emotion in one instance, in another intellectual love (*YVP1* 251). In the script, the speckled bird symbolizes the *Daimon* of Maud Gonne (*YVP2* 280), the white swan, daughter Anne Yeats's *Daimon*, the black eagle, son Michael Yeats's *Daimon* (*YVP1* 48, *YVP2* 386). Which is to say, birds are pervasive and far-ranging in their significance.

30. Matthew DeForrest offers a compelling argument about these characters embodying aspects of the Great Wheel. In terms of *Faculties*, there is O'Leary functioning as *Will* at Phase 20, Denise as *Mask* at Phase 6, Huddon as *Creative Mind* at Phase 10, and Huddon as *Body of Fate* at Phase 24. Counter to them is the other set of characters who function as *Principles*: Robartes as the *Spirit* at Phase 10, Aherne as the *Husk* at Phase 20, Bond as the *Celestial Body* at Phase 24, and Bell as the *Passionate Body* at Phase 6. See "Stories of Michael Robartes," *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 18:50–54.
31. Plato, *Symposium*, *Collected Works of Plato*, 4th Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 520.
32. James Olney, "Sex and the Dead: Daimones of Yeats and Jung," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 14.1 (1981), 56.
33. Many versions of the myth depict Leda as lying with her husband (King Tyndareus of Sparta) the same night that Zeus impregnated her. The result: two eggs, each hatching twins. The mortal children were Clytemnestra and Castor, the divine offspring Helen and Pollux.
34. For a more detailed version of my discussion of "Leda" see Chapter 7 in *Pressed Against Divinity* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997).
35. In the second edition, Yeats changes this line from an assertion, ending in a semi-colon, as in *A Vision A*, to a question: "...And how can body, laid in that white rush, / But feel the strange heart beating where it lies? (*AVB* 267).
36. I use "performed" here with Judith Butler in mind. Butler argues that gender is manifested or performed via a repetition of acts that are socially/culturally inscribed. Such scripts allow gender to be manifested through performativity (and it alone). To some extent, Yeats anticipates Butler's sense of gender performativity since men and women operate in oppositional behavior, perhaps most clearly seen in the Initiatory and Critical Moments but also captured in (for instance) the image of the dance ("Crazy Jane Grown Old Looks at the Dancers"). Butler would not share Yeats's sense of masculine and feminine as *Tinctures* or substantive identities, however. See Judith Butler, *Gender Troubles: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990). Perhaps more accommodating to Yeats's position is Seyla Benhabib's notion of soft or interactive universalizability, wherein the self is a rational agent operating in a network of relationships and dependencies. See Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
37. Note how different Yeats's justification is in contrast to other approaches. In Thais E. Morgan's edited collection of essays discussing what occurs when a man writes in the voice of a woman, each contributor appeals to a different theory of gender. The act itself receives a wide variety of labels: Morgan calls it an "imagined perspective" (1) and "female impersonation" (193); Deborah Rubin labels it "ventriloquistic illusion" (14); Peter F. Murphy refers to it as "feminine discourse" (83); Beatrice Durand equates cross-gendered verse with the sociological term "cross-dressing" but regards this as an act of deception, when a man assumes "the false identity of a woman" (90). Christopher Benfey speaks of "bisexual poetry," but he sees this as ambiguously gender-marked text rather than an explicitly gendered act (125, 128). The common thread in these essays is an assumption of fictionalization laced with the suspicion of duplicity. That is, cross-gendered verse is a rhetorical sleight of hand belying the truth of the writer's gender identity. See Thais E. Morgan, ed., *Men Writing the Feminine: Literature, Theory, and the Question of Genders* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).
38. This suggests a sort of hybridity as defined by Homi Bhabha, that is, identity that crosses cultural boundaries insofar as no man is entirely or purely masculine, no woman entirely or purely feminine. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
39. Hazard Adams, *The Book of Yeats's Poems*, 30.
40. Sexual union also pertains to incarnations at Phases 1 and 15, e.g., "If the Spirit at 15 be a man he must give the 'Kiss of Death' to some woman," (*CW13* 199; *AVA* 242).
41. "Concrete other" is Seyla Benhabib's term for a unique individual with a distinct life-history. To treat another as "concrete" rather than "generalized" means to relate in terms of the "norms of equity and complementary reciprocity." See Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 159.

## ESOTERICISM AND ESCAPE

by C. Nicholas Serra

“Magicians do exist,” declared Marcel Mauss in 1902, and Yeats certainly agreed.<sup>1</sup> However, as Mauss also notes, magical rites “are always considered unauthorized, abnormal and, at the very least, not highly estimable,” and this assertion has certainly proved true within the community of Yeatsians.<sup>2</sup> Historically, the study of Yeats’s occultism has been, to use a deliberate pejorative, the ill-favored stepchild in an otherwise completely canonical and academically orthodox field. Outright mockery of all that “mumbo-jumbo” has not been out of bounds.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this was the natural reaction of rational academics faced with texts whose complex esoteric metaphors require “a Rose or secret explanation,”<sup>4</sup> for as Kathleen Raine asserts: “The merely academic study of magical symbolism may be likened to the analysis of musical scores by a student who does not know that the documents he meticulously annotates are merely indications for the evocation of music from instruments of whose very existence he is ignorant.”<sup>5</sup>

What, then, can be said about that Everest of the Yeatsian canon, *A Vision* and its horrible occult system of gyres within phases within cycles? It is clearly an esoteric document, in every sense of the word “a book for specialists only” (*L* 700): composed by two Golden Dawn adepts, dedicated to Golden Dawn adepts, and reserved for their pragmatic use (*CW*13 lv; *AVA* xii).<sup>6</sup>

For example, one of key cabalistic tropes behind the foundational 1925 edition, the archer who shows the way of the soul between sun and moon, appeared to Yeats—in August 1896, not November 1917—after a nine-day evocation of the “lunar power,” and Yeats elucidated this vision using the Order’s cabalistic symbolism, based on information obtained from Wynn Westcott, one of the Golden Dawn’s three founders (*CW*3 280ff & 485; *Au* 372ff & 576; *Mem* 100ff).

Moreover, Yeats’s original expositor for the system, Michael Robartes, is presented as the only true knower of its secrets, and he is certainly Yeats’s mask of an idealized 8°=3° Golden Dawn adept “resurrected” from “Rosa Alchemica.”<sup>7</sup> Yet without the shared curricular knowledge of every Golden Dawn adept that Yeats broadly enumerates in Section XIII of “A Packet for Ezra Pound,” the symbolism of his metaphysical algebra is seemingly arbitrary, harsh, and difficult, easily confused with that distasteful “popular spiritualism” that “clings to all that is vague and obvious in popular Christianity” (*AVB* 23–24).

Indeed, Christina Stoddart, one of the later Chiefs of the Golden Dawn’s Amoun Temple, apparently had no trouble recognizing esoteric elements in the drafts of Yeats’s “philosophy” (*YGD* 144). In fact, Yeats corresponded with members of the Golden Dawn’s Hermes Temple in Bristol about *A Vision*’s symbolism at least through 1931 (*YGD* 154). The *Vision Papers* themselves are littered with passing references to the Order and its teachings. Finally, and perhaps most telling of all, in 1925 Yeats revised “The Two Trees” (*VP* 134–36; *CW*1 44–45), his early didactic verse depicting the cabalistic Tree of Life, such that his own system of gyres and phases is clearly represented

as existing *within* this framework: the schematic diagram depicting the entire cabalistic universe, and the unifying glyph of the Golden Dawn magical system.<sup>8</sup>

None of this is news. Yeats explicitly apologized to those readers who came to the 1925 edition “through some interest in my poetry and in that alone,” although this apology does nothing to elucidate his pragmatic esoteric subtext *in se* (*CW13* lv; *AVA* xii). Similarly, in the original dialogic introduction, Owen Aherne begs for an explanation of the system’s “general spiritual purpose” that is never provided (*YVP4* 26–27). Without it, academic critics have likewise been stymied, lost like Aherne in the complexity of the system’s detail, stonewalled by unassailable passive constructions.<sup>9</sup> Typically, Yeats himself steadfastly refuses to explain,<sup>10</sup> and his remarks in “The End of the Cycle” (and “Vacillation”) suggest not only that he *could not* explain, but that, in the end, he himself failed to achieve some unstated, pragmatic task (*AVB* 301).

Clearly the cabalistic and esoteric teachings of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn—transmitted by the initiated for the initiated—must in some way underpin the system and provide a context for its hypothetical utility that is distinct from mere “metaphors for poetry” (*AVB* 8). How, then, is the uninitiated academic to read it in an initiated context? Why has no esoteric methodology for reading yet been proposed, despite the best efforts of those formidable scholars of the last generation who opened up the study of Yeats’s Golden Dawn activities in relation to his poetic paradigm—George Mills Harper, Kathleen Raine, Richard Finneran, John Kelly, Warwick Gould, Walter Kelly Hood, William Murphy *et al*?

Furthermore, it is clear that this implied esotericism must in some way explain a new understanding of the body that is unique to Yeats alone, as *A Vision* is the fruit of original research, however esoteric, and the system’s exclusive focus on the soul is at odds with Yeats’s treatment of the body-soul dilemma throughout the poetic corpus. In particular, it fails to address how “the soul’s ultimate, particular freedom, and the soul’s disappearance in God” mesh with Yeats’s other stated aim of “restoring” the body, for according to Michael Robartes, the antinomies are not resolved by death (*AVB* 52).<sup>11</sup> And where, in the end, is the magic—the initiated processes that undermine ordinary causality?

What follows is not, unfortunately, the complete outline of an esoteric methodology for reading Yeats’s occult symbolism based on the Golden Dawn’s Cabala. Space constraints alone preclude such an undertaking. Instead, what I hope to provide is a brief summary of those suppositions in the primary criticism that have prevented one from being developed previously, a critique of the flaws in the most commonly used source materials, a prospectus of the materials that are potentially available to remedy those flaws and, in the end, an interpolation of the Robartesian “escape” within the context of Yeats’s tasks as an Exempt Adept 7°=4° of the Golden Dawn’s Inner Order.

Obviously, before one can ask the question, “How does Yeats’s system fit within the broader context of the Golden Dawn’s ‘magical’ system?” one first has to understand what the Golden Dawn was, in itself, as an esoteric or occult organization.

Although the history of the Order has been retold variously and at length, the definitive version has yet to be written, and there exists a great deal of confusion about the “Golden Dawn” and its broader objectives as both have been described in innumerable thumbnail sketches and conflicting accounts. George Harper and most other critics of the 1970s leaned heavily upon Ellic Howe’s *Magicians of the Golden Dawn: A Documentary*

*History of a Magical Order, 1887–1923*, Francis King’s *Ritual Magic In England*, Israel Regardie’s *My Rosicrucian Adventure*, and some *extremely* dubious sources that include A.E. Waite’s *Shadows of Life and Thought* and Christina Mary Stoddart’s *Light-Bearers of Darkness*.<sup>12</sup> None of these is either free from inherent biases or 100% reliable, and thus all of the assumptions about the Golden Dawn in the primary scholarship need to be reexamined.

Fortunately, the comparative material available on the Golden Dawn as a whole has multiplied exponentially in the last three decades. Ritual documents from A. E. Waite’s schismatic, Christianized Holy Order of the Golden Dawn have seen publication, likewise certain papers from Robert Felkin’s Smaragdum Thalasses Temple No. 49 (New Zealand), as well as a miscellany of early Order lectures and documents by J. W. Brodie-Innes, Florence Farr, and MacGregor Mathers, many published by Darcy Kuntz in Holmes’s *Golden Dawn Studies Series*. Ithell Colquhoun’s biography *Sword of Wisdom: MacGregor Mathers and the Golden Dawn* appeared in 1975, and further biographical material—some brief, some compendious—is more generally available on the major figures surrounding the Order. In Yeats studies, of course, this includes not only Mary Greer’s *Women of the Golden Dawn*, but also R. A. Gilbert’s *A. E. Waite: Magician of Many Parts*, Alan Richardson’s *Priestess: The Life and Magic of Dion Fortune*, to say nothing of the available but as yet unpublished material from the Golden Dawn’s parent organization, the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*, held in the Yorke Collection at the Warburg Institute, and the not inconsiderable collection of the United Grand Lodge of England Library.<sup>13</sup>

In order to avoid retelling the complex history of the Order, its sister organizations and schismatic factions about which even exemplary scholars have made mistakes<sup>14</sup>—caught up in preconceptions, non-germane speculation about the origin and authenticity of the foundational documents, sidetracked by the farcical presentation of the so-called Revolt of the Adepts in 1900, outré magical duels, seemingly outrageous goings-on—I confine this discussion to a spare recitation of what the Order was and was not, *generally*. For those coming to the material for the first time, I would recommend beginning further reading with Mary Greer and Darcy Kuntz’s slim *The Chronology of the Golden Dawn*, and progressing cautiously afterward into the more detailed histories.<sup>15</sup>

At base, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was an initiatory body whose esoteric curriculum and rituals—its entire body of teaching—were structured around an adaptation of the cabalistic system of mystical Judaism. The Order’s ten (or twelve) grades were, with two exceptions, directly linked to sephiroth on the Tree of Life (see Figure 1). Members were promised occult knowledge in theory and practice. They were taught what amounts to a form of yoga, as well as other seemingly disjointed fragments of occult trivia and ritual gleaned from a variety of historical sources. The Cabala provided a symbol system, a paradigm for cross-referencing symbols, and several methods of esoteric exegesis that were applied to an otherwise objective curriculum of fairly exoteric material that was largely assessed through conventional examinations. However, we know from Yeats that it was more than “a mere society for experiment and research” (*YGD* 264). The ultimate aim of every adept was *gnosis* and eventual, perhaps literal, union with God. Most of what is overtly discussed in the surviving Order documents, however, is not *gnosis* but mere *episteme*, and it is unwise to mistake the object of meditation with either praxis or its result.

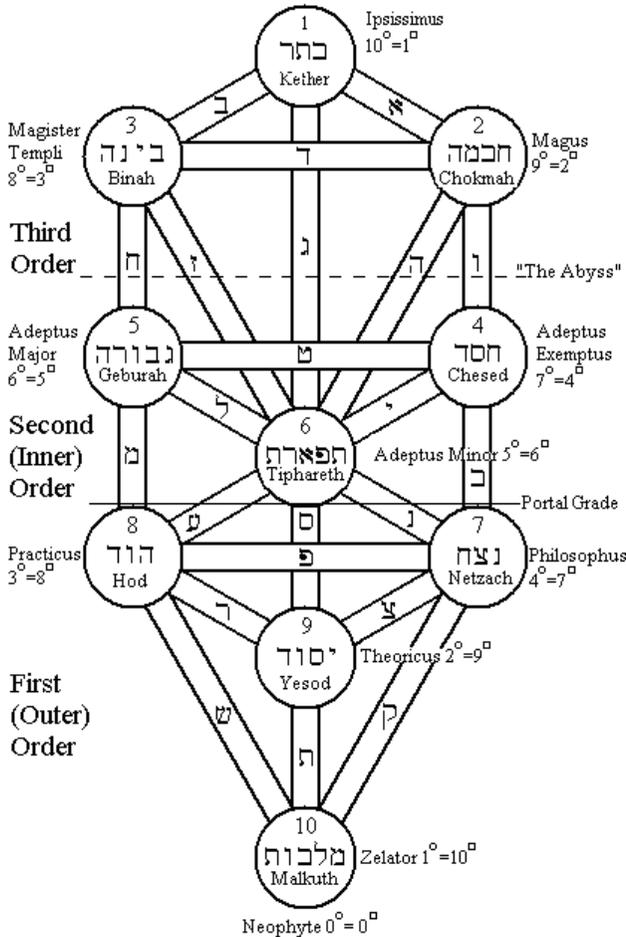


Figure 1  
Grade Structure of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

Specifically, the Golden Dawn was (somehow) chartered in 1888 by three Master Masons: Dr William Robert Woodman (who died in 1891), Dr William Wynn Westcott, and Samuel Liddell “MacGregor” Mathers. All three of these men were high-ranking members of the *Societas Rosicruciana In Anglia*, as well as other contemporary Masonic and fringe-Masonic bodies. A. E. Waite, Golden Dawn adept and sensationally ponderous occult journalist, described Westcott in particular as “a man whom you may ask by chance concerning some almost nameless Rite and it proves very shortly that he is either its British custodian or the holder of some high if inoperative office therein.”<sup>16</sup>

However, despite the Masonic affiliations of its founders, the Golden Dawn was in no way a Masonic body. It was not sex-segregated, and did not pretend to confer degrees that were equivalent to those of orthodox Craft Masonry; nor was extra-order involvement in Freemasonry either expected or required. Tellingly, Westcott himself was of the opinion that “The secrets of Occultism are...to some extent the secrets that Freemasonry

has lost.”<sup>17</sup> Further, it is clear that there were a number of Masons in the otherwise orthodox S.R.I.A. who were keenly interested in the practical side of alchemy, ritual magic, and astrology, as evidenced by F. L. Gardner’s *Catalogue Raisonné of Works on the Occult Sciences*, F. G. Irwin’s manuscript copy of *The Grimoire of Pope Honorius*, and Frederick Hockley’s alchemical *A Manual of a Rosicrucian Philos[ophus]*.<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, notwithstanding the assertions of such seminal Yeats scholars as Virginia Moore and George Mills Harper, the Golden Dawn was in no way a specifically Christian organization. True, the S.R.I.A. admitted only “Christian” Master Masons, at least nominally, and therefore the three founders of the Golden Dawn must have been Christian in some way, shape, or form. On the other hand, Westcott noted that while “the members of all true Rosicrucian Colleges have always been Christians,” these were not always of an “orthodox type” and tended to display an affinity for “Gnostic ideals.” His further claim that Rosicrucian societies can expose a “broader scheme of Christian teaching” also casts doubt upon any claim to doctrinal orthodoxy.<sup>19</sup>

Certainly the Golden Dawn’s Inner Order rituals dramatized the myth of “Christian” Rosenkreutz and the symbol of the Red Rose and Gold Cross. However, these were supported by the Hermetic foundation of the Outer Order rather than the reverse. Christian symbolism was admixed with and subsumed within a larger syncretistic context that was Hermetic, Gnostic, and pagan. In Flying Roll XV, “Man and God,” Westcott observes with tolerance that “Every shade of unorthodoxy is represented among us.”<sup>20</sup> Beyond Yeats’s later protestations that he was no “Christian man” (*VP* 503; *CWI* 256), I take as the final word Colquhoun’s statement that applications to the Matherses’ post-1900 “A. : O. : Lodge of the G.D. in the Outer,” to which Yeats considered sending students (see *YGD* 145–46), specified that applicants “must believe in the Gods, or at least in a Supreme Being.”<sup>21</sup>

This claim of a Christian foundation for the Order has gone hand in hand with the historical embarrassment of academics regarding the nature of Yeats’s “religion.” I would point out that trying to describe the Order as “Christian” simply introduces a question-begging red herring into any argument, a rhetorical strategy that has historically been used by those critics who wished to somehow normalize Yeats’s beliefs—in spite of the fact that no Christian denomination sanctions the practice of magic. Indeed, Yeats pointedly disavowed that short-lived, Christianized Golden Dawn faction led by A. E. Waite.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, although Yeats revolted against his one-time mentor and Order founder MacGregor Mathers in 1900, this was not because he and the London adepts discounted either Mathers’s magical teachings or his purported magical standing. Rather, they rebelled against his autocratic administration. Yeats speaks positively about Mathers’s magical system, if not always about Mathers himself, throughout his autobiographies and letters. I am in complete accord with Ithell Colquhoun who, in her analysis of the schismatic Golden Dawn factions, ultimately excludes Yeats’s from the truly dissident schismatic orders because he seems “so indelibly stamped with the GD sigil” that he is placed, in her account, “where he began, under Mathers’s aegis in *Isis-Urania*.”<sup>23</sup>

Beyond Mathers’s administrative foibles that led Yeats to put him “out of the Kaballa” in 1900 (*CL2* 514; cf. *L* 339), the most pressing questions for Yeats and the other members, both before and after 1900, seem to return always to the nature of the Golden Dawn’s highest adepts, its anonymous Secret Chiefs. Yeats’s answers to these questions, insofar as they can be divined, are particularly important to any reading of *A Vision*.

