

**INTERNATIONAL YEATS SOCIETY CONFERENCE
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ABSTRACTS**

Alphabetical order based on surnames of presenters.

Thought, Reality and Justice: Yeats, Heaney and the Nobel Prize

Nicholas Allen

When Seamus Heaney delivered his Nobel Prize lecture to the Swedish Academy in December 1995, Yeats was the ghost at his shoulder. ‘Crediting Poetry’ was a clearance and a beginning, an appraisal of Heaney’s work to date and a preparation for what was to come. He took his bearings from Akhmatova, Kavanagh, Bishop, Hopkins and others, but Yeats was the central coordinate. Yeats was a poet who, like Heaney, had lived through violence and controversy, and who retained a belief in the practice of art as the foundations of a future settlement. Heaney turned to ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’ as a model for witness and reconstitution, relating it to his earlier search for illumination in ‘Exposure’. Heaney’s Yeats was a particular construct of a specific time in Irish cultural history, the Good Friday Agreement the bookend to a century disfigured by mental and physical partition. Reading this Yeats asks questions of the significance of their two Nobel awards in context of Irish literature, history and politics, questions that have contemporary significance as the centenary of Yeats’s prize coincides with that of the civil war and its traumatic aftermaths.

The Reluctant Tourist: “The Bounty of Sweden” as Travelogue

Charles I. Armstrong

Two publications were the direct result of Yeats’s winning the Nobel Prize for Literature: “The Bounty of Sweden” and a written version of his lecture presented to the Swedish Academy. They were first published in *The Dial* and *The London Mercury* (1924), before later being republished by Cuala Press (in 1925) and in *Dramatis Personae* (1936). This talk will present an interpretation of “The Bounty of Sweden” that pays attention to some of the small yet significant differences between the different versions of this piece. It will claim that while Yeats on the one hand uses this text to embrace his own canonization and “nobility”, it is also marked by an ironic and self-conscious adaptation of tourism and traditional generic traits of the travelogue. Attention will also be paid to how Yeats’s typically Paterian prose style here links up with references to Impressionism, as well as the use made of popular culture in this text.

“Embroidering Yeats”

Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux

In November 1922 when Yeats received word of the Nobel Prize, Cuala Industries, the printing and embroidery business run by Yeats’s two sisters, Susan (Lolly) and Elizabeth (Lily), was in the midst of one of its periodic crises. Lily was ill in a London nursing home; Cuala was in debt £2000; and the whole operation had, of necessity, been moved into the basement and dining room of Yeats’s Dublin house. Yeats’s Nobel speech on the Irish Dramatic Movement’s tumultuous founding and the crisis playing out at home both point to the great theme of Yeats’s creative life: the difficult, uncertain, often contentious and collaborative work of bringing imaginative vision into material form--the poetic line that “will take us hours maybe,” the “stitching and unstitching,” the “plays/That have to be set up fifty ways,” “Theatre business, management of men.” Yeats’s struggles with his sister Lolly at the Cuala Press to create beautiful books sufficient to his vision are well-known. This talk considers Yeats’s less familiar, and also fraught, collaboration with Lily, focusing on his commissions for embroidered

illustrations of his poems. After brief looks at the embroideries for “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” and “The Song of Wandering Aengus,” the talk turns attention to the two remarkable, and remarkably different, renditions of “The Players Ask for a Blessing on the Psaltery and on Themselves.” Dating to the 1930s, these re-mediations – written words transformed into a design transformed into a stitched work of art – offered the chance to literally re-vise his early poems, giving them new forms and meanings in the world.