Were these highest adepts human individuals who had attained what the *Bhagavad Gita* calls *brahma-nirvana* (5:24–26), who would be free from the cycle of rebirth at death, their consciousness merging with the Infinite? Were they the discarnate souls of deceased initiates, such as the Egyptian adept “contacted” by Florence Farr’s Sphere Group from a fragment of cartonnage in the British Museum? Were they living adepts somehow accessing the knowledge of past incarnations? Were they just frauds, like the Horos couple who deceived Mathers and involved the Order in a sensational sex scandal? Were they individuals whose daimons had governed their souls so well that “through sacerdotal theurgy” they had yielded to a god?<sup>24</sup>

In short, were the three highest grades of the Golden Dawn’s hierarchy attainable to a mortal being, and how, and did one have to die first? Nobody knew, although the opinions of Helena Blavatsky and Karl von Eckartshausen seem to have swayed many.<sup>25</sup> What can be said is that, despite all these uncertainties, Yeats strove to master the highest grades available, and even after he resigned from active participation in the Order “amid quarrels caused by men,” still maintained, [*italics mine*] “I am confident from internal evidence that the rituals, *as I knew them*, were in substance ancient though never so in language unless some ancient text was incorporated” (*CW3* 454 n117; *Au* 579).

Lacking a mission statement couched in terms less vague than “seeking the light” or “initiation” or “apotheosis,” one can only say that generally the task of initiates seems to have been elevation into ever higher grades that were symbolically associated with cabalistic teachings about the makeup of the soul (cf. *CW13* liv–lv; *AVA* xi).

On the other hand, Yeats’s system, as presented in *A Vision*, is not like anything, specifically, in the Order’s rituals or Knowledge Lectures as most Yeatsians understand them, and in large part this is indicative of major flaws in the primary exegetical source used by the majority of scholars: Israel Regardie’s *The Golden Dawn* in its many editions.

Regardie joined the Hermes Temple of the Stella Matutina (Bristol) in 1933. He resigned in December of 1934, following his initiation into the highest of the sub-grades of the Adeptus Minor 5°=6°. Between 1937 and 1940 he published his Order papers in a four-volume edition, which has been expanded and revised many times since.<sup>26</sup> Yeats clearly had had misgivings about the Bristol group as early as 1919, albeit via his paranoid colleague Christina Stoddart (*YGD* 134–36), and Regardie was obviously allowed to rush through the grades. By his own account in *My Rosicrucian Adventure* (later *What You Should Know about the Golden Dawn*), the Order as Regardie knew it was in a state of extreme decadence. Moreover, he never attempted the two higher graders of the Inner Order (achieved by Yeats on 16 October 1914 and 24 April 1916), and frankly boasts of his ignorance: “I know absolutely nothing of this grade of Adeptus Major. And care less.”<sup>27</sup> Regardie’s texts in their various editions are clearly not coeval with Yeats. Furthermore, not only do they lack any instruction for the higher grades of the Inner Order, but they are incomplete in terms of the Order’s minor or unofficial curriculum, the “Flying Rolls” (although these are available in the later editions of Francis King’s *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic and Alchemy* and R. A. Gilbert’s *The Sorcerer and His Apprentice*). Like *A Vision* itself, Regardie’s stated audience is limited to practicing occultists who are expected to make sense of the system he presents through ritual practice.<sup>28</sup>

Further, in order to present “the whole system” he conflated his original texts, especially in the later editions, with materials from several bend-sinister branches of the Order, and adulterated all editions with his own essays inserted under his magical motto,

*Ad Majorem Adonai Gloriam*, as if they were original Order documents.<sup>29</sup> Likewise, the later Falcon Press editions include modern explanatory papers written by his friends and students. Worse, Regardie's text was compiled from what he admits to have been corrupt sources that he edited to suit his own late-breaking understanding of Order practices, heavily influenced by Reichian psychology. The grade rituals as he reproduces them have been, he says, "tampered with, in some cases unintelligently." In the course of his revisions he compounded this tampering, abbreviating and deleting "whole paragraphs"; sentences were "made more clear, the redundant use of many words eliminated" even "completely rewritten to render them more coherent."<sup>30</sup> Regardie summarily expunged papers that he judged antiquated or offensive, such as one on the symbolism of the twelve tribes of Israel. To pick just one other example, the instructions on clairvoyance are headed by the note, "this paper is compiled from several unofficial documents which were not sufficiently interesting to publish in unabridged form by themselves. Also several pieces of oral instruction are here included."<sup>31</sup> Finally, although Regardie's knowledge of Hebrew was undoubtedly superior to that of many of the founding Chiefs, numerous minor errors in the Hebrew orthography occur, especially in the paperback editions.

In short, Regardie's *Golden Dawn* is not designed for academic study, nor was it composed with Yeats scholars in mind. It cannot be said to represent the rituals as Yeats knew them, and it is a singular source. Of course, the only other early published sources for these documents—themselves far from perfect—are to be found in the volumes of Aleister Crowley's *Equinox*, and no reputable Yeatsian would reference *them*.<sup>32</sup>

Critics desperately require a text that does not yet exist: an edition of the Golden Dawn manuscripts as Yeats knew them, both complete and hopefully drawn exclusively from the manuscripts available in the Yeats Collection at the National Library of Ireland. Happily, the holdings of Yeats's occult papers include not only Yeats's own Order notebooks, but also the more legible copybooks of George Pollexfen, as well as typescripts made by George Yeats (who studied in the later Stella Matutina) and several other adepts. There seem to be some lacunae in the collection—I have not yet discovered a copy of the Adeptus Major grade ritual, for example.<sup>33</sup> However, in the main the majority of the documents seem to be present, many in multiple copies. Furthermore, in at least some cases, revisions that were made to the rituals over time—Yeats and Horniman jointly made some emendations in 1902—were written interlineally and as marginalia in copies from the 1890s, allowing scholars to study the Order teachings as they evolved, not simply as an artificially created monolith.

However, even assuming easy access to primary texts, Regardie's comment to his bastardized paper on clairvoyance points to another major deficiency that is less easy to remedy. No matter whose documents are used, the oral component of the Order's teaching—the pragmatic explanations of the otherwise recondite and rather opaque occult metaphors—is almost entirely lacking. How can this ever be recovered? And where, for the purposes of comparative context, are the records of experiments carried out by the early adepts along Golden Dawn principles? Only a handful have survived among the Flying Rolls. How can the materials contained in the *Vision Papers* be judged within the context of experiments carried out by Golden Dawn adepts without such materials?<sup>34</sup>

What is wanting is a teacher or, failing that, a reader's guide by an initiated author—with some very particular qualifications. Ideally, this individual should possess at least

Yeats's own magical standing (Adeptus Exemptus 7°=4° by the time of his marriage), preferably have been instructed by MacGregor Mathers himself or, at the very least, his wife Moira. Functionally, beyond being nearly 100 years old, he or she would have to be willing to divulge esoteric information—the Golden Dawn's overall system and objectives, its method of arranging symbols, its rules of esoteric grammar as it were—explained academically in violation of the Neophyte's oath of secrecy, and further be able to demonstrate that information as used in practice for comparison's sake.

Yeats himself is a terrible teacher. To return for a moment to Mauss, "Where religious rites are performed openly, in full public view, magical rites are carried out in secret.... And even if the magician has to work in public he makes an attempt to dissemble: his gestures become furtive and his words indistinct."<sup>35</sup> In short, as every Yeatsian must recognize, Yeats lies. He deceives, inveigles, and obfuscates. One has to remember his oath of secrecy about the particulars of the esoteric secrets of the manipulation of symbols he learned from Mathers. One recalls his statements in "Magic" that even that bland recitation revealed "more of the ancient secret" than many among his fellow students thought it right to tell, and that he expunged whole paragraphs that seemed to speak of "hidden things" (*CW* 40; *E&I* 51).

George Harper laments that "One could wish that [Miss Stoddart, as a Golden Dawn adept, however unstable] had commented further on the occult symbolism and philosophy she apparently recognised in *Four Plays for Dancers*, *The Wild Swans at Coole*, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, and *Four Years*"—to say nothing of "The Phases of the Moon" and the germs of Yeats's "philosophy" as expressed in the "Robartes Papers" (*YGD* 144). Of course, Stoddart didn't have to comment further; both she and Yeats were initiates. They had been taught a common system for arranging and studying the correspondence of symbols. They had a shared understanding that both had sworn to keep secret.

Fortunately, there is actually one source who fits the bill in every way: an adept coeval with Yeats, like Yeats also Mathers's protégé, who (unlike Yeats) kept meticulous records of his experiments and took pains to explain, explain, explain. Unfortunately, that one person is also the infamous Aleister Crowley.

In the critical canon Crowley is portrayed almost without exception as the renegade and oath-breaker who caused many of the Order's problems during the schism of 1900, but in 1900 it was Yeats, not Crowley, who was the renegade.<sup>36</sup> Crowley certainly broke his oath of secrecy—in 1909, which does not account for Yeats's antipathy in 1900, nor explain the continuing denunciation of academics, most of whom paradoxically *thank* Regardie for publishing his Golden Dawn papers.

What could have engendered such lasting antipathy in Yeats, a man who claimed to "understand people easily, easily sympathise with all kinds of character, easily forgive all kinds of defects. Apart from opinions which I judge too sternly, I scarcely judge people at all, am altogether lax in my attitude towards conduct" (*CW* 3 320; *Au* 432).<sup>37</sup> And was Yeats's antipathy based on anything that would preclude using Crowley's Golden Dawn documents and commentaries to fill in the practical gaps in *A Vision*—much as Marcus Blackden used knowledge from the Golden Dawn to facilitate his "translation" of the *Ritual of the Mystery of the Judgment of the Soul*?<sup>38</sup>

Doubtless there was little love lost between Yeats and Crowley, but as an occult teacher whose fundamental methodology is that version of the Cabala taught by MacGregor

Mathers, Crowley seems a spokesman for uninformed readers, the uninitiated. For example, though Crowley, as a Golden Dawn adept, undoubtedly understood Yeats's implied symbol patterns, he nevertheless complains in a review of *Shadowy Waters* of Yeats's taciturnity. "You [Yeats] peer into the darkly splendid world, the abyss of light—for it is light, to the seer—and you see [or at least show] but 'unintelligible images, unluminous, formless, and void.' Then you return and pose as one who has trodden the eternal snows.... Better abandon mysticism outright than this." He might also have said (as did he say to A. E. Waite), "Drop your eternal hinting, hinting, hinting, 'Oh what an exalted grade I have, if you poor dull uninitiated people would only perceive it!'"<sup>39</sup>

It is not my intention to attempt to rehabilitate Aleister Crowley's public reputation. However, it is certainly demonstrable that most of what Yeatsians "think" they know about Crowley is often distorted at best, and completely fabricated at worst. Beyond Crowley's status as Mathers's "favorite" at a time when Mathers was being ousted as chief of his own Order, Yeats's attitude stemmed from the fact that they were completely antithetical men in almost every respect—save perhaps in that both were "young, vain, self-righteous," and bent on proving themselves men of action (*CW3* 334; *Au* 454). Yeats, too, began by playing "at being a sage, a magician or a poet" and similarly chose Shelley's Alastor as his model (*CW3* 80; *Au* 64).<sup>40</sup> By all accounts, in 1900 the young Crowley was well on his way to out-Wildeing Wilde.<sup>41</sup> He was the stereotype, if not the epitome of the 1890s decadent.

One can well imagine what the struggling, sexually frustrated Yeats thought of Crowley in 1900. At 23, the younger man was funded by an allowance, and fresh from his sojourn at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he had violently shaken free of his strict Plymouth Brethren upbringing: reading forbidden English literature, indulging his admittedly multifaceted sexual appetites, rock climbing on holidays, and not bothering to sit for a degree. He is an odd mix of Shelley and Huysmans, a writer of tolerable technical verse if not good poetry, with an impressive memory and a formidable knowledge of both the biblical and classical canons.

Crowley spent lavishly for sumptuous, privately printed editions of his poetry and gemstone-encrusted ritual objects. He was keen to prove that "the Christianity of hypocrisy and cruelty was not true Christianity," or, as he also explains it, "I did not hate God or Christ, but merely the God and Christ of the people whom I hated."<sup>42</sup> Once in the Golden Dawn, he passed through the Outer Order's examinations and initiations with only the minimum time in-grade, and shared rooms with a member of the Inner Order from whom he certainly received advanced training beyond his standing. Crowley is often summarily dismissed as a "black Magician," but it is worth noting that this epithet was commonly used in *belle époque* occult circles for anyone with a different mystical ideology.<sup>43</sup> In short, the young Crowley was everything that Yeats was not, including a brilliant student of magic. He was not Mathers's favorite for nothing.

As an example, one gets an interesting view of Crowley from the post-schismatic "Statement Issued to Adepts by the Majority of the Council Feb 1901," perhaps the only Golden Dawn document where Crowley is mentioned in a complimentary way, albeit left-handedly, without the dignity of his Order motto, and only in passing. The main points addressed by the committee concerned examinations, secret sub-groups within the Order, and a certain laxity toward seniority that Mathers and Farr had tolerated but which

irked the senior adepts. The relevant passage begins: "A colour scheme of the 4 scales was given by the late chief in Paris to Jeh Aur [Allan Bennett] to Volo Noscere [George Cecil Jones] and to Crowley (all juniors). Sapientia [Florence Farr] had known it and had kept it secret for many years. Jeh Aur told her he had been told it was rece TcN.0d in vision by Vestigia [Moina Mathers]" (*YGD* 252).

The account tends to confirm that significant portions of the knowledge aTcN.ailable to the Inner Order adepts came from the Matherses' experiments (arguably foreshadowing Yeats's own later occult work). Also, the fact that Florence Farr had rece TcN.0d such knowl-

Yeats does on more than one occasion, ingenuously reveal that he has expunged whole paragraphs so as to leave readers wondering. Like Regardie, Crowley writes for an audience of practicing occultists, but unlike *The Golden Dawn*, Crowley's texts always elucidate the material with lengthy, first-order explanations that are as academically objective as the subject matter allows.

Moreover, Crowley imposes a hypertextual mode of reading on his audience through endless internal references to other works—many of them his own. Crowley maintained that his method of reading,

going from each author to those whom he quoted had a great advantage. It established a rational consecution in my research; and as soon as I reached a certain point the curves became re-entrant, so that my knowledge acquired a comprehensiveness which could never have been so satisfactorily attained by any arbitrary curriculum. I began to understand the real relation of one subject to another.<sup>45</sup>

His is certainly not an arbitrary curriculum, and it forces a cabalistic associational dialogue by constantly shifting ground and recontextualizing.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, Crowley escapes being a dictator, imposing a strictly Crowleian outlook on his readers, by emphasizing the distinction between specific particulars and the general cabalistic organizational system behind his commentary. As he told one student, “Never let your mind wander from the fact that your Qabalah is not my Qabalah; a good many of the things which I have noted may be useful to you, but you must construct your own system so that it is a living weapon in your hand,”<sup>47</sup> and another: “The gods that you quote are not at all those given in Liber Resh and I do not see why you should depart from the text, but if for some reason you find them more suited to your peculiar style of beauty, go ahead and heaven prosper you!”<sup>48</sup>

Crowley's subject in his lectures, essays, and didactic poetry is, at base, the same Golden Dawn system that informed Yeats, the same system that both learned directly from Macgregor Mathers and the Inner Order adepts of the 1890s, the shared context of Yeats and the dedicatees of *A Vision*. In later life, both Yeats and Crowley did go on to create (or attempt to create) personal, spin-off magical orders, in all cases founded upon and more or less working within their shared Golden Dawn first principles. Just as Yeats overtly brackets the 1937 edition of *A Vision* with references to the Golden Dawn, Timothy d'Arch Smith, a bibliographer of Crowley, notes: “Rail against it though he might (and did), [The Golden Dawn] was the magical order [Crowley] had joined as a young man of twenty-three....[It] exerted, throughout his life, the very strongest influence; and it is in the light of that Order's teaching that we must study [him].”<sup>49</sup>

Most of what the *academic* community “knows” about Crowley is derived from a number of highly dubious sources. George Mills Harper points readers directly to one: the sensationalist biographies by John Symonds, whose texts simply rehash and expand the protracted smear campaign against Crowley in the 1920s tabloids (*YGD* 182–83 n19).<sup>50</sup> Fortunately, there have been a number of better biographies published in the intervening years.<sup>51</sup>

In Yeats's letters, a fair portion of the acrimony aimed at Crowley has to do with Mathers's summary reversal of the decision by the senior adept in London not to admit

Crowley to the Inner Order, which was nevertheless only one impetus for the subsequent "Battle of Blythe Road." Crowley's major fault seems to have been that he was "a person of unspeakable life" (*CL2* 518; *L* 342). He certainly boasted in wholly adolescent ways about flouting Victorian sexual conventions and, as he was admittedly both bisexual and a *roué*, it is unsurprising that his colleagues accused him of "unnatural vice."<sup>52</sup>

Furthermore, it seems highly probable that Crowley was, even at this early date, mixing sex and magic: two inflammable topics that become explosive when one adds the possibility of homoeroticism to the mix. While Yeats may have forgiven Wilde "that sin which, more than any other possible to man, would turn all those people against him" (*CW3* 223; *AU* 285), apparently this tolerance did not extend to someone who, as an Inner Order adept, would be authorized to create daughter organizations under the aegis of the Golden Dawn. What Yeats ultimately feared, as he reported to Lady Gregory, was that this mad person would gain "the means to carry on a mystical society which will give him control of the consciences of many" (*CL2* 518; *L* 342). But are these Victorian qualms about Crowley's sexuality any reason to therefore discard his technical exegesis of the original Golden Dawn material?

I would note, in passing, that it was not the idea of "sex-magic" *per se* that Yeats was set against. Despite Regardie's protests that "the subject of sex is nowhere dealt with" in the Golden Dawn's system,<sup>53</sup> Dion Fortune claims that Moina Mathers nearly turned her out of the Order for publishing "inner teachings" in *The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage*.<sup>54</sup> Francis King sees clear links between Rudolf Steiner's ideas, which influenced the reconstitution of the Stella Matutina, and the curriculum of the German fringe-Masonic *Ordo Templi Orientis* that did indeed teach sex magic in some form (and which Crowley headed in Britain and Ireland from 1912 onward). Likewise, King points out that Robert Felkin, Yeats's Chief in the Stella Matutina, was in fact a member of the British section of the O.T.O. headed by Crowley.<sup>55</sup> Wynn Westcott, too—that inveterate accumulator of obscure rites and honors—was corresponding with Theodore Reuss, the Head of the O.T.O. worldwide.<sup>56</sup> These connections would certainly help explain a number of Yeats's curious, otherwise unaccountable uses of obscure and esoteric sexual symbolism in the later poetry. And Yeats and George certainly were doing something both sexual and magical to conceive the Irish avatar.

Crowley did, later, adopt the magical motto To Mega Therion—The Great Beast—but he *frequently* resorted to such exaggerated rhetoric and hyperbole under the mistaken assumption that its very extremity would force uninitiated readers to think about and question their preconceptions, and perhaps seek for a "rose" or esoteric rationale. This strategy backfired in many cases, for obvious reasons.<sup>57</sup> Yet Yeats, too, certainly consecrated a talisman to The Great Beast: the sun (whose kamea, or magic-square talisman, contains the whole integers from one to thirty-six arranged in a square such that each row adds to 111, but whose total sum is 666). And again, whatever Yeats might have thought of Crowley personally, he did earn his knowledge from Mathers.

In Yeats criticism, the overt anti-Crowley trend began with Ellmann, who seized upon Crowley as the ideal straw man, and subsequent criticism followed suit. Yeats and Crowley obviously disliked each other, and if Yeats could be set against Crowley specifically, rather than Mathers, and against everything that the public associated with Crowley, then Yeats's questionable actions as a renegade adept and his potential framing as a Satanist or "black

magician” could be minimized. Thus, in his “Black Magic Against White,” Ellmann skews the time-line of Crowley’s life in order to lead readers to the conclusion that Yeats (in 1900) was responding directly to a persona Crowley did not adopt until 1919.<sup>58</sup> In this way Yeats became the so-called “white magician” of the Golden Dawn and Crowley the “black.”

Admittedly, in attempting to deal impartially with Yeats’s involvement in occultism and the Golden Dawn, Ellmann faced formidable challenges: diffusing as much as possible those contemporaries who saw Yeats’s “hobby” as an irrational embarrassment, and distancing the Nobel laureate from potential allegations of Satanism or “black magic.” Indeed, Crowley was still alive, and infamous, when Ellmann was gathering data for *The Man and the Masks*, likewise Crowley’s reputation as created by Lord Beaverbrook.<sup>59</sup> The upshot is that today, despite the potential utility of his technical papers, Crowley *himself* is almost universally and unquestioningly vilified and his work summarily rejected by association even in the primary editions of Yeats’s works. A prime example: in the notes to volume 2 of the *Collected Letters*, Kelly, Gould, and Toomey have no trouble asserting that “Crowley’s mistresses were typically subjected to beatings, drugs, and ‘sex magic,’” and report that Yeats described Crowley to fellow initiate Arthur Machen (as recorded in *Things Near and Far*) as “a fiend in human form... a man who hung up naked women in cupboards by hooks which pierced the flesh of their arms” (CL2 523–24 n10). They fail to inform readers that Crowley published a substantially different although perhaps no less implausible account of this incident in “At the Fork of the Roads.”<sup>60</sup> They do not reveal that the location where the incident purportedly occurred was being shared at the time by Allan Bennett, whom Yeats invokes without rancor in his introduction to *A Vision* (1925). Nor do they feel it necessary to note that Machen himself says, “I can by no means go bail for the actuality of any of the misdeeds charged against him.”<sup>61</sup>

In light of the above: What can the extant Golden Dawn documents and Aleister Crowley’s exegetical work on the same subjects tell readers about *A Vision*, its system, and its esoteric context that is not already evident from the dazzling panoply of detail provided by Yeats himself? How can the esoteric components or doctrines that probably mean nothing to the reader (but still speak of “hidden things” [CW4 40; *E&I* 51]) be interpolated, divined, or recognized as such—especially if they are unique to Yeats’s own interpretation of the Golden Dawn’s Cabala?

Speaking generally, Crowley notes that an Adeptus Exemptus 7°=4° must “prepare and publish a thesis setting forth His knowledge of the Universe, and his proposals for its welfare and progress. He will thus be known as the leader of a school of thought.”<sup>62</sup> *A Vision* certainly fits this broad description. Furthermore, sounding very much like Yeats’s assertions in “Is the Order of R.R. & A.C. to remain a Magical Order?” (*YGD* 267), Crowley goes on to observe that “He will have attained all but the supreme summits of meditation, and should be already prepared to perceive that the only possible course for him is to devote himself utterly to helping his fellow creatures.” Moreover, in order to attain the next initiation into the 8°=3° “Grade of Magister Templi, he must perform Two Tasks; the emancipation from Thought by putting each idea against its opposite, and refusing to prefer either; and the consecration of himself as a pure vehicle for the influence of the Order”—that is, the Golden Dawn’s Secret Chiefs—“to which he aspires.”<sup>63</sup>

Interestingly, Crowley also has something to say about Yeats’s composition of his memoirs, begun in 1914, and particularly *A Vision*’s direct antecedent *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*,

Yeats's "spiritual history" (*AVB* 9). "It is absolutely essential," Crowley tells his students, "to begin a magical diary, and keep it up daily. You begin by an account of your life, going back even before your birth to your ancestry...[Y]ou must find an answer to the question: 'How did I come to be in this place at this time, engaged in this particular work?'...[T]his will start you on the discovery of who you really are, and eventually lead you to your recovering the memory of previous incarnations."<sup>64</sup> Logically, using this type of self-analysis (and perhaps astrology) readers can place themselves *within* the system, much as Yeats claims in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* that "When I think of any great poetical writer of the past...I comprehend, if I know the lineaments of his life, that the work is the man's flight from his entire horoscope, his blind struggle in the network of the stars" (*CW* 5 6; *Myth* 328).

In Crowley's terminology, this knowledge of "who you really are" is the True Will. It is the adept's task to discover and follow his or her True Will, clearly differentiating it from the limitations imposed on the individual by nature and others. Although it does not function exactly like *Will* in *A Vision*, Crowley's concept nevertheless seems close to what Owen Aherne calls the law of his being, which he could "only express or fail to express" (*M2005* 198–99; *Myth* 305). Florence Farr, too, opines that "The Man who cannot 'be Himself' must be melted down in the casting-ladle of Phtha [Ptah]. The artist-craftsman of the Gods will disperse the elemental material which in its present combination cannot, and will not, be regenerated; he bides his time for a happier moment of operation."<sup>65</sup> Clearly, there are similarities and curious resonances. If their specific magical ideologies were different, their general cabalistic understanding and summary conclusions, unsurprisingly, seem almost identical.

The surviving quires of the *Vision Papers*, too, indicate that the Golden Dawn was never far from Yeats's mind, from start to finish. The automatic script and the Sleep and Dream Notebooks are littered with allusions to the Order and its teachings—many indexed, although by no means all.<sup>66</sup> Certainly some references are only incidental and passing (*YVPI* 64; *YVP2* 194–95). Many are glaringly incomplete. For example, Yeats seems not to have preserved notes of his follow-up actions regarding calling up spirits and undertaking meditations (*YVPI* 119, 208). These lacunae might be explained by the fact that Yeats and his wife shared a common esoteric understanding and did not need to record specifics about their routine practices. Equally, this material may have been part of the 25% of the primary documents that have gone missing over the years (*YVPI* 11).

However, it *is* clear that the Yeatsian system is merely a subset of the Golden Dawn's larger cabalistic matrix. From the very beginning Yeats attempted to elucidate the phasal symbolism using the Order's cabalistic symbolism. He diagrammed the Phases as if they were part of the Tree of Life, imposing the lightning flash signifying the divine influx onto their circle (*YVPI* 205). Somewhat unsuccessfully, he attempted to correlate the germs of the system with other "order attribution[s]," including the ten sephiroth and their implicit cross-correspondences (*YVPI* 280).<sup>67</sup> On April 14, 1919, one finds references to an "evocation of the higher self" related to the Inner Order Rose Cross lamen (*YVP2* 247). Currently, there is no other source other than Crowley's texts that detail and explain these particulars as they were understood by the original Golden Dawn adepts.<sup>68</sup>

One wishes that it were possible to compare the *Vision Papers* with the records of other, similar magical endeavors by Yeats's fellow adepts, or even Yeats's notes on the numerous experiments alluded to in technical articles such as "Invoking the Irish Fairies" (*CW* 9

182–84; *UPI* 245–47). One certainly could attempt a comparative methodological reading using some of Crowley’s records—particularly with an eye toward understanding the typical cabalistic / Golden Dawn exegetical techniques that Crowley employed, as well as the precautionary measures he took against potential “frustration” that Yeats *seems* to have neglected. Detailed examples are found in Crowley’s Cairo Working of 1904, Amalantrah Working of 1918, Bartzabel Working of 1910, Ab-ul-Diz Working of 1911, Paris Working of 1914, and the Enochian visions of 1900 and 1909 recorded in “The Vision and the Voice.”<sup>69</sup> In the last, particularly, Crowley’s explanation of the Call of the Fifth Aethyr has several close connections with Yeats’s explanation of his Archer Vision. Unfortunately, the original Golden Dawn records are apparently either lost or unavailable, and a detailed exposition of the methodological development of Yeats’s system using Crowley’s comparative examples is beyond the scope of the current project. I would merely note that, except perhaps in “The Phases of the Moon,” the phasal system as published in *A Vision B*—what Yeats felt he could disclose to the public (*L* 916)—functions alike for all, initiate and layman. Thus, one can hardly call it “magical” or esoteric *in se*.

Curiously, although Yeats publically describes a system that seems to function entirely for the eventual pleasure and liberation of the soul, I would point out that *A Vision’s* apparently exclusive focus on the soul is at odds with Yeats’s passing remarks in the introductory material, likewise his insistence on a resolution of the body-soul dilemma in the later poetic corpus: particularly in “Dialogue of Self and Soul,” “Among School Children,” and especially “Vacillation,” wherein the body is apparently wrong about the nature of death, and the soul does not have to suffer “remorse,” literally “being chewed up again,” during incarnation.

I would argue for two related concepts. This general purpose that Yeats fails to define must be the main esoteric component of the text: its pragmatic use within the Golden Dawn’s own largely unstated “magical” objectives, particular to the tasks of the Inner Order adepts who lacked practical instruction for the highest grades of the R.R. and A.C., and intelligible for anyone with a shared cabalistic understanding and degree of initiation. Interestingly, the only part of the system that seems not to function “in so far as a man is like all other men” (*CW*5 28; *Myth* 361) is what Graham Hough calls the system’s “joker”: escape from the restrictions of the system itself.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, I interpolate that the nature of this escape is what is unique to Yeats’s understanding of the Cabala, his answer to the question of whether an adept could attain initiation into the Third Order while still in the body, a question that he raises but leaves unresolved in his 1901 pamphlet “Is the Order R.R. & A.C. to remain a Magical Order?” (*YGD* 260, 261, 265).

In short, rather than a predestined process by which everyone must “gradually grow better” through “innumerable lives” (*VPI* 935; *CW*2 725), the final escape of the *Thirteenth Cone* is available only to adepts at Phase 27 who have passed “very fully” through at least the eight requisite phases—1, 4, 8, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19 (see *YVP*4 107)—and/or otherwise managed to “exhaust their possible lives, to set, as it were, the hands of the clock racing” (*VPI* 935; *CW*2 725). There, they can make the “final choice” to “pass from the edge to the center” (*YVP*4 108 & 107) or, as Robartes puts it in “The Phases of the Moon,” “Out of the up and down, the wagon-wheel” of antinomies (*VP* 377; *CW*1 168). As for the average individual caught up in the winding path of nature, “No excellence of life or latenes of cycle—unless there has been the final choice at 27—gives where there is no

desire the emotion of good & evil" (*YVP* 4 108). According to "The Phases of the Moon," "When all the dough has been so kneaded up / That it can take what form cook Nature fancies / The first thin crescent is wheeled round once more (*VP* 377; *CW* 1 168).

This willed movement seems equivalent to what a Golden Dawn adept would call initiation into the Third Order, a transition from the understanding of the sephirah Chesed to Binah, across the abyss. It follows the cabalistic path from Yeats's Archer Vision—the straight (although reversed) spiritual inflow, shot from the "burning bow" Q-Sh-Th defined by paths 29, 31, and 32 on the Tree of Life. This inflow is described in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* as available only to saints or sages who are *not* caught up in the winding path of nature and gradual perfection like other men and animals (*CW* 5 28; *Myth* 361). It is represented by the equilibrating Middle Pillar of the Tree of Life that directly connects all three major levels of spiritual attainment.<sup>71</sup>

What seems to be wholly unique to Yeats is not the idea that this final choice or initiation leads to an ultimate Unity of Being of the individual and "God," nor that it represented a potential form of apotheosis. Most striking is that Yeats's research and experiments clearly seem to have led him to the belief that this complete unity of being would include the body, indeed could not exist "in separation from the body" (*YVP* 2 41).

Yeats politely lies in his remarks on *A Vision* when he says that there was nothing in the Cabala to help him (*AVB* 12). Certainly the germ of these historical gyres that mirror the spiritual evolution of individuals is to be found in Mathers's assertion that "The Life of Nations is like the Life of men" in Flying Roll X: "Concerning the Symbolism of Self-Sacrifice and Crucifixion contained in the 5<sup>o</sup>=6<sup>o</sup> Grade."<sup>72</sup> Clearly adepts who wished actually to *use* the system would first have to perform a sort of psychological introspection in order to define their current phase of spiritual evolution, and this is in keeping with the tenets of Moina Mathers's Flying Roll XXI, "Know Thyself," which explain how the consciousness or soul of the adept from several levels on the Tree of Life are contacted and combined as part of a necessary "development of the Man."<sup>73</sup>

Further, we know that the Golden Dawn adepts, even the clergymen in J. W. Brodie-Innes's spin-off Cromlech Temple, espoused a belief in some sort of metempsychosis. It is certain that Westcott borrowed some of his information from cabalistic sources that claimed that no human soul would be redeemed until all souls had been purified and perfected. As he says in "An Introduction to The Study Of The Kabalah": "when all the pre-existent Souls who have been incarnated here have arrived at perfection, the Evil Angels are also to be raised, and all lives will be merged into The Deity by the Kiss of Love from the Mouth of the Holy One, and the Manifested Universe shall be no more, until again vivified by the Divine FIAT."<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, we know that Yeats entered the Golden Dawn with the object of discovering the history of the soul (*CW* 13 liv–lv; *AVA* xi). We know that the founders, drawing on many different schools of Cabala, taught that the spiritual constitution of a human being was made up of at least four distinct principles: the *Nephesh* (the animating "animal soul" of the passions and senses), the *Ruach* (or intellectual soul of one's thoughts, mind, and reason), the *Neshamah* (the truly immortal spiritual soul that connects an individual in incarnation with the highest part of the divine spark, or *Yechidah*). All three of these existed during incarnation within the *Guph*, or physical body, which Westcott nevertheless describes as a spiritual principle, however mortal. As in *A Vision*, the three spiritual

components have a divided existence during life and the potential for continued separate existence after death.

At death, “according to the Kabalah, the visible material body, the *Guph*, decays, and the Animal aspect of the soul, the *Nephesh*, only gradually fades away from it: the *Ruach*, the Human aspect, passes away from the Assiatic plane, and the *Neshamah*, the spiritual soul, returns to the Treasury of Heaven, to the *Gan Oidin*, or of Paradise, perfected to a Spiritual world beyond the plane of re-birth.” If the soul is condemned, it travels to “Gai-Hinnom, or hell, for a period of punishment before the next incarnation; if approved, the Soul passes to an Oidin or Heaven. In the end of the present manifestation of the Universe, all souls will have become perfected by suffering, have been blessed in Paradise, and will be in reunion with the God from Whom they came forth.”<sup>75</sup>

It was the task of a Golden Dawn adept to bring the disparate parts of his or her soul into perfect unity. One could certainly say that the degree of union hypothetically mirrors the degree of initiation, the most important step being arguably the Adeptus Minor 5°=6° degree in which the aspirant swears: “I will from this day forward apply myself unto the Great Work, which is so to purify and exalt my spiritual Nature that with the Divine Aid I may at length attain to be more than human, and thus gradually rise and unite myself to my higher and divine Genius.”<sup>76</sup> This entity was equated to the Augoeides of Iamblichus, the Daemon of the Gnostics, and the Holy Guardian Angel from *The Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage*.<sup>77</sup> Florence Farr’s commentary indicates that the Augoeides was actually treated as the sum of the various aspects of the soul equilibrated such that “the whole being became a luminous Khou or Shining Body of super-human potency.” The adept, in other words, “became in the eyes of the Egyptians, Osirified. That is to say, a Microprosopus, or Perfect copy of the Macroprosopus.”<sup>78</sup>

On the other hand, the Golden Dawn did not seem to provide any formulaic method for achieving this aim. Moina Mathers described the accomplishment of “real Initiation” when

the *You* in [the quasi-sephirah] Daath (the seat of the Spiritual Consciousness) [astride the cabalistic Abyss between Chesed and Binah] have allied yourself to the *You* in [the sephirah] Tiphereth (the seat of the Human Consciousness) and to the *You* in [the sephirah] Kether (the seat of the Divine Consciousness) and from thence the Kether sending rays downwards; from it to the Daath, from Daath to Tiphereth and from thence to [the sephirah] Yesod, which is the seat of the Automatic Consciousness.

This combination must have taken place with the consent of the Lower Will (in Tiphereth) as being the Human Will.<sup>79</sup>

Rather glibly, she recommends that every Adeptus Minor should “strive to begin the practice of such an operation.”<sup>80</sup> Crowley would later maintain that “It is impossible to lay down precise rules by which a man may attain to the knowledge and conversation of His Holy Guardian Angel; for that is the particular secret of each one of us; a secret not to be told or even divined by any other, whatever his grade.”<sup>81</sup>

One might say that the Golden Dawn documents focus on the product rather than the process of initiation. The promised product, however, was certainly enough to keep

Yeats laboring for decades over the open book that Michael Robartes left: a glorified body with the

apparent solidity of the ordinary body, and the faculties of the Spirit body. Because if you can once get the great force of the Highest [Yechidah] to send its ray clean down through the Neschamah into the mind, and thence, into your physical body, the Nepesch would be so transformed as to render you almost like a God walking on this Earth.<sup>82</sup>

Another possibility, as explained in the lecture on "The Task undertaken by the Adeptus Minor," is that "the Higher Genius shall descend into the Kether of the Man, bringing with him the tremendous illumination of his Angelic Nature; and the man shall become what was said of Enoch: "And Chanokh made himself to walk for ever close with the essence of the Elohim, and he existed not apart, seeing that the Elohim took possession of his being."<sup>83</sup>

I think that Yeats took these esoteric assertions at face value. At least, I see no evidence that he did not. As a child he may have believed in the possibility of a bodily resurrection or assumption only at the emotional level. However, as an adult who spent decades practicing magic, this childhood belief was clearly transformed intellectually as the emotional and intellectual "souls" were brought into harmony. Thus his unique system is merely "now an interpretation, now an enlargement of the folk-lore of the villages" (*CWI* 13 liv; *AVA* xi).

As evidenced in "Vacillation," he came to accept, and adapt, "miracles of the saints": the body of Saint Teresa lying undecayed in the tomb, "bathed in miraculous oil" (*VP* 503; *CWI* 256), likewise the possibility of bodily immortality for modern adepts, modern saints, like bodies of ancient priests and initiates, scooped out by Egyptian embalmers to act as talismans, that sit down nightly in their tombs, their component souls reunited. Elsewhere in "Vacillation" Yeats asks one of his hallmark rhetorical questions using the persona of The Heart, the Ab, that in Egyptian mythology links the Ka soul with the physical body: "What theme had Homer but original sin?" (*VP* 503; *CWI* 256). Any classicist would answer without thinking, "*Arete*: human excellence, living up to one's full potential." This, I judge, is related to the distinction that Yeats draws in the automatic script between the "perfect man" being not only "complete" but also "perfected" (*YVPI* 280). Finally, in his introductory letter to Ezra Pound Yeats declares, "I send to you the introduction to a book which will, when finished, proclaim a new divinity." In substance, Yeats relates this being to two opposing paradigms from previous ages: Oedipus, who sank down into the earth, and Christ, who "went into the abstract sky"—in both cases, "soul and body" (*AVB* 27).

To sum up: the above barely exposes the esoteric subtext of the System. Like Yeats, I have hinted at but said very little about those parts of *A Vision* and the *Vision Papers* that relate to sexual love and the creation of the Irish avatar. There remains the theological approach suggested by Yeats's repeated references to a mythical Syriac original for his doctrines, also the place of the escape within the context of *The Resurrection*. Certainly there are innumerable methodological details to be followed up, countless technical details to be explored and accounted for. Hopefully, however, the above serves to elucidate

Robartes's assertion that while the soul may disappear in God, death alone "cannot solve the antinomy" (*AVB* 52) and points to a rose for Yeats's metaphors that heretofore have been restricted to "specialists only" (*L* 700).