Elevating Matter

Michael Cade-Stewart

Yeats is one of those poets who can defy the codes of society and culture in creating radical ‘elsewheres’. Cixous says that these may be feminist when ‘opened by men who are capable of becoming woman’ (1986). Butler Cullingford demonstrated this to be true for Yeats’s feminist readers in 1993. This paper argues that Yeats can also open elsewheres compatible with more recent, posthuman, feminism in his elevation of matter. We see this tendency in his earliest poetry; one corollary of spiritual awakening is to ‘know’, like Niamh and Oisín, ‘The reason of the trembling trees’ (1889), becoming attuned to the dialect of matter (in Alice Oswald’s phrase), and thereby hearing, ‘all that lamentation of the leaves’ (1925). Arkins identifies this as part of Yeats’s distinctive ‘poetic idiolect’ (2010), but it offers content as well as style. The singing bone of ‘Three Things’ (1929) anticipates Irigaray’s observation that under patriarchy women’s experience is closer to that of matter than to men’s, and the need to undo hierarchies to afford real gender equality. Yeats does just this in ‘Three Things’ in giving voice to female experience through conscious matter. In elevating matter, I argue, Yeats opens ‘elsewheres’ of new-materialist insight.

Breakfast, accident incoherence: Yeats, Civil War and the Nobel in 1923

Matthew Campbell

Many readers and followers of Yeats take seriously his conception of the poet in the 1937 ‘General Introduction’: the poet ‘is never the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast; he has been re-born as an idea, something intended, complete.’ Quoting this phrase in an argument about the usefulness of biography, Roy Foster added the next sentence: ‘A novelist might describe his accident, his incoherence, he must not, he is more type than man, more passion than type.’ Yeats probably had Joyce in mind - though he told Olivia Shakespeare in 1923 that if he met Joyce he would need ‘the utmost ingenuity to hide the fact that I have never finished Ulysses’. This paper will take these ideas back to the period of Civil War in Ireland of 1922-23 and of Yeats’s reading and thinking about the coincidence and divergence of ‘intended, complete’ historical necessity and poetical form in that period. In 1937, Yeats went on to compare the poet to ‘Lear, Romeo, Oedipus, Tiresias’, all tragic bar the latter - which he may very well have gleaned from another work from the previous year, T.S. Eliot’s *Waste Land*. At least he confessed his difficulty with that poem to its author. Centred on a reading of the ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’ written though 1922 but first published in January 1923, the talk will look at Yeats’s poetry of the period of Civil War, leading up to his Nobel ‘elevation’ in November of 1923. It will think about the teleology of poems written in the midst of historical events in which their corresponding historical teleology appeared so uncertain. The readings will be set against the visionary writing which occupied so much of Yeats’s creative energies in this time and the first versions of ‘Leda and the Swan’. The teleologies in these texts, no matter how pessimistic they might be, seemed to have been revealed to him in full systematic coherence. So, the Yeatsian question the paper will ask again, is about systematic coherence and lyric contingency, of how the accidental and the unforeseen at the breakfast table can find its place in one of the most extreme mid-twentieth-century manifesto-statements of authorial and artistic power: ‘something intended, complete.’

Climbing the Narrow Stairs: W. B. Yeats's Vertical Spaces

Lucy Collins

As well as being central to the volume *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), the image of the stairway recurs in Yeats's texts. It affirms the importance of the built environment as a motif of both stability and change in Yeats's poetry, and as a form within which to explore the temporal both as personal experience and intellectual construct. Gaston Bachelard's assertion of the verticality of domestic space, and its relation to dream, is especially applicable in Yeats's case, expressing the deepening connections between physical and imaginative realms in his work. In addition to the spiritual significance of ascent – and its expression of transcendence – it retains its connection to intellectual and artistic labour. In this paper I will explore the representation of stairways, and of the act of climbing, in Yeats's work, as a means to investigate temporality and change.