### Notes

1. Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, trans. Robert Brain (London: Routledge, 2001), 32.
2. *Ibid.*, 29. It is important to note that Yeats was not exactly the "white magician"—a term that is more from the realm of pop culture than otherwise—depicted in much of the early secondary criticism. Compare the accounts in Edith Young, *Inside Out* (London: Routledge, 1971), 7; "The Sorcerers" (*M2005* 24–26; *Myth* 37–40); Deirdre Toomey, "Strange Experiences in Pembroke Road" (*YAZ* [1997] 303–318). See also Gerald Yorke's notes regarding Yeats's admission of work with the sigils of the seventy-two goetic demons in trans. S. L. MacGregor Mathers, ed. Aleister Crowley, *The Goetia: The Lesser Key of Solomon the King (Clavicula Salomonis Regis)* (Foyers: Society for the Propagation of Religious Truth, 1904), facsimile of editor's copy with marginalia reproduced ([Nottingham]: Hell Fire Club Books, [2009]), 51.
3. K. G. W. Cross, "The Fascination of What's Difficult: A Survey of Yeats Criticism and Research," in *In Excited Reverie: A Centenary Tribute to William Butler Yeats*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares and K. G. W. Cross (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 327. Yeats's most pointed response to his detractors is clearly stated in his 1892 letter to John O'Leary (*CL1* 302–4; *L* 210–11), resurfacing thematically much later in his 1934 poem, "A Prayer for Old Age."
4. W. Wynn Westcott, *Rosicrucians, Past and Present, at Home and Abroad* (privately printed, 1913; Kila, MT: Kessinger, 1996), 6. This document is also available in ed. R. A. Gilbert, *The Magical Mason: Forgotten Hermetic Writings of William Wynn Westcott, Physician and Magus*, (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: Aquarian Press, 1983); however, the source used by Gilbert lacks elements that appear in other offprints (see also the Holmes 1989 unpaginated version, [6]), including that cited here, which closes what would be the first (incomplete) paragraph on page 46 of Gilbert's edition with the following: "The tenets of this work are closely approximate to those of the earliest of the followers of Christian Rosenkreuz, whose name was probably a mystic title, motto or synonym, and not a family cognomen: 'Christian' referring to the general theological tendency, and 'Rosenkreuz' to the Cross of Suffering whose explanation and key may need a Rose or secret explanation."
5. Kathleen Raine, "Yeats, the Tarot and the Golden Dawn," in *Yeats the Initiate* (Savage, MD: Barnes and Noble; Mountrath, Laois: Dolmen Press; London: George Allen & Unwin, 1986), 177.
6. Admittedly, George Yeats never belonged to the original, pre-1900 "Golden Dawn" proper. However, for simplicity's sake throughout this essay I use "Golden Dawn" as a general descriptive term defining a group of temples and individuals, both before and after the schism of 1900, adhering to the cabalistic ideology, methods, and objectives originally propagated by founders Wynn Westcott and especially MacGregor Mathers.
7. Justification for this statement is found in the otherwise inexplicable appearance (during the initiation ceremony that leads to Robartes's "death") of the sephirah Binah personified as "an immortal august woman, who had black lilies in her hair, and... a love like the love that breathed upon the waters" (*M2005* 190; *Myth* 289–90). See also Yeats's cabalistic explication of Robartes in the notes to *The Wind Among the Reeds* (*VP* 803).
8. See C. Nicholas Serra, "Crowley, Continuity, and Qabalah: Yeats's Over-System in 'The Two Trees,' 1892 and 1929," *Yeats Eliot Review* 15, no. 3 (Summer 1998), 33–44.
9. For example: "I am told to give Phases 1, 8, 15, 22 a month apiece..." (*AVB* 196) or "My imagination was for a time haunted...and it seemed to me..." (*AVB* 214).
10. As he commented to Edith Shackleton Heald in a letter of February 21, 1938: "I have always deliberately left out this explaining" (*L* 906).
11. Cf. Yeats's parallel treatment of the body in terms of the historical phases as well as the genesis of the "Supernatural Songs" (*L* 823–24).
12. Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn: A Documentary History of a Magical Order (1887–1923)* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972); Francis King, *Ritual Magic In England* (London: Neville Spearman, 1970); Israel Regardie, *My Rosicrucian Adventure* (Chicago: Aries Press, 1936); A. E. Waite, *Shadows of Life and Thought* (London: Selwyn and Blount, 1938); Inquire Within [Christina Mary Stoddart], *Light-Bearers of Darkness* (London: Boswell, 1930).
13. A. E. Waite, *Inner and Outer Order Initiations of the Holy Order of the Golden Dawn* (Burnaby, BC: Ishtar, 2005); Pat Zalewski, *Inner Order Teachings of the Golden Dawn* (Loughborough, Leicestershire: Thoth,

- 2006); Ithell Colquhoun, *Sword of Wisdom: MacGregor Mathers and the Golden Dawn* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975); Mary K. Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn: Rebels and Priestesses* (Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 1995); R. A. Gilbert, *A. E. Waite: Magician of Many Parts* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: Aquarian, 1987); Alan Richardson, *Priestess: The Life and Magic of Dion Fortune* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: Aquarian, 1987).
14. See, for example, King's critique of Kathleen Raine's assertions in S. L. MacGregor Mathers et al., *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic and Alchemy*, ed. Francis King (1971; Rochester, VT: Destiny, 1987), 195–196. This book was reissued in 1997 by the same publishers under the title *Ritual Magic of the Golden Dawn*.
  15. Mary K. Greer and Darcy Kuntz, *The Chronology of the Golden Dawn: Being the Chronological History of a Magical Order* (Golden Dawn Studies No 11) (Edmonds, WA: Holmes Publishing, 1999).
  16. A. E. Waite, *Annus Mirabilis Redivivus* (manuscript diary of 1902–03, 10 October), quoted by R. A. Gilbert in “William Wynn Westcott and the Esoteric School of Masonic Research” at [www.mastermason.com/luxocculta/westcott.htm#\\_ftn7](http://www.mastermason.com/luxocculta/westcott.htm#_ftn7), retrieved 24 June, 2009.
  17. William Wynn Westcott, *An Introduction to the Study of the Kabbalah* (London: J. M. Watkins, 1910), 66; also available at <http://www.hermetics.org/pdf/Westcott.Kabbalah.pdf>.
  18. F. L. Gardner, *Catalogue Raisonné of Works on the Occult Sciences*, 3 vols. (London: Privately Printed, 1903, 1911, 1912); F. G. Irwin, *The Grimoire of Pope Honorius* (n.p. : Society of Esoteric Endeavour, n.d.); Frederick Hockley, *A Manual of a Rosicrucian Philos[ophus]* (n.p. : Hell Fire Club, n.d.).
  19. Westcott, *Rosicrucians, Past and Present, at Home and Abroad*, 4 & 6. Cf. ed. Gilbert, *The Magical Mason*, 43 & 46; as noted earlier (n4), Gilbert's text omits elements found elsewhere, here the end of a sentence: “. . . have always been Christians, *but perhaps not of an orthodox type, for there has always been a tendency in the teachings toward Gnostic ideals*” (omitted text in italic).
  20. S. L. MacGregor Mathers et al., *Astral Projection*, 125.
  21. Ithell Colquhoun, *Sword of Wisdom*, 20.
  22. This faction also included Reverend A. W. Ayton, Marcus Blackden, and in particular Evelyn Underhill, whose spiritual advisor was Baron von Hügel, as referenced in “Vacillation.”
  23. Ithell Colquhoun, *Sword of Wisdom*, 238.
  24. Iamblichus, *The Mysteries*, as cited by Florence Farr, *Egyptian Magic*, (1896; Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 1996), 16.
  25. Karl Von Eckartshausen, *The Cloud Upon The Sanctuary*, trans. Isabelle de Steiger (London: William Rider & Son, 1909). This edition also contains introductory material by Golden Dawn Adepts A. E. Waite and J. W. Brodie-Innes. See *Mem 281* for Yeats's comments about Blavatsky's “masters.”
  26. Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn: An Account of the Teachings, Rites, and Ceremonies of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, 4 vols. (Chicago: Aries Press, 1937–1940).
  27. Israel Regardie, *What You Should Know about the Golden Dawn* (1936; Phoenix, AZ: New Falcon: 1983), 101 (1936 title: *My Rosicrucian Adventure*).
  28. Israel Regardie, *What You Should Know about the Golden Dawn*, 120.
  29. Israel Regardie, *What You Should Know about the Golden Dawn*, 41.
  30. Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn* 1:86–87; also *The Golden Dawn [Revised and Enlarged]*, 4 vols. in 1 (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1982), 44.
  31. Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, 4:11; also *The Golden Dawn [Revised and Enlarged]* 456.
  32. Aleister Crowley, ed., *The Equinox: The Review of Scientific Illuminism*, Vol. 1, 10 nos. (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1909–1913).
  33. As helpful as the NLI manuscript staff have been, they have politely declined access to those notebooks incorporated into the long-running Yeats exhibit.
  34. The surviving papers from Farr's Sphere Group, which caused so much dissension, are now available in Florence Farr, *The Enochian Experiments of the Golden Dawn*, ed. Darcy Kuntz (Edmonds, WA: Holmes Publishing, 1996).
  35. Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, 29.
  36. Yeats calls Crowley “mad,” “bitter,” “violent,” and “absurd” because of his theatrical behavior toward the London adepts. Crowley's diaries reveal that Mathers (whom Yeats describes in regretful but glowing tones) was the primary orchestrator of this symbolic drama. Indeed, the events were only slightly more outré than any sanctioned Golden Dawn activity, notable only because they took place in the public road (*L* 340, 341–2; *CL2* 514–16, 518). For Crowley's diaries, see Aleister Crowley, “Primary Sources: A. C. Inspects the G . : . D . : .,” *Thelema Lodge Calendar* (August 1993), n.p. but as 5–9; also available online at [www.billheidrick.com/tlc1993/tlc0893.htm#ps](http://www.billheidrick.com/tlc1993/tlc0893.htm#ps).

37. Cf. Jack Yeats's description of Crowley, *LTWBY2* 309–10, and Yeats's reply, *L* 590.
38. *Ritual of the Mystery of the Judgment of the Soul*, trans. Marcus Blackden (London: Bernard Quaritch for the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, [1914].)
39. Aleister Crowley, *Equinox* 1, no. 3 (1910): 330 and 321.
40. Crowley's legal name was Edward Alexander Crowley, which he informally changed to mirror Shelley.
41. See H. R. Wakefield, "He Cometh and He Passeth By" in *They Return at Evening* (New York: D. Appleton, 1928), 64–109. The Crowley-inspired magician Oscar Clinton is connected "with the nineties, raptures and roses, absinthe and poses; and the other Oscar" (69).
42. Aleister Crowley, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autobiography*, ed. John Symonds and Kenneth Grant (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 73.
43. Likewise, in Crowley's 1917 *roman à clef*, *Moonchild* (published 1929), Yeats is lampooned as the "cadaverous Protestant-Irishman named Gates," "highly skilled in black magic in his own way," possessed of "real original talent, with now and then a flash of insight which came close to genius"—but also neglected teeth and "a habit of physical dirt." Aleister Crowley, *Moonchild* (London: Mandrake Press, 1929), 152.
44. John Symonds, *The Great Beast: The Life of Aleister Crowley* (London: Rider and Company, 1951), 20.
45. Aleister Crowley, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*, 114.
46. Compare Crowley's recommendations for learning the Cabala in "Magick Without Tears [unabridged digital typescript]," ed. Karl Germer (Ordo Templi Orientis: 13 November, 1988), Introduction: Letter F, Aug. 20, 1943. References point to chapter titles so as to correspond to the greatest degree possible with the heavily abridged but more readily available text: Aleister Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*, ed. Israel Regardie (St Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1973), as well as the much rarer Aleister Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*, ed. Karl Germer (Hampton, NJ: Thelema Publishing, 1954). E-text is available at <http://hermetic.com/crowley/magick-without-tears/>.
47. Aleister Crowley, "Magick Without Tears," Introduction: Letter F, Aug. 20, 1943.
48. Aleister Crowley, "Crowley Classics [Letter to Grady McMurtry 10 April, 1946]" in *Thelema Lodge Newsletter*, May 1993, n.p. but as 2, available online at [www.billheidrick.com/tlc1993/tlc0593.htm](http://www.billheidrick.com/tlc1993/tlc0593.htm).
49. Timothy d'Arch Smith, *The Books of the Beast: Essays on Aleister Crowley, Montague Summers and Others* (London: Crucible Press, 1987), 15.
50. This in spite of the fact that Symonds himself describes the newspaper accounts of Crowley as "too sensational to believe, and too discursive to remember," John Symonds, *The Magic of Aleister Crowley* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1958), 13. See also [www.lashtal.com/nuke/module-subjects-listpages-subid-1.phtml](http://www.lashtal.com/nuke/module-subjects-listpages-subid-1.phtml) for a large archive of newspaper references relating to Crowley.
51. Three of the more recent are Lawrence Sutin's *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), Martin Booth's *A Magick Life: the Biography of Aleister Crowley* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2000), and Richard Kaczynski's *Perdunabo: The Life of Aleister Crowley* (Tempe, AZ: New Falcon Publications, 2002). Additionally, for those interested in the specifics of the above-mentioned smear campaign, I would recommend the Helios edition of P. R. Stephensen's *The Legend of Aleister Crowley* (Enmore, NSW: Helios & O.T.O. [Australia], 2007), which contains not only the original text unedited by Israel Regardie, but a wealth of supplementary material, including a reprint of Norman Mudd's "An Open Letter to Lord Beaverbrook" in Crowley's defense.
52. Jean Overton Fuller, *The Magical Dilemma of Victor Neuburg* (London: W. H. Allen, 1965), 184–85.
53. Israel Regardie, *What You Should Know about the Golden Dawn*, 30.
54. Alan Richardson, *Priestess*, 117. See Dion Fortune, *The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage* (London: William Rider, 1924).
55. Francis King, ed., *The Secret Rituals of the O. T. O.* (London: C. W. Daniel, 1973), 27.
56. Reproduced in facsimile in Lady Queenborough (Edith Starr Miller), *Occult Theocracy*, 2 vols (France: Privately Printed, 1933), 2:720ff.
57. See as an example the parallel arguments he makes in Aleister Crowley, *The Banned Lecture: Gilles de Rais, to Have Been Delivered before the Oxford University Poetry Society by Aleister Crowley, on the Evening of Monday, February 3rd, 1930* (Cincinnati: Black Moon Publishing, 1985).
58. Richard Ellmann, "Black Magic Against White," *Partisan Review* 15, no. 9 (September 1948): 1049–1051. Notes of his interview with Crowley from 25–26 June 1947 are published in ed. Warwick Gould, "'Gasp-ing on the Strand': Richard Ellmann's W. B. Yeats Notebooks," *YA16* (2005) at 352–55.
59. For example, when Crowley's physician died within days of him, the *Daily Express* trumpeted, "Magician Put Curse on Him" (4 December, 1947).
60. Aleister Crowley, *Equinox* 1, no. 1 (1909): 101–8.

61. Arthur Machen, *Things Near and Far* (London: Martin Secker, 1926), 148.
62. Albeit in his own adaptation of the Golden Dawn, but for which he published so many of the primary Order documents in the *Equinox*. Aleister Crowley, "One Star in Sight" in *Magick in Theory and Practice* (Paris: Lecram Press, 1929), 236.
63. *Ibid.*, 236–37.
64. Aleister Crowley, "Magick Without Tears," Introduction: Letter A.
65. Florence Farr, *Egyptian Magic*, 6.
66. For example, the editors do not recognize "abyss" as a cabalistic symbol for the divide between the uppermost three sephiroth, and the rest of the Tree of Life (*YVP1* 257). However, Crowley notes: "It should never be forgotten for a single moment that the central and essential work of the Magician is the attainment of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. Once he has achieved this he must of course be left entirely in the hands of that Angel, who can be invariably and inevitably relied upon to lead him to the further great step—crossing of the Abyss and the attainment of the grade of Master of the Temple" (*Magick Without Tears*, Ch. 83).
67. Compare Arthur Machen's rather dismissive description in *Things Near and Far*, 154.
68. Yeats even asked his communicators for advice regarding the problems that Christina Stoddart was having with the adepti of the Amoun temple in the summer and fall of 1919 (*YVP2* 295–97, 442).
69. See Aleister Crowley, *Equinox of the Gods* chaps. 6–7 (see <http://hermetic.com/crowley/equinox-of-the-gods/index.html>); *Equinox* 4, no. 2: *The Vision & the Voice with Commentary and Other Papers* (York Beach, ME: Weiser, 1998); and *Equinox* 1, no. 5 (1911): supplement.
70. Graham Hough, *The Mystery Religion of W. B. Yeats* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1984), 117.
71. Crowley has this to say on the same topic: "The Single Supreme Ritual... is the raising of the complete man in a vertical straight line. Any deviation from this line tends to become black magic.... If the magician needs to perform any other operation than this, it is only lawful in so far as it is a necessary preliminary to That One Work" (*Magick in Theory and Practice*, 190).
72. S. L. MacGregor Mathers et al., *Astral Projection*, 136.
73. S. L. MacGregor Mathers et al., *Astral Projection*, 151.
74. William Wynn Westcott, *An Introduction to the Study of the Kabalah* (London: J. M. Watkins, 1910), 32–33.
75. Westcott, *An Introduction to the Study of the Kabalah*, 64–65.
76. Aleister Crowley, *Equinox* 1, no. 3 (1910): 214. This obligation is reiterated in several other instructional documents, particularly Flying Roll XIX: "The Aims and Means of Adeptship" (S. L. MacGregor Mathers et al., *Astral Projection*, 115–121).
77. See S. L. MacGregor Mathers, trans., *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: Aquarian, 1985). Both Mathers and Crowley were fond of the Abramelin system, perhaps because it provided a more objective and ready-made set of procedures by which to obtain knowledge of and conversation with one's "Holy Guardian Angel" than the original Golden Dawn papers. It also provided a compendium of magic squares and associated formulae by which a large body of demons could be evoked and compelled to serve the adept.
78. Florence Farr, *Egyptian Magic*, 11.
79. S. L. MacGregor Mathers et al., *Astral Projection*, 151.
80. *Ibid.*, 151.
81. Aleister Crowley, "One Star in Sight" in *Magick in Theory and Practice*, 239. Cf. *CW5* 19; *Myth* 347–48.
82. S. L. MacGregor Mathers et al., *Astral Projection*, 136.
83. Aleister Crowley, *Equinox* 1, no. 2 (1909): 321. Most, if not all, members would have been familiar with this passage from Genesis 5:24 in the King James translation: "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

## THE POLITICAL OCCULT: REVISITING FASCISM, YEATS AND *A VISION*

by Claire V. Nally

The two versions of *A Vision* (1925 and 1937) rather neatly coincide with Yeats's interest in authoritarian and proto-fascist policy, emerging most fully in his brief support of the Irish Blueshirts in 1933. In terms of Yeats's work, such an idea was posited by George Orwell in January 1943: "Those who dread the prospect of universal suffrage, popular education, freedom of thought, emancipation of women, will start off with a predilection towards secret cults. There is another link between Fascism and magic in the profound hostility of both to the Christian ethical code."<sup>1</sup> In fact, a number of commentaries on Yeats's political liaison with right-wing fanaticism have emerged since Conor Cruise O'Brien's "Passion and Cunning" in 1965.<sup>2</sup> Seamus Deane has commented that "Yeats's occult belief passes into his social and political beliefs."<sup>3</sup> Paul Scott Stansfield describes *A Vision* as "a deplorable venture"<sup>4</sup> whilst Stephen Spender has suggested: "In the minds of writers who thought that their first obligation in their art was to keep open lines of communication with the dead, Fascism represented order, a return to the past tradition, opposition to Communism and social decadence."<sup>5</sup> Of course, Yeats's ventures into otherworldly study were frequent and remained a constant throughout his life. In *Blood Kindred*, W. J. McCormack suggests "underlying these interests and sympathies [in *On the Boiler*] was an occult philosophy that endorsed the irrational."<sup>6</sup> Theodor Adorno has also observed that "The appeal of anti-Semitism to insiders is its status as the 'secret' which explains everything and is available only to initiates. Like occultism and astrology, anti-Semitism is a paranoid projection of the 'semi-erudite.'"<sup>7</sup>

The nation and the occult coincide in Nazism in a way that, on the surface at least, recalls Yeats's conception of civilization in *A Vision*: Anthony Smith notes how "totalitarian controls and an almost 'magical' archaic symbolism transform nazism into a pseudo-military-religious order, far removed from earlier nationalisms,"<sup>8</sup> while in *A Vision B*, Yeats claims "A civilisation is a struggle to keep self-control.... The loss of control over thought comes towards the end; first a sinking in upon the moral being, then the last surrender, the irrational cry, revelation—the scream of Juno's peacock" (*AVB* 268).

Despite these initial comments, an attraction to or application of the occult does not necessarily imply odious political affiliation. In the main, Yeats's knowledge of fascism was drawn from the Italian model, and indeed, many occultists register an important corrective to such generalizations: "under the influence of Annie Besant (future president of the Theosophical Society), the society became closely identified with the cause of Indian nationalism. Besant herself was to be interned in India for activities relating to her support of Indian Home Rule, and in 1917 was elected president of the Indian National Congress."<sup>9</sup> In fact, much of the anxiety about secret and/or occult societies in the early part of the twentieth century was generated by a suspicion of their radicalism: "It is unnecessary to enlarge at length on Mrs. Besant's connexion with the seditious elements in this country and in India.... [I]ndeed Mrs. Besant in her lectures on Liberty, Equality, Fraternity at the Queen's Hall in October [1919]... clearly indicated Socialism as the system of the coming

New Era."<sup>10</sup> Equally AE (George Russell) "saw in his commitment to the spiritual life a sacred resolve to renounce all lesser concerns for the sake of universal welfare."<sup>11</sup> AE is a good example of the complexity of occult politics. He was an expert mystic and a Theosophist, and supported the Irish co-operative movement, whilst he worked for impoverished farmers in the west of Ireland as part of his office in the Irish Agricultural Organization Society (he also contributed to *The Irish Homestead*, organ of the IAOS, becoming editor in 1905). However, despite his center-left credentials, he did engage with Italian extreme politics in his contribution to Odon Por's book, *Fascism* (1923): "While Russell is often regarded as the secular saint of the Irish literary movement, and his journalism as a bastion of liberal tolerance, he too can be found positively responding to the appeal of fascism" (BK 10). Maud Gonne and her daughter, along with Iseult's husband Francis Stuart, consistently supported the Blueshirts in Ireland and fascism abroad: along with Arthur Griffiths, Gonne openly expressed anti-Semitic tendencies, especially in her support of the anti-Dreyfusard cause in France (by contrast Yeats was Dreyfusard). She and Iseult were suspected of harboring a German Nazi spy, Hermann Görtz (BK 21).<sup>12</sup> However, Maud Gonne left the Golden Dawn, suspecting it of Freemasonry and thus of British imperial politics.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1937 version of *A Vision*, Michael Robartes draws a clear opposition between authoritarian and democratic modes of government (necessarily abjuring the latter) which emerge with the rotation of the opposing gyres. He also couches his appraisal in a rhetoric of violence: "After an age of necessity, truth, goodness, mechanism, science, democracy, abstraction, peace, comes an age of freedom, fiction, evil, kindred, art, aristocracy, particularity, war.... Love war because of its horror, that belief may be changed, civilisation renewed.... Belief is renewed continually in the ordeal of death" (AVB 52–54). As Adorno identifies, the authoritarian personality is given to desire for violence: "At the hub of the fascist, anti-Semitic propaganda ritual is the desire for ritual murder.... The idea of actual shedding of blood is advocated as necessary.... Murder is invested with the halo of a sacrament."<sup>14</sup> This is of course, not exclusive to fascist agendas (the notion of blood sacrifice was also prevalent in Pearse's revolutionary ethos). However, there is also a moral judgment encoded in Robartes's statement: he specifically states that the first democratic age represents the "good," whilst the second aristocratic age signifies "evil." Of course, there is always the possibility of Blakean inversion, but Aherne questions Robartes in reply that "Even if the next divine influx be to kindreds why should war be necessary? Cannot they develop their characteristics in some other way?" (AVB 53). Again, Yeats refuses to commit to the fascist ideology in totality. At a later point in the main text of *A Vision*, a similar formula is repeated: "A *primary* dispensation looking beyond itself towards a transcendent power is dogmatic, levelling, unifying, feminine, humane, peace its means and end; an *antithetical* dispensation obeys imminent power, is expressive, hierarchical, multiple, masculine, harsh, surgical" (AVB 263). Notably here, the judgment on the *antithetical* dispensation is one of approval. The oppositional model with its approbation of violence emerges in part from Yeats's reading of ancient Greek philosophy, especially Empedocles: "There is a double becoming of perishable things and a double passing away.... And these things never cease, continually changing places, at one time all uniting in one through Love, at another each borne in different directions by the repulsion of Strife."<sup>15</sup> Undoubtedly Yeats was urging in the *antithetical* dispensation with a scarcely suppressed sense of

satisfaction: “when the new gyre begins to stir, I am filled with excitement” (*AVB* 300). In fact, Yeats had been publicly advocating anti-democratic politics prior to the Blueshirt episode in 1933. In 1924, before the publication of the first version of *A Vision*, he told an interviewer: “Authoritarian government is certainly coming, if for no other reason than that the modern State is so complex that it must find some kind of expert government—a government firm enough, tyrannical enough, if you will, to spend years in carrying out its plans” (“From Democracy to Authority,” *UP2* 435). He expressed open admiration of Mussolini, citing him as “a great popular leader [who] has said to an applauding multitude ‘We will trample upon the decomposing body of the Goddess of Liberty.’”<sup>16</sup> Again we see the vacillation between two political polarities.

In *A Vision B*, Yeats has provided a number of references to fascist and proto-fascist authors with whom he claimed an ideological kinship. The first of these is Oswald Spengler, about whose book, *The Decline of the West* (published in German in July 1918), Yeats stated: “though founded upon a different philosophy, [it] gives the same years of crisis and draws the same general conclusions” (*AVB* 11). He also claimed that “our thoughts run together...I discovered for myself Spengler’s main source in Vico, and that half the revolutionary thoughts of Europe are a perversion of Vico’s philosophy” (*AVB* 260–1). What Spengler and Vico share with Yeats is a cyclical philosophy. In *The Decline of the West*, there is a persistent fixation on the degeneracy of Western culture, and the emergence of an antithetical opposite:

A Culture is born in the moment when a great soul awakens out of the proto-spirituality...of ever-childish humanity, and detaches itself, a form from the formless, a bounded and mortal thing from the boundless and enduring. It blooms on the soil of an exactly-definable landscape, to which plant-wise it remains bound.... Every Culture stands in a deeply symbolical, almost in a mystical, relation to the Extended, the space, in which and through which it strives to actualize itself. The aim once attained—the idea, the entire content of possibilities, fulfilled and made externally actual—the Culture suddenly hardens, it mortifies, its blood congeals, its force breaks down, and it becomes *Civilization*.... This—the inward and outward fulfilment, the finality, that awaits every living Culture—is the purport of all the historic “declines,” among them that decline of the Classical which we know so well and fully, and another decline, entirely comparable to it in course and duration, which will occupy the first centuries of the coming millennium but is heralded already and sensible in and around us to-day—the decline of the West.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed the historical cycle is heavily derivative of Vico, who claimed that there exists “the *ideal eternal history*, through which the history of all nations must in time pass. For whenever nations emerge from their savage, ferocious, and brutish ages, and are civilized by religion, they begin, develop, and end in the same stages.”<sup>18</sup> For Yeats and Spengler, what marks the cyclical mode of thinking is a regressive and anti-Marxist vision of history (though founded upon a *different* philosophy). Aligning the history of decay and renewal with Spengler’s palingenesis reveals a common ground with the politics of Nazi Germany:

the myth of renewal, of rebirth. Etymologically, the term of “palingenesis,” deriving from *palin* (again, anew) and *genesis* (creation, birth) refers to the sense of a new start or of regeneration after a phase of crisis or decline which can be associated just as much with mystical (for example the Second Coming) as secular realities (for example the New Germany)...[It is] a generic term for the vision of a radically *new* beginning which follows a period of destruction or perceived dissolution.<sup>19</sup>

Of course Spengler's philosophy, and especially his critical approach to liberalism, was co-opted by the Nazis, and Spengler himself had voted for the National Socialists in the 1932 election (he had flown a swastika flag outside his house in Munich). After *The Decline of the West*, he wrote *The Hour of Decision* in 1934, which, whilst criticizing National Socialist policy, also maintained a profoundly offensive approach to what he perceived to be “the Coloured Peril” threatening modern Europe. W. J. McCormack suggests that Yeats's recognition of Spengler reveals his own thought to be “irrational, elitist, catastrophic and occult” (*BK* 245). However, Spengler also disagreed with Nazi racial policy and anti-Semitism, for which he was eventually ostracized, whilst *The Hour of Decision* was proscribed in Nazi Germany. Such comparisons between authors are never as simple as they appear. In many ways Spengler is irredeemable, but like the Italian anti-fascist Benedetto Croce, he is both implicated and distanced from the official regime.<sup>20</sup> Croce was from a conservative and aristocratic background, greatly influenced by Vico. He initially welcomed Italian fascism and problematically, he “includes Jewish culture in the camp of those cultures incompatible with European ideas.”<sup>21</sup> However, he mounted a vigorous campaign against the far right in Italy in 1925 with the publication of his manifesto. This sought to counter Giovanni Gentile's “*Manifesto degli intellettuali del fascismo*” (or “Manifesto of Fascist Intellectuals”), which was written at the request of Mussolini and included Pirandello and Marinetti among its signatories.<sup>22</sup> Croce was also on the index of texts proscribed by the Vatican, and endured fascist censorship. Yeats refers to him in *A Vision* in his refutation of Hegel (*AVB* 72n; see also 82) and both share a rejection of the latter philosopher's progressive idea of history.

An affirmation of cyclical history does not necessarily condemn Yeats to pro-fascist politics. In fact, the anti-fascist Carlo Levi employed cyclical theories of history as a “bulwark against the dangerous sedimentation of thought that had, for example, taken over Italian liberalism, and could, in the worst of hypotheses pave the way for a new form of fascism.”<sup>23</sup> Here the Viconian cycles are employed as a counter to fascism. Like Nietzsche, cyclical philosophy can be appropriated for dangerous and racially motivated politics, but it is also possible to mobilize such historical thought against the far right. Certainly in the 1920s, Yeats's occult thought is not *committed* to far-right propaganda. In “Sailing to Byzantium” Yeats does not subscribe to the cult of youth which emerged in Hitler's regime during that time: “That is no country for old men” (*VP* 407; *CWI* 197). Whether “that” is Ireland or Europe, Yeats flies from a culture which reveres youth, to Byzantium. Interestingly too, Hitler's Germany would forbid secret societies, including the Golden Dawn: “[the] German occultist movement...flourished underground between c. 1920 and its eventual destruction by the Nazis after 1933....The Hermetische Orden der Goldenen Dämmerung, i.e. the G.D., was on the Gestapo's list of proscribed occult organisations.

Although the order never existed in Germany they were taking no chances.”<sup>24</sup> As René Alleau has claimed, “The National Socialist party did not tolerate secret societies, because it was itself a secret society, with its grand master, its racist gnosis, its rites and initiations.”<sup>25</sup> Although themselves implicated in secrecy, the Nazis nonetheless considered the Golden Dawn a threat, a competitor, rather than a buttress to their own ideology. The Nazi proscription was mirrored by the Irish Blueshirts, who asserted that “Members of secret societies would not be eligible for membership.”<sup>26</sup> With his occult connections and interests, this edict placed Yeats in a very ironic and compromised position as regards the Blueshirt movement. Equally, at each juncture in the text of *A Vision*, contextual material provides little conclusion in terms of a clear affiliation between Yeatsian occultism and fascist tendencies.

Where the theories of Spengler and Yeats cohere most alarmingly with extremist politics is in the concept of the strong leader figure. In *The Decline of the West*, Spengler details the rise of Caesarism which marks the beginning of a historical change. He explains that “By the term ‘Caesarism’ I mean that kind of government which, irrespective of any constitutional formulation that it may have, is in its inward self a return to thorough formlessness....Real importance centred in the wholly personal power exercised by the Caesar, or by anybody else capable of exercising it in his place” (*DW2* 431). The phrase “irrespective of any constitutional formulation” suspiciously points to a supremacy of the ruler against the legitimate authority of the individual as enshrined in instruments of government. Spengler continues that,

the chaos [of the old order] gives forth a new and overpowering factor that penetrates to the very elementals of Becoming—the Caesar-men. Before them the [omnipotence of] money collapses. *The Imperial Age, in every Culture alike, signifies the end of the politics of mind and money.* The powers of the blood, unbroken bodily forces, resume their ancient lordship. “Race” springs forth, pure and irresistible—the strongest win and the residue is their spoil. They seize the management of the world, and the realm of books and problems petrifies or vanishes from memory....Once the Imperial Age has arrived, there are no more political problems.... (*DW2* 431–32)

Yeats’s own political thought provides a useful comparison to this extract: “If any Government or party undertake this work it will need force, marching men....There is no such government or party today; should either appear I offer it...what remains to me of life.”<sup>27</sup> It is this desire for strong leadership which in an occult formula, develops into the role of the avatar (in Hinduism, this is the descent of a deity from heaven to earth, and Theosophy continues with this tradition). Yeats claimed of himself that he was “a forerunner of that horde that will some day come down the mountains” (*L* 873), referring to those mysterious figures which reappear throughout the *Vision* Papers. Yeats initially connects the avatar with AE’s characters of the same name: “The word ‘avatar’ being taken from an old vision of Russells [sic] of a child seen rising up above Ben Bulben” (*YVP3* 83). Characteristically peculiar, the Yeatses believed that the avatar would be incarnated in their first-born child, pointing to an early union of eugenical breeding, the search for aristocratic lineage, and the occult (*YVP1* 17 & 25). The *Vision* Papers cite, “The child the

avatar the mountain the work" (*YVP3* 337), which relates to the fact that Yeats believed AE's story pointed to his own ancestors (*YVP3* 83). Yeats as a "fourth" generation figure in the script is merely a "forerunner": his child or children, of the fifth generation, will bring forth the new regime.

It is this context in which *Purgatory* should be read (it was first published with *On the Boiler* in 1939). The play was written with the Peacock stage in mind, testifying to Yeats's desire for an elite performance space. That Yeats said of the play that he "put there [his] own conviction about this world and the next" (*L* 913) again reiterates the conjunction between the otherworld and the mundane sphere of politics. This is an analogy he also makes in *On the Boiler*, with his comparison of arcane pursuit and pseudo-scientific methodology: "Eugenical and psychical research are the revolutionary movements with that element of novelty and sensation which sooner or later stir men to action" (*CW5* 238; *Ex* 437). *Purgatory* provided the poet with yet another scandal: Yeats's purgatorial belief system seemed heterodox to some members of the Catholic clergy.<sup>28</sup> It is his eugenic fantasy, focusing on the *mésalliance* between an Anglo-Irish woman and her groom which produced the Old Man. In murdering his own son, he claims justification because "had he grown up / He would have struck a woman's fancy, / Begot, and passed pollution on" (*VPI* 1049; *CW2* 543).<sup>29</sup> Providing a direct contrast with the occult selective breeding of the Yeatses in their quest to produce the avatar, the Old Man's son represents the degeneration of the Anglo-Irish race: "Since about 1900 the better stocks have not been replacing their numbers, while the stupider and less healthy have been more than replacing theirs. Unless there is a change in the public mind every rank above the lowest must degenerate, and, as inferior men push up into its gaps, degenerate more and more quickly" (*CW5* 229; *Ex* 423). As a counter to the degeneration of the nation, Yeats posits the Irish avatar. Most worrying is the proto-fascist political inflection which this occult figure provides. It relates to a solitary, independent and implicitly despotic leader, one who emerges from the masses but is not of them: "New avatar is a person... a person born in many... It is not a doctrine" (*YVP1* 482). For Yeats, it pointed to a violent annunciation in history, providing close comparison in the script with the Sphinx, and thus with the poem, "The Second Coming." Yeats asked in a script produced in Dublin on November 5 1918: "What characteristic coming & present arises from position of new avatar between Christ and Budha [sic]" (*YVP2* 111). The capacity of the avatar to be a precursor of a new mode of government is one of its most marked aspects:

Will influence of Avatar be chiefly spread by geographical East

Yes

Will influence bring war in physical sense

No it will bring tyranny

Will it impose on the world by tyranny

Yes

Will that tyranny have behind it the masses or be against the masses

the masses against themselves

Do you look on a movement like that in Russia as the opposite principle to the avatar or a part of his principle

preparatory only (*YVP2* 536–37)

Yeats's fear of communist Russia emerges here, and will be discussed further in the context of the Blueshirt movement. More important at this juncture, however, is how the avatar suggests the advent of authoritarianism, and can also mark a new civilization in "revelation by shock" (*YVP2* 469). The parallels with the poem "The Second Coming" are clear: here the "rough beast" famously issues in "some revelation" (*VP* 402; *CWI* 189). The announcement of the new dispensation through the agency of the avatar is also outlined in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" where "There lurches past, his great eyes without thought / Under the shadow of stupid straw-pale locks, / That insolent fiend Robert Artisson" (*VP* 433; *CWI* 214). Artisson was an evil spirit pursued in the fourteenth century in Kilkenny, who attached himself to Lady Kyteler as an incubus, and is the source of one of Ireland's most infamous witchcraft cases. As Yeats makes clear in the poem, the spirit required the sacrifice of the nine red cocks. Artisson signals the emergence of raw, inhuman violence, but as Michael Tratner has pointed out, "the fiend's name suggests that he is the 'artist's son,' that he represents the artist's or poet's success in giving birth to a new leader, a new age."<sup>30</sup> As a form of genetic heritage, a "son" or creation of Yeats's, the vulgar ferocity of Artisson is also implicated in the idea of the avatar.

The coming of the avatar is marked by "Bitterness...it is impervious to pity & amenable to passion and thought" (*YVP3* 335). There is always the revelation of the avatar before a change of cycle: "Avatar influx always before...because one begins a cycle the other ends it" and "The antithesis begets the avatar" (*YVPI* 467 and 481). The avatar also points to a suppression of individual agency: "We are now approaching the avatar & the opportunity of choice is smallest possible" (*YVPI* 486). Equally worrying, and partly demonstrated by the Yeatses' fascination with their children as avatars, is the potential for a racial discourse: "each nation must have its avatar in the time to come" (*YVP2* 155). The national avatar is closely linked to the more general idea of eternal recurrence: "nations also were sealed at birth with a character derived from the whole, and had, like individuals, their periods of increase and decrease" (*AVB* 253).<sup>31</sup> Such ethnicity is also posited in AE's novella "The Avatars" (dedicated to Yeats on its 1933 publication): he suggests the purpose of an avatar is "to reveal the spiritual character of a race to itself" (*DOTG* 542–43). In this way, Yeats's occult nationalism can be related to fascist racialism: "*nationalism* is the real driving force behind Nazism, as it is with fascism in general. The precondition of the existence of a higher racial community is not the state but the nation...nationalism is *necessarily xenophobic*—that is, xenophobia is part of the logic of nationalism—and thus always remains an invitation to anti-Semitism and racism."<sup>32</sup>

However, the aggression and appraisal of secular power implicit in Yeats's figure of the avatar is somewhat absent from AE's vision. He states "The wise ones assume excellent forms in secret. Did an Avatar ever sit on a throne? Have they not always gone about the world as vagrants?" (*DOTG* 582–83). The figure also ushers in a Utopian model of human relations: "Our dream is coming true. All the things which seemed remote and fabulous, tales of a golden age, of gods mingling with men, things sunken from belief on remote horizons of time, now seem to rise to us, to be true once more" (*DOTG* 588). He also affirms individual choice: "he was an Avatar of freedom" (*DOTG* 600). In many ways, AE's avatar represents the coming of spirituality rather than despotism. By contrast, despite the

alignment in the *Vision* Papers with AE's model, Yeats's avatar corresponds more closely to Spenglerian Caesarism:

Highest of all, however, is not action, but the *ability to command*....[T]he statesman rises to something that in the Classical world would doubtless have been called divinity. He becomes the creator of a new life, the *spirit*-ancestor of a young race. He himself, as a unit, vanishes from the stream after a few years. But a minority called into being by him takes up his course and maintains it indefinitely....Such a minority develops into a true "breed," even when it had begun merely as a party, and the sureness of its decisions comes to be that of blood, not of reason....The great statesman is the gardener of a people...[building] from the top storey downwards. (*DW2* 444–45)

Of course a close relation to the Nietzschean superman is evident here: "those enigmatical men, predestined for conquering and circumventing others, the finest examples of which are Alcibiades and Caesar."<sup>33</sup> This is resonant of Yeats's claim that leaders exercise their influence in society by filtration from the top to the bottom strata. It is the absence of this form of strong leadership which Yeats refers to in 1928, in his publication of "Blood and the Moon": it is "a time / Half dead at the top" (*VP* 480; *CWI* 241).

Yeats's vision of the avatar has some sympathy with Spengler: it is a racial entity; one which becomes or invokes a despotic leader; one who employs a tyrannical will in his approach to the people. However, in a clear paradox to the authoritarian model described by Adorno, the avatar is also related to the *Thirteenth Cone*:

Are souls about to be born at time of Avatar in spiritual cone?  
Well to simplify—13th cycle souls are born or rather begin 13th cycle at time of avatar. (*YVP2* 171)

The *Thirteenth Cone* is perhaps one of the most inexplicable and mystifying aspects of *A Vision*. The *Spirits of the Thirteenth Cone* are outside the system, and despite the overall determinism of *A Vision*, it represents an attempt to account for free will and autonomy: "the work of the *Thirteenth Cone* or cycle which is in every man and called by every man his freedom" (*AVB* 302). Ellmann comments that "All the determinism or quasi-determinism of *A Vision* is abruptly confronted with the Thirteenth Cycle which is able to alter everything, and suddenly free will, liberty, and deity pour back into the universe."<sup>34</sup> Representing an escape from the ever-whirling cycles of reincarnation and rebirth, it signals freedom, a form of discarnate Utopia: "The ultimate reality because neither one nor many, concord nor discord, is symbolised as a phaseless sphere" (*AVB* 193). In a complicated turn of events, this too is implicated in an overall scheme of opposition, as Hazard Adams comments, "the determined is always opposed by the indeterminate, fate by destiny. This is the role of the Thirteenth Cone, one's freedom and possessed by all."<sup>35</sup> Hence Yeats refers to "Chance being at one with Choice at last" ("Solomon and the Witch," *VP* 388; *CWI* 179), and also, in the poem "All Souls' Night," how the soul's journey into afterlife is marked by being,

...free and yet fast,  
 Being both Chance and Choice  
 Forget its broken toys  
 And sink into its own delight at last. (*VP* 472–73; *CWI* 233)

Both fate and liberty are paradoxically united and the system is seen to encompass both destiny and free will. It is a discernible feature of *A Vision* that the *Thirteenth Cone* ultimately denotes (for both history and the individual) another way “in which Yeats’s efforts at mechanical philosophizing end in frustration.”<sup>36</sup> However, like all Utopias, is impossible to apprehend the *Thirteenth Cone*, as it “can be symbolized but cannot be known” (*AVB* 193). The avatar is thus inherently Janus-faced: in AE’s assessment, and that of the *Thirteenth Cone* of *A Vision*, it is a liberating force for good. It is also heralds a dark and oppressive mode of government. In this unsettled paradigm of Yeats’s occult politics, it is relevant to review Yeats’s claim for the soul before rebirth:

The victim must, in the *Shiftings*, live the act of cruelty, not as victim but as tyrant; whereas the tyrant must by a necessity of his or her nature become the victim. But if one is dead and the other living they find each other in thought and symbol, the one that has been passive and is now active may from within control the other, once tyrant now victim. (*AVB* 238)

There is no permanent ascendancy of either tyrant or victim in Yeats’s schema: to learn from the life lived, it is necessary to encompass the whole of experience, to appreciate the other’s viewpoint. This has a fundamentally democratizing potential, despite Yeats’s own extremist and anti-democratic political allegiances at this time.