Popular Literary Sources in the Comic Strips of Jack B. Yeats

Michael Connerty

Many of the comic strip series that Jack B. Yeats contributed to UK comics between c. 1892- 1917 were informed by his keen interest in the popular literary genres that proliferated in books, magazines and other periodicals (including the comics themselves) during this period. His first recurring character, Chubblock Homes, pastiched the contemporaneous detective stories of Conan Doyle, and he went on to create further series that likewise drew on crime fiction and sensationalist reportage. Maritime adventure narratives and colonialist travelogues are reworked in series like Roly Poly's Round the World Tour and The Adventures of Sandab the Sailor. Other examples, such as the entirely stage-set series The Jester Theatre Royal, point to Yeats' own later work as a dramatist and novelist. At the same time there is a tendency, in line with prevailing editorial conventions, to lampoon writers and, particularly, poets. Perhaps the most surprising material to those familiar with his better-known work as a painter, are examples of 'popular modernism' in series such as Dr. Upp-to-Dayte's Academy and The Whodidit, both of which can be positioned in relation to the nascent science fiction genre. This incorporation of generic literary tropes into his graphic work is a significant element of Yeats' own artistic development as well as of the comic strip medium more generally, during this crucial period in its early evolution.

Negative Elevation: Memorializing Erasure in 'To A Wealthy Man' and Other Poems

Matthew DeForrest

Any act of elevation assumes the existence of a lever—the mechanism by which a subject is lifted above their peers. Yeats raised Maud Gonne above most of the women of her generation by imposing his hierarchy on history through his love poetry. It is easy to forget that the elevated are only half the formula. Yeats made himself an active participant in the act of elevation, rendering great deeds and great personages into language that raised them out of the temporal into the eternal. The Irish tradition, however, includes not only elevation but diminution. Corpre's satire of Bres was the first of these. In "To a Wealthy Man", Yeats employs this satirical tradition to create a kind of negative elevation by memorializing their absence, erasing them, as individuals, from the historic record—leaving only the empty space that records what they could have done and could have been. This Irish elite's limited vision is connected to those who "fumble in a greasy till" in "September 1913" (2), which immediately follows, and are unworthy of "the right twigs for the eagle's nest" ("To a Wealthy Man" 36) of the kind that incubated the Wild Geese ("September 1913" 17-18).

‘The Irish Dramatic Movement’: images of ‘fellow workers’ in Yeats’s Nobel Prize lecture and other related speeches

Matthew Fay

When Yeats chose ‘The Irish Dramatic Movement’ as the topic of his Nobel prize lecture, he paid tribute to ‘fellow-workers’ who helped build the Abbey. However, his references to them were hardly flattering: Frank Fay was ‘a stage struck solicitor’s clerk’, Willie Fay ‘a working man who had toured Ireland in a theatrical company managed by a Negro’. I explore Yeats’s curious suppression of the contribution of others while professing to share the honour with them. Yeats lectured on Irish drama throughout his life. Taking examples from different periods, I trace the development of his narrative of the history of the Abbey. I consider his references to the Fays, Sara Allgood and Maire O’Neill, figures who are only glancingly acknowledged in his lectures in contrast to Synge and Lady Gregory whom he singles out for praise. In comparing Yeats’s version of the Abbey history with alternative voices, significant differences emerge. I examine how the Nobel lecture served Yeats and how he went on to adapt it for different audiences over the following decades, and the pushback he received from those whose contribution he occluded. Drawing on published and unpublished sources, this paper sheds new light on Yeats’s thinking on the contested topic of the founding of the Abbey Theatre.

Anxious for Legacy: Progeny and Natural Monuments in Yeats’ The Tower

Alex French

It has been well established that WB Yeats seeks to elevate his family lineage, and, in so doing, himself, through spiritual involvement in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. One needs only read “Prayer for my Son” to see Yeats’ anxieties to leave a legacy for himself that has been improved through mystic practices. Yeats’ desire to leave a legacy for himself through his progeny is also, inextricably, linked to a desire for a physical monument that stands for his life and his work in *The Tower*. And yet, running throughout *The Tower* is the fear—and yearning—for nature to reclaim these monuments, creating a kind of natural monument that simultaneously erases the man-made structure and yet still, somehow, memorializes the artist. In particular, Yeats imagines man-made monuments being reclaimed by insects and birds. In “Meditations in Time of Civil War,” he imagines owls inheriting the tower, first if the quality of his descendants decline, and second as a natural cycle of nature. Birds as memorializing agents of nature gives new life to the wish at the end of “Sailing to Byzantium” to sing “Of what is past, passing, or to come.