Adorno’s assessment of the fascist personality is highly relevant in consideration of the avatar and its relation to Spenglerian Caesarism: there is a tendency to crave “submission to authority, desire for a strong leader, subservience of the individual to the state, and so forth.... Weakness in the ego is expressed in the inability to build up a consistent and enduring set of moral values within the personality; and it is this state of affairs, apparently, that makes it necessary for the individual to seek some organizing and coordinating agency outside of himself.”<sup>37</sup> This desire for an external moral arbiter marks a clear correlation with an assessment of the occult. However, Yeats’s approach to any form of politics was never wholly “uncritical.” Writing about his initial experience of the Irish Blueshirts to Olivia Shakespear in July 1933, Yeats is obviously enchanted, and links the oppositional theory of *A Vision* with a nascent anti-democratic policy:

It is amusing to live in a country where men will always act. Where nobody is satisfied with thought. There is so little in our stocking that we are ready at any moment to turn it inside out, and how can we not feel emulous when we see Hitler juggling with his sausage of stocking. Our chosen colour is blue, and blue shirts are marching about all over the country, and their organiser tells me that it was my suggestion—a suggestion I have entirely forgotten—that made them select for their flag a red St Patrick’s cross on a blue ground—all I can remember is that I have always denounced green and commended blue (the colour of my

early book covers)...History is very simple—the rule of the many, then the rule of the few, day and night, night and day for ever, while in small disturbed nations day and night race. (*L* 812).

As McCormack has identified, this letter was written just months after the persecution of the Jews had been codified in the Third Reich, “with a national boycott of Jewish businesses, and after the suppression of Germany’s trade unions” (*BK* 49).<sup>38</sup>

However, it is important to assess the Blueshirts as a specifically Irish historical phenomenon. How far the movement can be considered an Irish emulation of Italy is problematic: “‘Irish fascism’ remains an open question, ideologically speaking—at least for the early 1930s.”<sup>39</sup> This is certainly the case in an analysis of the intellectual impetus behind the Blueshirts, which was in obvious contradistinction to the motivations of many of the members. The Blueshirts emerged as an amalgam of several different strands of Irish political societies: “[They] sprang directly from the Army Comrades Association. The foundation of Fine Gael, of which the Blueshirt movement was an integral part, was brought about by the merging of Cumann na nGaedheal and the Centre Party with the National Guard” (*MB* 211). The two political parties, Cumann na nGaedheal (which Yeats supported during the Civil War) and the Centre Party had a background which seemingly would attract Yeats’s late politics, being essentially conservative: the latter represented a restrained approach to Irish nationalism, and caution in economics and social policy. Cumann na nGaedheal tended to attract “the propertied and business classes, the confidence of the Catholic hierarchy and the trust of the British government” (*MB* 211). From its foundation, the ACA emphasized it was apolitical, although there was some level of sympathy between the Association and Cumann na nGaedheal. The resulting Blueshirt hierarchy, led by General Eoin O’Duffy, claimed an allegiance to the Pope Pius X’s encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, which outlined a social policy of corporatism and the re-establishment of vocational groups: “the medieval guild system brought up to date.”<sup>40</sup> Given Yeats’s allegiance to the feudal system of the Middle Ages and his idea of “Unity of Culture,” it is possible to see how such a scheme would appeal to the poet. However, the influence of the papal encyclical was not restricted to any one political polarity, and was “to figure prominently in the Constitution of 1937.”<sup>41</sup> The Blueshirt intellectuals tended to appeal to the Italian system as well as to the papal encyclical, but “minimised the importance of the dictatorship” (*MB* 225) and in fact, such a proposal was in clear contradiction to the Catholic societal model (*MB* 227). However, O’Duffy’s political aspirations were less cautious:

He saw the Blueshirts as part of a world-wide phenomenon and was quick to identify himself as its leader. He was pleased to call himself a Fascist and enthusiastically immersed himself in the affairs of international Fascism....His crusading zeal and his view of Fascism as the Christian answer to the threat of Communism...may have blinded him to the ugly reality of many aspects of the Fascist movements he praised.... (*MB* 229)

Yeats obviously hoped that the Blueshirts would produce the Irish avatar, the occultist version of the autocratic leader: “I know half a dozen men any one of whom may be Caesar—

or Cataline. It is amusing to live in a country where men will always act" (L 812). In fact, he wanted to stage a Blueshirted version of *Coriolanus* at the Abbey, mercifully resisted by other members of the Abbey administration.<sup>42</sup> Whether the rank-and-file Blueshirts supported the idea of anti-democratic Caesarism is another matter entirely:

Any developing fascism which did exist within the Blueshirts should be seen as a minority concern which was repugnant to, and therefore repelled by Fine Gael and the Blueshirt members.... The role of the members and the party traditionalists in not supporting the excesses of O'Duffy showed that, despite the allure of shirted politics across much of Western Europe, their overriding political allegiance was to the liberal democracy which had emerged following the years of the Irish revolution and had been crystallised in the post-Treaty era.<sup>43</sup>

The intelligentsia of the movement went in a contrary direction to the grass-roots member. Nowhere is this clearer than John A. Costello's statement in the Dáil that the Blueshirts would be victorious in Ireland in the same way as the Blackshirts had been in Italy and the "Hitlershirts" in Germany.<sup>44</sup>

With respect to communism, O'Duffy and Yeats certainly concurred. In 1919, Yeats claimed that, "What I want is that Ireland be kept from giving herself (under the influence of its lunatic faculty of going against everything which it believes England to affirm) to Marxian revolution or Marxian definitions of value in any form. I consider the Marxian criterion of values as in this age the spear-head of materialism and leading to inevitable murder" (L 656).<sup>45</sup> In *A Vision B* he asks, "How far can I accept socialistic or communistic prophecies?" (AVB 301). His rejection of democracy is equally uncompromising: "Doubtless I shall hate it [fascism] (though not so much as I hate Irish democracy)" (L 813). Like O'Duffy, he saw fascism as a counter to communism: "At the moment I am trying in association with [an] ex-cabinet minister, an eminent lawyer, and a philosopher, to work out a social theory which can be used against Communism in Ireland—what looks like emerging is Fascism modified by religion" (L 808). However, as McCormack observes, his antipathy towards the far left is commonplace: "antagonism towards Bolshevism was unremarkable, being shared by virtually everyone except members of a communist party" (BK 169). What is more noteworthy is how this portrayal of the Blueshirt movement is at odds with rank-and-file motivations for supporting the party: "members positively scorned the idea that they feared communism. They saw the communist threat as an attempt by the Blueshirt hierarchy and the Church to drum up support" (BIP 134).

It is easy to see Yeats's attraction to the movement. It represented a source of family cohesion, as the Blueshirts included a youth association (the League of Youth), and reinforced the importance of the collective ancestral unit with which Yeats was obsessed.<sup>46</sup> The party also sought to protect free speech against Fianna Fáil/IRA incursions, and more generally, responded to the fears of an IRA military coup, the institution of de Valera in a dictatorship, and the collapse of law and order (BIP 128–32).<sup>47</sup> However, it also emerged as a party which contradicted many of Yeats's own beliefs. One of these, already mentioned, is the proscription of membership in a secret society (although by this time Yeats's membership of the group that succeeded the Golden Dawn had lapsed). Another is Yeats's support of economic war with Britain,<sup>48</sup> which is categorically against one of the

chief motivations of Blueshirtism: "De Valera's attempt to bring Britain to its knees by sanction and embargo did more to unleash the forces of Blueshirtism than any amount of propaganda from O'Duffy" (*BIP* 128). Following his meeting with O'Duffy on 24 July 1933, Yeats's mood was somewhat curbed, and he is obviously critical of the General: "[he] is autocratic, directing the movement from above down as if it were an army. I did not think him a great man though a pleasant one, but one never knows, his face and mind may harden or clarify" (*L* 813). In fact, de Valera, not O'Duffy, emerged in the 1930s as the strong leader. Reading Yeats's evaluation of O'Duffy in the light of Adorno's model of authoritarianism, it is difficult to present Yeats as an unequivocal totalitarian. It is better to address the question as Marjorie Howes does: "Like the good Blakean he was, Yeats affirmed that each contrary was no less true because its opposite was also true."<sup>49</sup> Ultimately, the poet's politics replicate his occult antinomies.

In fact, in his occult politics of the late 1930s, Yeats spurned both communism and fascism. In the later version of *A Vision*, he claims "I...must think all civilisations equal at their best; every phase returns, therefore in some sense every civilisation" (*AVB* 206). This directly contradicts his earlier approval in *A Vision* for the hierarchical and despotic model of the antithetical dispensation. As Marjorie Howes suggests:

On a theoretical level that coincides with the grand historical scale of *A Vision*, Yeats accepts both democracy and authority, individual and race, equally, as the necessary and interdependent faces of an important historical and political antinomy. Ethically, he was no less committed to his own version of values like intellectual initiative and individual liberty than he was to family strength and inherited wealth.<sup>50</sup>

This is confirmed by Elizabeth Cullingford: "Yeats's poetry escapes simple political labels because it is essentially dialectical" (*YIF* viii). The poet's idea of fascism as a materialization of the antithetical dispensation is now firmly rejected: "Yeats had once thought that fascism was turning away from final primary thought. He now realized that it was actually the epitome of that thought" (*YIF* 218). Part of this rejection results from an enforced unity which Nazi Germany represents: "What discords will drive Europe to that artificial unity—only dry or drying sticks can be tied into a bundle—which is the decadence of every civilisation?" (*AVB* 301–2).<sup>51</sup> He criticizes such artificial unity in *On the Boiler*: "The Fascist countries know that civilisation has reached a crisis...but from dread of attack or because they must feed their uneducatable masses, put quantity before quality; any hale man can dig or march" (*CW5* 230; *Ex* 424). There is neither synthesis nor the acceptance of one side of the antinomies in the Yeatsian schema—there is rather a preference for complete alterity.

In the Free State, Yeats represented the causes of individual liberty in the divorce and the censorship debates, but he also supported the draconian measures of Kevin O'Higgins and asserted his ideas of elitism. His idea of the political occult is fully revealed in "A Race Philosophy" written in 1933 and copied into his diary after the Blueshirt incident. It opens with the line "The antinomies cannot be solved."<sup>52</sup> Yeats continues with a clear and uncompromising rejection of both political extremes: "Communism, Fascism, inadequate because society is the struggle of two forces not transparent to reason, the

family and the individual.”<sup>53</sup> In the accompanying “Genealogical Tree of Revolution,” Yeats identifies that Hegel’s solution of Kant’s antinomies resulted in both communism and fascism: “a diametrically opposed yet related series of propositions, centring on the materialist/idealist polarity....Fascism, which had once seemed the antithesis of communism, now looked more like its mirror image” (*YIF* 216). For Yeats, both political regimes represent the suppression of the individual freedom and thus are to be rejected: “Equality of opportunity, equality of rights, have been created to assist the individual in his struggle.”<sup>54</sup> However, existing simultaneously alongside this benevolent assertion of “equality” is a more eugenic and authoritarian angle reminiscent of *On the Boiler*: “Materially and spiritually uncreative families must not be allowed to prevail over the creative.”<sup>55</sup> There is conflict inherent in Yeats’s political occult here, which is ultimately irreconcilable. Both personal liberty and authoritarian power are defended in this esoteric framework of oppositions. The “Genealogical Tree” concludes by “enshrining conflict as its one constant.”<sup>56</sup>

Ultimately, after his Blueshirt escapade, Yeats rejects any real commitment to fascist politics, which is not to say he does not envisage an anti-democratic, and aristocratic regime for Ireland. However, with the recognition of the political alterity of the later work comes the caveat that the whole of Yeats’s occult enterprise is not necessarily incriminated in exclusivist hypotheses (as in the example of the Golden Dawn), and this is a careful distinction which should be made in any consideration of the poet’s esoteric studies. It is impossible to remake Yeats as a benevolent but bewildered poet trespassing into an unfamiliar political forum, because Yeats’s occult poetics were invariably always political, and on occasion, of a somewhat alarming variety. However, it is possible to retrieve the occult from an absolute judgment that it inherently comprises right-wing, pseudo-fascist and authoritarian doctrines. As a close study of Yeats’s occult career demonstrates, the political implications of arcane pursuit are often far more elusive. As George Orwell concluded in the 1940s: “No doubt Yeats wavered in his beliefs and held at different times many different opinions, some enlightened, some not.”<sup>57</sup> A similar claim may be made for the occult and its political inflections.

## Notes

- 1 George Orwell, “W. B. Yeats,” *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* (London: Secker & Warburg Limited, 1968), vol. 2, “My Country Right or Left: 1940–1943,” 275.
- 2 Conor Cruise O’Brien, “Passion and Cunning,” in *In Excited Reverie: A Centenary Tribute to William Butler Yeats*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares and K. G. W. Cross (London: Macmillan, 1965), 207–278.
- 3 Seamus Deane, “Yeats and the Occult,” *W. B. Yeats: Critical Assessments*, ed. David Pierce (Robertsbridge: Helm Information Ltd., 2000), vol. 4, “Assessments: 1980–2000,” 209.
- 4 Paul Scott Stanfield, *Yeats and Politics in the 1930s* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 187.
- 5 Stephen Spender, Foreword to *The Appeal of Fascism: A Study of Intellectuals and Fascism 1919–1945* by Alistair Hamilton, (London: Anthony Blond, 1971), xi.
- 6 W. J. McCormack, *Blood Kindred: W. B. Yeats; The Life, The Death, The Politics* (London: Pimlico, 2005), 129; hereafter *BK* in text.
- 7 Theodor W. Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and Others Essays on the Irrational in Culture*, ed. S. Crook (1994; London: Routledge, 2002), 31.
- 8 Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1979), 79.
- 9 Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 30–31.

- 10 Nesta H. Webster, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements* (1924; New York: A & B Publishers Group, 1998), 306–7.
- 11 AE (George Russell), *The Descent of the Gods*, ed. Raghavan Iyer and Nandini Iyer, (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1988), 3, introduction. Hereafter *DOTG* in text.
- 12 Iseult was charged but mysteriously acquitted.
- 13 Maud Gonne, *A Servant of the Queen, Reminiscences (1938)*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares and Anna MacBride White, (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1994), 212.
- 14 Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth*, 229.
- 15 John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1892), 221 (cf. *WBGYL* 316; *YL* 308). See also Wayne Chapman, “Authors in Eternity: Some Sources of Yeats’s Creative Mysticism,” *YAI5* (2002), 288–312.
- 16 Cited by Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 249.
- 17 Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson, 2 vols., (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1926–28), vol. 1, 106–7. See *WBGYL* 1989 (*YL* 1975). Hereafter *DW1* and *DW2* in text.
- 18 Giambattista Vico, *New Science*, trans. David Marsh (1744: Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), 154 (cf. *WBGYL* 456; *YL* 445); B. Croce, *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, trans. R. G. Collingwood (London: Howard Latimer, 1913).
- 19 Roger Griffin, “Fascism: ‘Rebirth’ and ‘Ultra-Nationalism’” (1993), *The Fascism Reader*, ed. Aristotle A. Kallis (London: Routledge, 2003), 174.
- 20 See Elizabeth Cullingford, *Yeats, Ireland and Fascism* (London, Macmillan, 1981), 151. Hereafter *YIF* in text.
- 21 David Ward, *Antifascisms: Cultural Politics in Italy, 1943–6. Benedetto Croce and the Liberals, Carlo Levi and the Actionists*” (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), 81.
- 22 Gentile’s discussion of Kant is cited in *AVB* 70, footnote.
- 23 See Ward, *Antifascisms*, 188, for further discussion of Carlo Levi and the Actionists.
- 24 Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn: A Documentary History of a Magical Order (1887–1923)* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 284.
- 25 René Alleau, *Les sources occultes du nazisme* (Paris: Grasset, 1969), 214. Cited in Umberto Eco, *Foucault’s Pendulum*, trans. W. Weaver (London: Vintage, 2001), 507.
- 26 Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1970), 74; hereafter *MB* in text.
- 27 Yeats, “Commentary on the Three Songs,” *The King of the Great Clock Tower, and Other Poems* (1934; Shannon, Irish University Press, 1977), 37.
- 28 See Roy Foster, *Life2* 628, and Welch, *The Abbey Theatre 1899–1999: Form and Pressure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 133. As McCormack points out, “his developing his theme in the house of his lesbian lover should be accounted a triumph among Yeats’s liberal inconsistencies” (*BK* 122).
- 29 For further discussion on *Purgatory* and eugenics, see Marjorie Howes, *Yeats’s Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 160–85.
- 30 Michael Tratner, *Modernism and Mass Politics: Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 153.
- 31 See *YVP3* 121–22 for the Irish nation being at the opposite phase (8–9) from Europe’s Phase 23.
- 32 Mark Neoleous, “Racism, Fascism and Nationalism” (1997), *The Fascist Reader*, ed. Aristotle A. Kallis, 351–53.
- 33 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Helen Zimmern (London & Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1907), 122. Nietzsche was notoriously misappropriated by the Nazi regime in Germany.
- 34 Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 286.
- 35 Hazard Adams, *The Book of Yeats’s Vision: Romantic Modern and Antithetical Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 148.
- 36 Hazard Adams, “Criticism, Politics and History: The Matter of Yeats,” *Georgia Review*, 24 (1970), 158–82 at 168n.
- 37 Adorno and others, “Measurement of Antidemocratic Trends,” in T. W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, Daniel J. Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 231–34.
- 38 By contrast, of course, Yeats supported the workers against the businessmen in the Dublin lock-out of 1913. Yeats’s militant anti-labor politics emerged during his Free State years.

- 39 R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland: 1600–1972*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), 550.
- 40 Michael Tierney, cited *MB* 222.
- 41 F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (London: Fontana, 1985), 528.
- 42 Welch, *The Abbey Theatre*, 122.
- 43 Mike Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), 197–98; hereafter *BIP* in text. See also Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland* (London: Profile, 2004), 416.
- 44 Cited in Tim Pat Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow* (London: Arrow, 1995), 473.
- 45 See also NLI, MS 36,272/33, “Michael Robartes Foretells,” where Robartes says, “I reject Marxian Socialism, in so far as it is derived from [Marx]” (*YO* 221).
- 46 See *BIP* 125 for further details on the Blueshirts as “a family pastime.”
- 47 For de Valera and fears of a dictatorship, see Coogan, *De Valera*, 467.
- 48 Stanfield, *Yeats and Politics in the 1930s*, 19.
- 49 Howes, *Yeats’s Nations*, 162.
- 50 Howes, *Yeats’s Nations*, 162.
- 51 See also his letter of 30 November 1936 to Ethel Mannin (*L* 869).
- 52 NLI MS 30,280, “The Genealogical Tree of Revolution and A Race Philosophy,” 2. Published in A. Norman Jeffares, *W. B. Yeats: Man and Poet* (1966; New York: St Martin’s Press, 1996), 325–26.
- 53 NLI MS 30,280, 2.
- 54 NLI MS 30,280, 2.
- 55 NLI MS 30,280, 2.
- 56 Michael North, *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 73.
- 57 George Orwell, “W. B. Yeats,” 275.

# Glossary

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The following glossary is intended to provide guidance to readers who may just want to check a term or confirm something. The following definitions are brief and supplementary to the fuller treatment in the essays and almost all of the definitions and concepts are elaborated and modified significantly. It is based on the page on “Terminology” at Neil Mann’s website, YeatsVision.com, though significantly adapted. Where relevant, the essay in this volume that deals with the topic is given at the end.

Yeats was careful about italicization and capitalization of most terms, marking the terms even in manuscript and typescript, though not always entirely consistently. In this volume, we have preferred the form that is most commonly used in *A Vision*, favoring *A Vision B* in cases where the two editions vary and general consistency where there is variation within an edition.