Reflections from the Gyres: The Evolution of Yeatsian Imagery

Dana Garvin

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre...” Lines cemented in our collective psyche. The image of the gyre originated in rudimentary sketches on pages constructed through the Yeatses experiments in automatism beginning in 1917. The illustrated gyres evolved from simple conical forms with spiralled lines indicating movement into complex structures representing an entire philosophical system. The evolutionary journey of the gyres is the primary focus of this presentation. Its story is told through the various formations obsessively rendered by both George and W. B. Yeats in thousands of preserved handwritten drafts and manuscripts. While mostly unpublished and therefore unexperienced by a wider audience, the Yeatses’ illustrations warrant discussion and examination outside of the Automatic Script as they greatly contribute to all areas of Yeats studies. Therefore, this presentation puts up for discussion additional imagery that emerges from the Automatic Script including sketches of towers, birds, and humanoid figures especially those that have direct connections to the poetry and plays. This imagery as a whole transcends the Automatic Script, Notebooks, and MSS for *A Vision* through an evolutionary process that created Yeats’s most iconic symbols.

“A movement down upon life not upwards out of life”: W.B. Yeats and immanence

Seán Golden

Yeats search for Unity of Being always tempered transcendence with immanence. He told Florence Farr that he had “begun eastern meditations” in a search for “a movement downwards upon life not upwards out of life”. Gauri Viswanathan has written about his interest in Theosophy that, “Yeats was never able effectively to accept the idea of transcendent reality if it implied an otherworldliness or Universal Being that required him to relinquish the individuated self”; David Soud that, “he remained unresolved about the relinquishment of individual selfhood required by the Indic traditions he studied at such length”. Yeats’ occult preoccupations alternately converged and clashed with received notions of Hinduism. In the end, he showed a special interest in Zen Buddhism. The most notable change that Hindu Buddhism underwent in its passage through China to Japan was the possibility of achieving *satori* in one’s own lifetime, not as the result of a very lengthy series of incarnations. In his own copy of D.T Suzuki’s *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, Yeats marked the following passage: “We seem to be in the same objective surrounds, but subjectively we are rejuvenated, we are born again”. This presentation will explore the Yeats paradoxical approach to transcendence.

Tower Counter Tower: Yeats’s Images of Gallery and Circus

Ketevan Grdzeldze

The ‘love at first sight’ that Yeats experienced for Thor Ballylee might be evocative of John Donne’s *Good Morrow* and his famous understanding of love as pilgrim’s progress – if ever any symbol Yeats had seen, perceived, and composed, it was but a dream of this tower and its winding stair. Indeed, the tower, a composite symbol of space and time, of tradition and individual talent, derives from and, ultimately, encompasses many key images of W. B. Yeats’s poetry. It also represents what C. G. Jung in *Symbols of Transformation* called the noble ambition of a moth: a dangerous passion of a ‘mortal animal’ to raise above the bounds of earthiness. This urge to have ‘a sick heart’ consumed away and be gathered into ‘the artifice of eternity’ projects itself on contradictory impulses to wind and unwind, to build and deconstruct, to ascend and descend as manifested in the symbols of the rose, the tower, and the winding stair among others. In his last years, however, Yeats seems to have grown increasingly ironical of the opposite currents and higher motives that inspired many of his previous images. This paper aims to examine the buildings of *Last Poems* – the gallery and the circus as derogatory and mocking variations of the once grand tower.

Material Artifacts, Thoor Ballylee, and Yeats’s Later Poetry

David Holdeman

This paper will offer an abbreviated version of my forthcoming essay in the special issue. The full essay considers how Yeats’s representations of objects manufactured by human beings evolve in his later poetry and centers on an extended reading of “Meditations in Time of Civil War.” The abbreviated version will focus more narrowly on poems from *Responsibilities* (1914) and *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), with special attention to “A Prayer on going into my House,” the first of Yeats’s poems to give a detailed account of Thoor Ballylee, the single most important artifact appearing in his work. In the early poetry, Yeats mostly restricts material artifacts to the background as part of a general tendency to avoid picturing the accidental, ephemeral exteriors of the physical world. But after marriage to Georgie Hyde Lees in 1917, acquisition of the items needed to found a household and a family inspires him to foreground the polarity between his fascination with the power of material artifacts and his wariness about representing them. His most characteristic encounters with such artifacts involve visionary attempts to dissolve their surfaces, so that what first appear as static physical objects begin to function as doorways for seeing and passing through toward eternal patterns.