## afterlife

The Yeatses’ system views birth and death not as true beginnings or endings but rather as significant junctures in a continuous process. Yeats compares a life to a night and a day: birth happens at sunset, the life corresponds to night, dominated by the lunar; death happens at daybreak, so that the afterlife corresponds to day, dominated by the solar.

The anatomy of the afterlife changed significantly between the two editions of *A Vision*. In *A Vision B* it is divided into six stages or states of unequal duration, labeled with the signs of the zodiac. A late draft of the material gives possibly the most succinct summary, though using calendar months instead of zodiacal signs:

The first symbolical state follows death immediately or accompanies it and is the symbolical March. It has two moments the “*vision of the blood kindred*” and the “*meditation upon the Celestial Body*,” and it is the separation of the Spirit from nature. The second state, or April, is called the return and the *dreaming back* and completes that separation. The third state [*Shiftings*], or May, is the separation from good and evil. The fourth, or June, is called the *Beatitude* or *beatific vision* ... and the fifth state, or July, is called the *purification* and unites the shade to its ideal aim and so moves it back into good and evil. The sixth state or August is called the *Preparation* [*AVB: Foreknowledge*] and displays its future life and so binds it to nature once more. (NLI 36,272/22)

See Graham A. Dampier, “The Spiritual Intellect’s Great Work,” 55–89.

## antithetical

One of the two *Tinctures*, the impulse to individuation and subjectivity, corresponding to the lunar (which operates on a larger and more general scale), and predominating during the brighter phases of the moon, between Phases 8 and 22. It is established in opposition to the *primary Tincture* and defines itself by continual conflict with the *primary*. See Neil Mann, “Everywhere that antinomy of the One and the Many,” 1–21.

## automatic script

A technique of mediumship, involving the clearing or distraction of the mind, though not usually trance, so that the hand writes without the intervention of the

conscious mind. The Yeatses' automatic script is an incredibly complex series of questions and answers, evolving over several years, mostly between 1917 and 1920. After this a technique of Sleeps was used, with decreasing frequency until 1924, though these are usually loosely included under the general heading of 'automatic script'. Only a proportion of the material that was collected (most now published in *Yeats's "Vision" Papers*) was finally refined and elaborated into *A Vision*. In part this was because Yeats did not fully understand all of the material, in part because it was too personal or partial, and also because of the natural limits imposed by the book which already contains a lot of material. See Margaret Mills Harper, "Reflected Voices, Double Visions," 269–290.

### **Beatific Vision**

The culminating Moment of Crisis, following the Initiatory and Critical Moments. In some manuscript material the term is also applied to the afterlife state usually titled "*Beatitude*." Both terms derive from the Latin root for "blessed" and are traditionally associated with religion and mysticism. See Neil Mann, "The *Thirteenth Cone*," 159–193, and Colin McDowell, "Shifting Sands," 194–216.

### **Beatitude**

The fourth stage of the afterlife, also called the *Marriage*, corresponding symbolically to the passage of *Spiri's* gyre through the zodiacal sign of Cancer, the sign of the summer solstice. See Graham A. Dampier, "The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work," 55–89, and Neil Mann, "The *Thirteenth Cone*," 159–193.

### **being**

"By being is understood that which divides into *Four Faculties*" (AVB 86); as a special term, it is comparable to Heidegger's *Seiende*, the process of being or what is extant, as opposed to his *Sein*, the essence of being, which may be closer to the *Principles*. However, as Heidegger goes on to say, "*Alle Seiende ist im Sein; das Sein ist das Seiende*"—"all being is in Being; Being *is* being," or in terms Yeats borrowed from Plotinus: "temporal existence" is "the characteristic act of the soul" (VPl 934; Ex 397). See Rory Ryan, "The Is and the Ought, the Knower and the Known," 22–54, and Matthew Gibson, "Timeless and Spaceless," 103–135.

### **Body of Fate**

One of the *Four Faculties*, the internal representation of the external world and "the acts towards which we are impelled" (NLI 30,354). See Rory Ryan, "The Is and the Ought, the Knower and the Known," 22–54.

### **Cabala**

Yeats's spelling in *A Vision* is Cabala, but elsewhere he tends to use Cabbala; other spellings include Kabbalah and Qabalah, or variant combinations of these. The last is perhaps closest to transliterating the Hebrew word קבלה meaning "tradition," "received doctrine," "received teaching," or "received wisdom" (spelled with ק [qoph], it comes from the same trilateral root, קבל [QBL], as *qibel*, to receive). It is a system of Jewish mysticism of rabbinical origin and unknown antiquity, which appears to have gained its current form in Spain and France during the period between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries CE. It formed the basis for the teachings of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. See C. Nicholas Serra, "Esotericism and Escape," 307–328.

***Celestial Body***

One of the Four *Principles*, highest of the hierarchy, which becomes the *Clarified Body* once all earthly incarnations are finished. It is the basis of the *Faculty of Body of Fate*. See Graham A. Dampier, "The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work," 55–89.

**civilization**

Usually used as the secular counterpart of a religious dispensation, a 2,200-year civilization runs from the midpoint of the preceding religious era to the midpoint of the next. It does not necessarily correspond to any conventionally recognized cultural label, such as Minoan civilization or even classical civilization. Yeats's classical civilization runs from around 1000BCE to around 1000 CE, with the monotheistic religions, focused on the Christian dispensation, starting at its midpoint (1 CE), and giving way to the civilization which this enabled (Christendom) around the year 1000 CE (see *AVB* 203–4). These two historical cycles, therefore, have the same length but are "syncopated," the civilization corresponding to a lunar month (starting at the New Moon) and the religion to a solar month (zodiacal and starting at the Full Moon). Yeats also sometimes uses the term for periods of one-thousand-odd years, referring for instance to a period corresponding to 1000 CE–2100 CE as "our Gothic civilisation" (*AVB* 255). N.B. Yeats's texts use the British spelling with "s." See Matthew Gibson, "Timeless and Spaceless," 103–135, and Matthew DeForrest, "W. B. Yeats's 'Dove or Swan,'" 136–158.

***Clarified Body***

The *Celestial Body* becomes the *Clarified Body* once all earthly incarnations are finished. Paradoxically, the soul prefigures this state not at Phase 1 but at Phase 15, when "Its own body possesses the greatest possible beauty, being indeed that body which the soul will permanently inhabit, when all its phases have been repeated according to the number allotted: that which we call the clarified or *Celestial Body*" (*CW*13 59; cf. *AVA* 71; cf. *AVB* 136).

**cone**

A cone is a diagrammatic convenience to represent the gyre, but one that becomes a synonym for gyre.

***Creative Mind***

One of the Four *Faculties* originally termed "Creative Genius" in the automatic script. It represents the mind in its consciously constructive aspect, and in more subjective, *antithetical* people can be seen as imagination (*AVB* 142). See Rory Ryan, "The Is and the Ought, the Knower and the Known," 22–54.

**Critical Moment**

The second of the Moments of Crisis, following the Initiatory Moment and preceding the Beatific Vision. See Colin McDowell, "Shifting Sands," 194–216.

**Cycle**

1. A general term referring to the modified repetition of the gyre, and any of the cyclical phenomena which inform the paradigm, such as the natural cycles of the day, the month and the year.
2. A specific term (often capitalized as "Cycle") referring to a complete round of 28 incarnations. The paradigm of the soul's progress involves 12 such Cycles, after

which it may then enter the Thirteenth Cycle (in *AVA* at least). These Cycles received considerable attention in the automatic script, where they are labeled by the signs of the zodiac, starting with Taurus. Yeats considered himself to be in his sixth cycle of incarnation (the Libra cycle), while George was in her seventh cycle of incarnation (the Scorpio cycle). See Neil Mann, “The *Thirteenth Cone*,” 159–193.

### ***Daimon***

A complex concept, which evolved with time, and which Yeats was probably never entirely sure about. The *Daimon* is the supernatural opposite of the human being, but part of a single continuous consciousness with the human, and can even be viewed as the same elements in a different dimension and different emphases. To a certain extent it controls human destiny, but needs its human counterpart to complete its knowledge of reality. See Matthew Gibson, “Timeless and Spaceless,” 103–135, and Neil Mann, “The *Thirteenth Cone*,” 159–193.

### **Dance of the Four Royal Persons**

In the fictions constructed around Kusta ben Luka, four of his followers claimed to be the royal family of the Country of Wisdom and danced on the sand to demonstrate true wisdom (*CW13* 10–12; *AVA* 9–11). Their dance is a moving version of the Great Wheel. See Colin McDowell, “Shifting Sands,” 194–216 and C. Nicholas Serra, “Esotericism and Escape,” 307–328.

### **Discord**

A relationship between *Faculties*, see *AVB* 93–94. The two Oppositions are Discords to each other: *Will* and *Mask*, the two fundamentally *antithetical Faculties*, are each the Discords to *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*, the two fundamentally *primary Faculties*. Each *Faculty* therefore has one Opposition and two Discords. The Discords lead the being to “the enforced understanding of the unlikeness” within the other Opposition, the realization that the goal is unattainable: “Life is an endeavour, made vain by the four sails of its mill, to come to a double contemplation of the chosen Image [*Will* contemplating *Mask*], that of the fated Image [*Creative Mind* contemplating *Body of Fate*]” (*AVB* 94). See Rory Ryan, “The Is and the Ought, the Knower and the Known,” 22–54.

### **Double Cone**

The “normal double cone” or gyre shows the two *Tinctures* as intersecting cones or gyres. In this form, the *Faculties* appear to move as pairs of Discords, *Will* and *Creative Mind* joined by a line across one cone, and *Mask* and *Body of Fate* joined by a line across the other. See Rory Ryan, “The Is and the Ought, the Knower and the Known,” 22–54.

### ***Dreaming Back***

A subsidiary state in the second stage of the afterlife, the *Return*, in which the events of the preceding life are relived according to their intensity. See Graham A. Dampier, ““The Spiritual Intellect’s Great Work,”” 55–89.

### ***Faculties***

The four fundamental constituents of the human psyche during incarnate life. The *Faculties* are: the active, lunar force of *Will* and its focus or target, the *Mask*, and the active, solar force of *Creative Mind* and its focus, the *Body of Fate*. The *Faculties*

are all, however, Lunar in relation to the *Principles*, and, unlike the *Principles*, they are creative but incapable of attaining understanding: 'Man can embody truth, but he cannot know it'. The *Faculties* are not intrinsically hierarchical, and are arranged around the circle of the Wheel in rough equality, although during any particular incarnation, one or more *Faculties* may be stronger. See Rory Ryan, "The Is and the Ought, the Knower and the Known," 22–54.

### Fictions

Within a month or two of the start of the automatic script, Yeats was framing ideas for fictions through which to present these new and exciting ideas. These centered on two old sources and two modern characters: a European book by a Renaissance writer, Giraldus, and an Arabian tradition based on the teachings of Kusta ben Luka, brought together by Michael Robartes, who would tell his discoveries to Owen Aherne. The earliest drafts are assembled in *YVP4*, and there are relics of this scheme in poems such as "The Phases of the Moon" and the notes to various volumes of poetry or plays. In *AVA*, Robartes's discoveries are the same but the drama is over the editing of papers by Aherne or Yeats, and there is more detail about Kusta ben Luka and the Arabian background. Again with the same starting premise, *Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends* (1931 and incorporated into *AVB*) shifts the action, positing a loose group of seekers, whose teacher is Robartes, with Aherne as his helper. See Wayne K. Chapman, "Metaphors for Poetry," 217–251 and Janis Haswell, "Yeats's *Vision* and the Feminine," 291–306.

### Foreknowledge

The sixth and final stage of the afterlife state, corresponding symbolically to the passage of *Spirit's* gyre through the zodiacal sign of Virgo. The text of *A Vision* actually states, "The sixth and final stage (corresponding to Scorpio) [is] called the *Foreknowledge*" (*AVB* 234), but this is a mistake, probably caused by confusion of the symbols of Virgo (♍) and Scorpio (♏)—Yeats's notes also frequently jumble the order of the zodiacal signs. An earlier draft, using the months rather than signs, labels the six stages with the months from March (when Aries starts) to August (when Virgo starts), and assigns August to this final stage (*NLI* 36,272/22). See Graham A. Dampier, "The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work," 55–89.

### Ghostly Self

Probably one of the most elusive concepts in the system, not least to Yeats himself. At some points the *Ghostly Self* seems to be a view of the *Daimon* as the archetype from which the individual human life is drawn and to which the soul will return, a concept similar to Plotinus's *eidos* of the individual soul, which resides in the realm of *nous*. At other points the *Ghostly Self* appears to be closer to the Theosophists' *Atman*, beyond *Celestial Body* but mirrored in *Spirit*, existing as the inviolate first spark of divinity which stays separated from all incarnation. Its name derives from the Holy Ghost of Christianity, and the Self of Theosophical Buddhism. See Matthew Gibson, "Timeless and Spaceless," 103–135, and Neil Mann, "The *Thirteenth Cone*," 159–193.

### Giraldus

In the fictions Yeats created surrounding *A Vision*, Giraldus was a Renaissance author who wrote a lost book called *Speculum Angelorum et Hominum* (1594), which set

forth much of the system. Michael Robartes finds a mutilated copy of the work, and later makes the connection with an Arabian tradition deriving from Kusta ben Luka. Giraldus may be based on Lilius Gyraldus of Ferrara or else one of two translators known as Giraldus of Cremona, who translated Arabic texts. However, a crucial reason for using the name may well have been its echo of the term “gyre.” See Wayne K. Chapman, “Metaphors for Poetry,” 217–251 and Janis Haswell, “Yeats’s *Vision* and the Feminine,” 291–306.

### **Golden Dawn**

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was a society founded in 1888 by William Wynn Westcott and Samuel Liddell (MacGregor) Mathers, with W. R. Woodman as a relatively silent third, based on information and rituals derived from a cipher manuscript of uncertain origin. The title Golden Dawn properly only applied to the “Outer Order,” and was anyway superseded by “MR” (*Morgenrothe*) in 1901, after a public scandal involving the name. The original body disappeared in the schisms of 1903, which led to a variety of successors. For Yeats, as for Dorothea Hunter, it might be said that “the Order was [his] university” (*YA9* 142). See C. Nicholas Serra, “Esotericism and Escape,” 307–328.

### **gyre**

The fundamental paradigm of growth and life in the Yeatses’ system. It represents the cyclical nature of reality, and the recurrent pattern of growth and decay, waxing and waning. See Neil Mann, “Everywhere that antinomy of the One and the Many,” 1–21.

### **Husk**

One of the Four *Principles*, the lowest in the hierarchy. It is the least permanent, but the one that is most closely associated with incarnate life, corresponding with the *Faculty of Will*. See Graham A. Dampier, “The Spiritual Intellect’s Great Work,” 55–89.

### **Image**

A projected form of the *Mask*: “The Image is a myth, a woman, a landscape, or anything whatsoever that is an external expression of the *Mask*” (*AVB* 107).

### **Initiatory Moment**

The first of the triad of Moments of Crisis, which never fully entered into *A Vision*. See Colin McDowell, “Shifting Sands,” 194–216.

### **Judwalis**

The Judwalis, or diagrammatists, are an Arab tribe who follow the philosophy of Kusta ben Luka. When Robartes meets them, their sacred book has been “lost or destroyed in desert fighting some generations before,” but they have “a vast body of doctrine” explained by diagrams drawn in the sand and “identical with those in the *Speculum Angelorum et Hominorum*” by Giraldus (*CW13* lxi; *AVA* xix). See Neil Mann, “Everywhere that antinomy of the One and the Many,” 1–21, Wayne K. Chapman, “Metaphors for Poetry,” 217–251 and Janis Haswell, “Yeats’s *Vision* and the Feminine,” 291–306.

### **Kusta ben Luka**

Kusta ben Luka is a Christian philosopher at the court of Harun al-Raschid or a later Caliph of Baghdad. He is author of *The Way of the Soul between Sun and Moon*, since

lost, which forms the basis of the philosophy of the Judwalis. The poem "Desert Geometry or The Gift of Harun Al-Raschid" details how the Caliph gave Kusta ben Luka a wife who marks out symbols on the desert sand while sleep-walking. This is effectively a concealed allusion to *A Vision's* real origins in the automatic writing, making Kusta ben Luka another Yeatsian alter ego. See Wayne K. Chapman, "Metaphors for Poetry," 217–251 and Janis Haswell, "Yeats's *Vision* and the Feminine," 291–306.

### **lunar**

The more inclusive term for the subjective, individual, multitudinous and creative pole of Yeats's overarching duality, represented in incarnate life by the *antithetical Tincture*: "the *Tinctures* belong to a man's life while in the body, and Solar and Lunar may transcend that body" (*CW13* 112; *AVA* 139). See Neil Mann, "Everywhere that antinomy of the One and the Many," 1–21.

### **Marriage**

An alternative name for the *Beatitude*, the fourth stage of the afterlife, conceived of as the symbolic marriage of the *Spirit* and the *Celestial Body*. See Graham A. Dampier, "The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work," 55–89 and Neil Mann, "The *Thirteenth Cone*," 159–193.

### **Mask**

One of the Four *Faculties*, "the image of what we wish to become, or of that to which we give our reverence" (*CW13* 15; *AVA* 15), or the "object of desire or idea of the good" (*AVB* 83). It only has meaning if there is the desire and choice of the *Will*; it in turn provides the focus or target for the *Will* and together they make up the emotional Opposition. See Rory Ryan, "The Is and the Ought, the Knower and the Known," 22–54.

### **Meditation**

Part of the first stage of the afterlife, following the preliminary *Vision of the Blood Kindred*, marking the transition of the consciousness from the *Faculty of Will* to the *Principle of Spirit*, and corresponding to the *Spirit's* passage through the sign of Aries. See Graham A. Dampier, who takes the *Meditation* as belonging more logically to the second stage of the *Return* in "The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work," 55–89.

### **Michael Robartes**

Robartes originally featured in the 1897 story *Rosa Alchemica* and in the titles of a few poems in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), where it is explained that he is a principle of the mind, and that "students of the magical tradition will understand me when I say that 'Michael Robartes' is fire reflected in water" or "the pride of the imagination brooding upon the greatness of its possessions, or the adoration of the Magi" (*VP* 803). In the fictions surrounding *A Vision*, he is depicted as having discovered two traditions: a European book of the Renaissance, the *Speculum Angelorum et Hominum* by Giraldus, and an Arabian tradition followed by the Judwalis based on teachings of Kusta ben Luka (see the subtitle to *AVA*). Robartes is the first to realize that the two share a fundamental scheme and in Yeats's earliest plans, he was to expound the system in dialogues with Owen Aherne. In the fictions presented in *AVA*, he had entrusted the editing of his papers to Aherne, but quarreled with him over his Christian/*primary* bias, and has

given them to the poet Yeats instead (drafts indicate that Robartes is conceived of as being Phase 19 [YVP4 31]). In the *Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends*, included in the prefatory material of *AVB*, he is a teacher, who has gathered a ragtag assortment of students around him, and is something of a sage and prophet.

### Moments of Crisis

An important element of the automatic script, which received cursory treatment in *AVA* (172–73; *CW13* 139–40) and none in *AVB*, linked particularly with sexual love. They are associated with the *Daimon*, the least predictable element of the system, and are symbolized by the lightning flash. The Initiatory Moment represents a shift in the nature of the *Mask* and *Body of Fate*, the “sensuous image,” effectively in our aims, values and goals, which sets in motion a series of events that reach a climax at the Critical Moment. The Critical Moment represents a moment of the greatest freedom within an individual life, where the intellect is able to analyze the aims and actions initiated, probably with the help of the *Daimonic* mind, and the individual is able to act with as much free will as he or she is capable of. The Critical Moment is not always reached, and even if it is, this process may be repeated without the individual reaching the third stage of Beatific Vision, where the individual moves into a form of greater wholeness, and possibly Unity of Being. See Colin McDowell, “Shifting Sands,” 194–216.

### Opening of the *Tinctures*

One of the more problematic technical ideas in *A Vision*, partly because Yeats’s understanding changed significantly between the two versions. In *AVB* he states that the *antithetical Tincture* opens at Phase 11 and the *primary* at Phase 12, and that this means “the reflection inward of the *Four Faculties*: all are as it were mirrored in the personality, Unity of Being becomes possible” (*AVB* 88). The *Tinctures* close again at 18 (*primary*) and 19 (*antithetical*), to open again on the other side of the wheel at 25 (*antithetical*) and 26 (*primary*) until 4 (*primary*) and 5 (*antithetical*). Whereas the *antithetical* side of the wheel gives an opening inward into personality, on the *primary* side the opening is outward, a form of rarefaction of the personal: it is an opening to fate or “Weird” (*AVB* 111), spiritual objectivity before Phase 1 and physical objectivity afterward.