“The Textual Culture of the Irish Literary Revival”

Clare Hutton

What were the underpinning structures of literary culture which enabled Yeats’s career to flourish? What were the conditions of literary reading and reception in Ireland and further afield and how did they change as the Literary Revival became more successful? Who were the editors and publishers who facilitated the making of his career, and the making of the Literary Revival generally? These are formative and foundational questions which I am addressing in my monograph, *The Textual Culture of the Irish Literary Revival*. In this paper I want to outline the approach and some of the key findings of the research looking in particular at the state of Irish literary culture at the very beginning of the movement (in 1886), Yeats’s attempts to revitalise publishing in the 1890s, and the foundation of Dun Emer (in 1903) and then Maunsel (in 1905), two Irish literary publishing houses which did much to promote Yeats’s vision. The method I have adopted for getting at such large questions about literary culture involves historicist and conceptual survey, combined with specific and detailed case study. I will overview the book as a whole, and mention some of the specific case studies and the rationale for their inclusion. This builds on the essay I have recently completed for the new issue of *International Yeats Studies*, a piece on “Elizabeth Yeats, *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* and Material Circumstance.”

Yeats and the "Violent Sacred"

William H. Johnsen

Yeats's greatest poetry was written in the advent of "endless war" (Hironaka, 2012), when (like Shakespeare) he left every other writer behind. The Great War, Ireland's Civil War with England, then with itself led Yeats to wonder whether only an annunciation from above could save us (see Heidegger 50 years later). René Girard argues that humans protect themselves from intraspecies violence (their worst enemy) by disowning it, expelling it, blaming it on the gods, thus rendering violence as a self-organising autonomous divinity. Yeats's serious investigation of theosophy and the world of faery prepared him uniquely to reckon with what Girard terms the "violent sacred" in "Easter 1916", "Leda and the Swan", and "The Second Coming". Girard is often criticized for using literary analysis to verify his anthropology of religion, such as his book on Shakespeare (*Theatre of Envy*, 1991), which suggests Shakespeare's consistent depiction of 'dulling' revenge for an audience that wants it sharpened. Yeats's poems deserve to be placed alongside Shakespeare (here as everywhere): his delayed publication of "Easter 1916", his constant revisions to "Leda" are to be connected to revision and adjusting within "The Second Coming" itself, as Yeats suggests how to think about, think through ("now I know") the violent sacred.

Stilts and Ladders: W.B. Yeats, Jack B. Yeats, and the Prosthetic

Anthony Johnson

Although Yeats’s late poetry gestures toward the notion of lying down where all ladders start, in ‘the foul rag and bone shop of the heart’, much of his other work (not least, ‘High Talk’) – whether it be though language, rhetoric, thought, or even the gyres of time – is predicated on the idea of elevation. Following a brief anatomization of the uses of heightening in W.B. Yeats’s work, the present paper focuses on the prosthetics of his poetic endeavour: most especially through his uses of language as a tool to see feel, and sense more deeply: beyond the *prima facie* experience of the mundane world. In an attempt to further understand the limitations, as well as assets, of the Yeatsian prosthetic, the second half of the paper moves on to study ‘stiltedness’ within the poet’s dramatic aesthetic, comparing and contrasting the practices exhibited there with the more Beckettian habitus found within the puppet theatre of his brother, Jack B. Yeats.