### Opposition

A relationship between *Faculties*, see *AVB* 93–94. The two Oppositions are “the emotional Opposition of *Will* and *Mask*,” the two fundamentally *antithetical Faculties*, and “the intellectual Opposition of *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*,” the two fundamentally *primary Faculties*. In each pair one is the active, appetent *Faculty* (*Creative Mind* and *Will*), while the other is the goal of its action, the target *Faculty* (*Body of Fate* and *Mask*). Within the fundamental gyre, the active *Faculty* is the apex or origin of the gyre, while the target *Faculty* is the base or widest expansion of the gyre; on the wheel, the Oppositions are diametrically opposed to each other. The two Oppositions form Discords to each other. See Rory Ryan, “The Is and the Ought, the Knower and the Known,” 22–54.

### Owen Aherne

A character who first appeared in 1897 in “The Tables of the Law,” where he is described as “half monk [*first version*: alchemist], half soldier of fortune” (*VSR* 151; *Myth* 294; *M2005* 192). Revived for expository dialogue with Michael Robartes, as seen in “The Phases of the Moon,” he is depicted in *AVA* as the original editor of the

papers Robartes has discovered, rejected in favor of Yeats because of his Christian/*primary* bias. In the *Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends*, included in the prefatory material of *AVB*, he is more Robartes's agent or factotum.

### **Passionate Body**

One of the Four *Principles*, the third in the hierarchy. It corresponds to the *Mask* in the *Faculties* and is associated with passion and desire, sharing much in common with the "Desire Body" of the Theosophists. It persists after death and is involved during the first two stages of the afterlife, after which it should be shed, but this is not always possible, which entails a repetition in the same phase of incarnation, as in the case of George Yeats herself. See Graham A. Dampier, "'The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work,'" 55–89.

### **Perfection**

There are four types of perfection attainable, and these only in certain phases of incarnation: Self-Sacrifice (in Phases 2, 3 and 4), Self-Knowledge (in Phase 13), Unity of Being (in Phases 16, 17 and 18), and Sanctity (in Phase 27) (see *AVB* 95 & 100). Generally Unity of Being is used by Yeats to cover some or all of these, since it was the form that interested him most and which was personally possible to him.

### **Phantasmagoria**

A subsidiary stage of the *Return* in *AVB*, the second stage of the afterlife, during which life and imagination are completed in order to exhaust emotion. It is part of what is referred to in *AVA* and the automatic script as the *Teaching*. See Graham A. Dampier, "'The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work,'" 55–89.

### **primary**

One of the two *Tinctures*, the impulse to the collective and objectivity, corresponding to the solar, which operates on a larger and more general scale, and predominating during the darker phases of the moon, between Phases 22 and 8. It is the first of the two *Tinctures*, since "in the *Primary* we are one, & because all are one before they are many" (NLI 30,319[5]) whereas the *antithetical* defines itself by opposition to the *primary* (see *AVB* 71–72), however Yeats's sympathies are more often with the *antithetical*. See Neil Mann, "'Everywhere that antinomy of the One and the Many,'" 1–21.

### **Principles**

The *Principles* represent pure knowledge and spiritual reality, but are uncreative and incapable of making new material, only of understanding what life offers. They remain in the unconscious mind during waking life, and are partially responsible for our dream life, coming to the fore after death, where the individual needs to understand and absorb the fruits of the preceding life before carrying on to the next life. The *Principles* are solar in relation to the *Faculties* and are intrinsically hierarchical, unlike the lunar *Faculties*. Within themselves, the two solar *Principles*, *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* are permanent and represent the continuity between lives, while the two lunar *Principles*, *Husk* and *Passionate Body* are impermanent, acquired afresh before each new life. See Graham A. Dampier, "'The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work,'" 55–89.

### **Purification**

The fifth stage of the afterlife, where the spirit is cleansed of its previous incarnation and starts to prepare for its coming life, as its new *Passionate Body* and *Husk* appear.

It corresponds symbolically to the passage of *Spirit's* gyre through the sign of Leo. See Graham A. Dampier, "The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work," 55–89.

### **Record**

In the Sphere, "All things are present as an eternal instant to our *Daimon*" (*AVB* 193). However, this state is incomprehensible to us, because "all things fall into a series of antinomies in human experience," so that Yeats's "instructors have therefore followed tradition by substituting for it a *Record* where the images of all past events remain for ever 'thinking the thought and doing the deed.' They are in popular mysticism called 'the pictures in the astral light,' a term that became current in the middle of the nineteenth century, and what Blake called 'the bright sculptures of Los's Hall'" (*AVB* 193). This definition seems to lay stress upon the past elements of the eternal instant, rather than the future ones, and, as Yeats hints, may owe more than a little to the Theosophists' idea of the "akashic record," images in the spiritual substance, as well as to the tradition of *anima mundi*. See Neil Mann, "The *Thirteenth Cone*," 159–193.

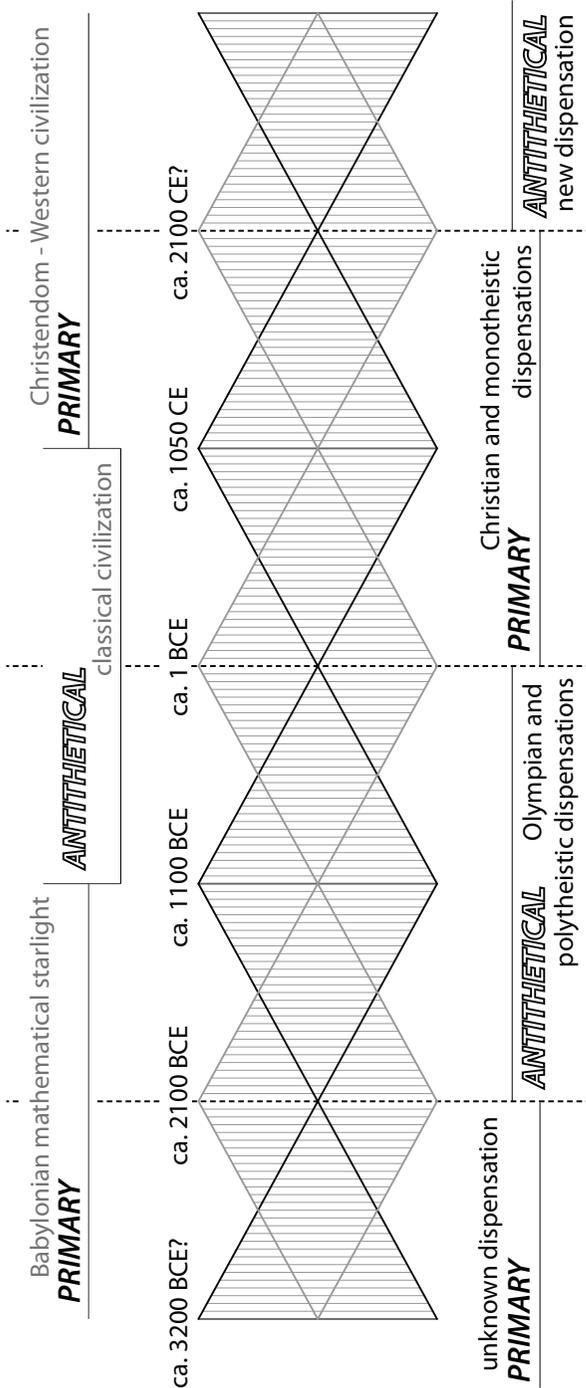
### **religion**

Religion or dispensation is sometimes used to designate a period of 2,200 years, as the solar counterpart to the lunar civilization. Like civilization, it does not necessarily refer to any conventionally recognized single religion; since Yeats's focus is almost exclusively European, Christianity is the dominant representative of the monotheism which dominates the 2000-plus years of our current cycle, however, it also includes Islam, philosophical Platonism, and, to a lesser extent, Buddhism. Yeats's monotheistic religious period, focused on the Christian dispensation, starts at the midpoint of the classical civilization in 1AD (1 CE), and the civilization that this dispensation enabled, Christendom, starts around the year 1000 CE (see *AVB* 203–4). These two historical cycles, therefore, have the same length but are "syncopated," the civilization corresponding to a lunar month, at the Ides of which (its Full Moon) starts a solar month (the zodiacal sign). Both religions and civilizations alternate between being *antithetical* and *primary*. See Matthew Gibson, "Timeless and Spaceless," 103–135, and Matthew DeForrest, "W. B. Yeats's 'Dove or Swan,'" 136–158.

*(For historical gyres of religion and civilization with junctures of annunciation, see figure on following page.)*

### **reincarnation**

One of the premises underlying the system of *A Vision* is the concept of reincarnation. Yeats does not deal with the origin of the "pilgrim soul" and only tangentially with its goal. However, behind the concept of the wheel lies the idea that the soul sets out from absorption in God or Nature at Phase 1 and incarnates through the successive phases of the moon until it reaches Phase 1 again, when the cycle starts again at a more advanced level. From Phase 2 onwards, the soul gains gradual self-awareness and independence of mind, until it reaches complete subjectivity and isolation at Phase 15. After this, it starts to move return towards a more intellectual and social form of absorption into the group, and finally into God. See Neil Mann, "Everywhere that antinomy of the One and the Many," 1–21, and "The *Thirteenth Cone*," 159–193.



This diagram outlines the gyres of religion/dispensation and civilization/age, which are syncopated with respect to one another. The gyre of religion is drawn in black and labeled along the bottom; that of civilization is drawn in gray and labeled along the top. The dates given are very rough.

At the height of a civilization's gyre (Phase 15), comes the beginning of a religion's gyre (Phase 1). At this point there is an influx from the *Thirteenth Cone* (dotted line), which initiates the new dispensation, alternately *antithetical* and *primary*.

- The influx c. 2100 BCE is symbolized by the annunciation to Leda: after her rape by Zeus in the form of a swan, she gave birth to embodiments of the *antithetical* heroic age—Helen, Clytemnestra, Castor and Pollux.
- The influx c. 1 BCE is symbolized by the annunciation to Mary: she was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, depicted in art by a dove, and gave birth to the embodiment of the *primary* Christian dispensation—Jesus.
- The coming influx, c. 2100 CE or earlier, is as yet unknown, but an associated harbinger is the “tough beast” described in “The Second Coming.”

The civilization enabled by the dispensation follows about a thousand years after it, and similarly alternates between *primary* and *antithetical*. The classical, pagan age enabled by the Ledaean annunciation arose around 1100 BCE and was finally exhausted by 1050 CE, while the age enabled by the Marian annunciation arose around the year 1050 CE and will finally close after 3000 CE, so is currently close to its maximum.

**Return**

The second stage of the afterlife and the most complex, corresponding symbolically to the passage of *Spirit's* gyre through the sign of Taurus. It comprises several states in each of which the *Spirit* attempts to understand its preceding life in different manners, and it passes from one to the other not in sequence but in rhythmic alternation. The first of these subsidiary states is also named the *Return*, where events are relived in sequence, and the other main stage is the *Dreaming Back*, where they are relived according to intensity. Further stages include the *Phantasmagoria* and other variations which Yeats does not label clearly. See Graham A. Dampier, "The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work," 55–89.

**Shiftings**

The third stage of the afterlife, during which good and evil are shed, corresponding symbolically to the passage of *Spirit's* gyre through the sign of Gemini. See Graham A. Dampier, "The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work," 55–89.

**Sleeps**

After 1920, since George Yeats found the sessions of automatic script increasingly draining, the Yeateses started the practice of "Sleeps" (or "Sleaps" in Yeats's spelling) where George would enter a trance and speak, while W. B. Yeats noted what she said. He would often later go through these notes and expand on them, dictating to George. These too decreased in frequency and ceased in 1924, with a few stray later instances. George Mills Harper gives a clear summary in *CVA* xvii–xxiii. See Margaret Mills Harper, "Reflected Voices, Double Visions," 269–290.

**solar**

The more inclusive term for the objective, collective and unifying pole of Yeats's overarching duality, which represents wisdom, knowledge and ultimate reality. In incarnate life the *primary Tincture* represents the solar aspect: "the *Tinctures* belong to a man's life while in the body, and Solar and Lunar may transcend that body" (*CW13* 112; *AVA* 139). See Neil Mann, "Everywhere that antinomy of the One and the Many," 1–21.

***Speculum Angelorum et Hominum***

The Latin title translates as "The Mirror of Angels and of Men" and is the name of the 1594 book by Giralduus, an alter ego for Yeats, and created as a fictional source for the system of *A Vision*. The book is discovered in Cracow by Michael Robartes, and, though it is mutilated, he is fascinated by its symbols and keeps it with him. He later finds that the diagrams used by the Judwalis are "identical with those in the *Speculum Angelorum et Hominorum*" (*CW13* lxi; *AVA* xix). In *A Vision* the title appeared with the last word garbled as "Hominorum" and also "Homenorum," mistakes which were corrected in the second edition. See Wayne K. Chapman, "Metaphors for Poetry," 217–251 and Janis Haswell, "Yeats's *Vision* and the Feminine," 291–306.

**Sphere**

The absolute and unitary form of being, beyond the gyres, the "ultimate reality." The human mind, fixed in the antinomies, can only perceive it as opposition to the mundane gyre, and therefore sees it as a gyre or cone: the *Thirteenth Cone*. See Graham

A. Dampier, "The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work," 55–89, and Neil Mann, "The *Thirteenth Cone*," 159–193.

### **Spirit**

One of the Four *Principles*, *Spirit*, the active, solar *Principle*, is the origin of movement and the individual being within the archetype of the *Celestial Body*. Although it comes second in the hierarchy, it is probably the most important of all, since it represents the impetus to life and experience. See Graham A. Dampier, "The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work," 55–89.

### **Teaching/Teachings**

The *Teaching* is used in the automatic script and in *A Vision A* to refer to part of the *Return*, corresponding to what is referred to as the *Phantasmagoria* in *AVB*. In *AVA* Yeats divides the *Return* into *Waking* and *Sleeping States* (compared in turn to *Sage* and *Victim* respectively): the *Waking State*, where other spirits intervene, "is commonly called the *Teaching*" (*CW13* 185–86; *AVA* 224–25). See Graham A. Dampier, "The Spiritual Intellect's Great Work," 55–89.

### **Thirteenth Cone**

The form of the Sphere, when seen through the antinomies. If you look at bright red for a while and then look at white, it will appear green, the complementary color (a phenomenon harnessed by the Golden Dawn with Flashing Colors). Similarly, the human being, trapped in the antinomies (red), sees the totality of the Sphere (white) as a form of opposition, an opposing cone (green). See Neil Mann, "The *Thirteenth Cone*," 159–193.

### **Thirteenth Cycle**

Generally synonymous with *Thirteenth Cone*, since every cycle can be represented by its own cone. However, the preceding twelve cycles are those of incarnation, which also correspond roughly with the twelve months of the Great Year, so the *Thirteenth Cycle* is sometimes seen as the beginning of a new, supernatural cycle of "incarnations," and *AVA* complicates matters further by mentioning *Fourteenth* and *Fifteenth Cycles*. See Neil Mann, "The *Thirteenth Cone*," 159–193.

### **Tincture**

The two *Tinctures* are the source of the fundamental conflict and tension that drive human life: the *primary* representing the One, the macrocosm, the race, the collective, the objective, truth, and knowledge, which strives with and against the *antithetical* representing the Many, the microcosm, the soul, the individual, the subjective, beauty and creativity. On a grander scale, the poles are referred to as solar and lunar, the *Tinctures* being reserved for incarnate life. The term, which does not originate in the automatic script, was borrowed from Jacob Boehme to give a joint name to the *primary—antithetical* polarity in the preparatory card index. See Neil Mann, "Everywhere that antinomy of the One and the Many," 1–21.

### **Unity of Being**

Yeats had used the term before *A Vision* but developed it significantly with relation to the system. He derives the term from his memory of Dante's *Convito*, claiming that Dante compares it to "a perfectly proportioned human body" (*AVB* 82), although Dante does not use it and the closest equivalent is a reference to harmony within a language. It is defined in a draft as "Complete Harmony between phisical [*sic*] body

intellect & spiritual desire all may be imperfect but if harmony is perfect it is unity.” In some ways it is a version of a Renaissance ideal, or even a Galenic one of the balanced four humors. It is declared to be the unity attainable through the *Mask* (*AVB* 82), therefore reserved particularly for the *antithetical* phases, when the *Mask* is free, and only really attainable after the “Vision of Evil,” which some souls attain at the Full Moon. In effect, therefore it is only really possible at Phases 16, 17 and 18—coincidentally the phases of Maud Gonne, W. B. Yeats and George Yeats respectively.

### **Victim and Sage**

The *Victim* and *Sage* are general, interchanging figures who are of more importance to *A Vision A* than *A Vision B*. The *Sage* represents the frail, fundamentally *primary* soul, who has only his doctrine, while the *Victim* represents the *antithetical* soul, and ‘Emotional Man’ who sacrifices all in a state of strength. They interchange on the wheel at Phases 22 and 8, so that whoever has been *Sage* before 22 will be *Victim* thereafter. Yeats also envisages them as changing over during the months of the Great Year, seeing Christ as the *Sage*, and the next avatar (2,150 years later) as the *Victim* or *antithetical* revelation. See Matthew Gibson, “Timeless and Spaceless,” 103–135.

### **Victimage**

A complex group of relationships through which one person or spirit may help to work off another’s karmic debt. They result from the refusal of certain experiences or experience itself (see especially *CW13* 199–200; *AVA* 242–43 and *AVB* 240).

### ***Vision of the Blood Kindred***

The start of the first stage of the afterlife after death, when all the impulses and images of the *Husk* or senses appear in a form of synthesis, a version of the tradition of people’s life flashing before their eyes. It leads into the *Meditation*, which may also be part of the first stage and indeed the more significant element, but Yeats’s account is not entirely clear (*AVB* 223–24; 235). It corresponds to the sign of Aries. Graham A. Dampier sees the first stage as confined to the *Vision of the Blood Kindred* in “The Spiritual Intellect’s Great Work,” 55–89.

### **Vision of Evil**

The perception of the world as continual and necessary strife, only properly achieved at or shortly after the Full-Moon incarnation. It is more the acknowledgement of a dualistic, possibly even Manichean, universe rather than any diabolic sense: “... no man believes willingly in evil or in suffering. How much of the strength and weight of Dante and of Balzac comes from unwilling belief, from the lack of it how much of the rhetoric and vagueness of all Shelley that does not arise from personal feeling?” (“If I were Four and Twenty” VII, *Ex* 277, cf. *CW5* 43–44).

### **wheel**

The wheel portrays the cyclical nature of the gyre, and is usually divided into twenty-eight stages, identified by the phases of the moon. Yeats perceives time as cyclical rather than linear and, as in the Hindu symbol, the wheel also represents the cycle of the soul’s rebirth. Yeats, in an *antithetical* incarnation himself, does not see this as something that it is necessarily desirable to escape. See Neil Mann, “Everywhere that antinomy of the One and the Many,” 1–21, and Rory Ryan, “The Is and the Ought, the Knower and the Known,” 22–54.

**Will**

One of the Four *Faculties*, described as “a bias ... an energy ... the first matter of a certain personality—choice’ (*CW13* 15; *AVA* 14–15), which “has neither emotion, morality nor intellectual interest, but knows how things are done, how windows open and shut, how roads are crossed, everything that we call utility. It seeks its own continuance” (*AVB* 83). It is effectively the life force or survival instinct in a relatively basic form, the will to continue. Without *Mask* it has no aim, but with the appropriate focus becomes the creative force in life. It was originally termed “Ego” in the automatic script and Yeats refers to the “*Will* or normal ego” (*AVB* 83)—the term is a borrowing from Madame Blavatsky (rather than from the English translators of Freud), and indicates the self, but the lower self. The *Will* is not always the dominant *Faculty* but is the one which determines the phase in which a person is located, so that those of Phase 27 have their *Will* at Phase 27, although the other *Faculties* are located elsewhere and may indeed dominate. See Rory Ryan, “The Is and the Ought, the Knower and the Known,” 22–54.

**zodiac**

The zodiac is a band of space on either side of the ecliptic, the apparent path of the sun through the year, within which the planets and the moon always appear. It is divided in a number of ways, most commonly: into 360 degrees, into 12 irregular constellations, into 12 regular signs, and into 27 or 28 mansions of the moon. Yeats specifically uses the signs of the zodiac to record the movement of solar elements within the system. The signs are usually reckoned from Aries, the start of which is the spring equinox, and are in order: Aries (♈), Taurus (♉), Gemini (♊), Cancer (♋), Leo (♌), Virgo (♍), Libra (♎), Scorpio (♏), Sagittarius (♐), Capricorn (♑), Aquarius (♒), Pisces (♓). See Colin McDowell, “Shifting Sands,” 194–216.

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