Yeats's blues: brilliance and depth, light and shadow

Anne Karhio

This paper will focus on the significance of the colour blue, particularly its darker tones, in Yeats's work. In "Reveries of Childhood and Youth" (1914), Yeats reminisced of how he as a child watched the artist Frank Huddlestone Potter sitting at his easel, his only memory of the moment not of the subject of the painting but of its background of "dark blue, a colour that always affects me" (Collected III, p. 68). In Yeats's earlier writing in particular, varieties of blue occur repeatedly, in different hues and material contexts, from "dark blue" to "peacock-blue", "dusky blue", or "brilliant blue" on "blue cloth", "blue robes", "blue curtain", "blue water", "blue china", "blue [book] covers", "blue distance" (in painting), or "blue nightshade-bowers". Of the varieties of blue, it was indigo that had a specific importance to the brother Jack B. Yeats, who in "Indigo Height" (1936) described it as "an axle", and "the strongest colour in the old pictorial theatre posters which used to decorate two or three corners in the seaport Town in the West of Ireland". The painter's eye registered how the sky and water in the western landscape would manifest this same colour. W. B. Yeats, during encounters with Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society, acquired a bottle of "indigo [...] extracted from the plant in some practical way" for the society's experiments - this colour chosen as one of the "seven principles which made the human soul and body correspond to the seven colours and the seven planets and the notes of the musical scale" (Jeffares, Man & Poet, p. 52). Yet Yeats's own engagement with such objects would fall short of the society's preferred doctrine. His fascination with the darker hues of blue and indigo was reflected in visual imagery of natural landscapes, material objects, and symbolic encounters, at intersections of transcendence and materiality where colour, as the poet noted on Blake's illustrations "gets its brilliance or its depth from being in light or in shadow" ("Illustrations", p. 184).

Picturing a Future Laureate: William Butler Yeats and The Art of Portraiture

Tim Keane

After viewing John Singer Sargent's flattering portrait of himself, Yeats reported profound satisfaction, slyly adding that "Sargent is good company." As son and sibling to portrait painters, and as a writer invested in manifold poetic personae and mythic self-invention, Yeats viewed visual art as parallel to and even a corollary to corresponding Symbolist literary practices. Toward commercial ends, he solicited portraiture by leading artists like Sargent for book jackets, well-aware that the dissemination of authorial likenesses could stoke a public mystique around him as a leading post-Romantic poet within a new century. This proposed talk examines the backstories, pictorial content and exhibition histories around four such seminal midcareer portraits of Yeats: by the poet's father John Yeats (1900); by Welsh Post-Impressionist Augustus John (1907); by leading Italian Verismo painter Antonio Mancini (1907); and by the prolific American master John Singer Sargent (1908). By successively discussing such portraits in light of Yeats's concurrent experimental literary self-portraiture in "The Song of Wandering Aengus" (1899), Samhain (1908) and "The Mask" (1910) this talk explores interchanges and points of tension between these artists' representations and Yeats' avowed esoteric commitment and traces how imaginative literary and visual portraiture responded to the transparently self-promoting ethos imposed on writers at the dawn of a mass media era.

Mask, Gyres, and Violence: War within versus War without in Yeats's Poetics of Elevation

Youngmin Kim

In his Charles Eliot Norton Lectures titled "The Witness of Poetry," Czeslaw Milosz argues that poetry should be "a passionate pursuit of the Real." The Swedish Academy recognizes him as a writer who "voices man's exposed condition in a world of severe conflicts." Other Nobel laureates in the past two decades have come from regions of conflicting external reality. Szymborska (Poland), Heaney (Belfast),

Walcott (the Caribbean), Paz (Mexico), Brodsky (the Soviet Union), and Siefert (Czechoslovakia) represent artistic and poetic touchstones for the qualities of poetic sensibility and the external context of the poetry of reality. In his Nobel Prize lecture, "Crediting Poetry," Seamus Heaney ironically cites Yeats's poems "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" and "Meditations in Time of Civil War," based on the struggle between "the violence from below" and "the violence from above," while retrieving Yeats's famous rhetorical question from "The Irish Dramatic Movement," "what is passion but the straining of the human being against some obstacle that prevents its unity?" I will examine Yeats's conception of reality in relation to his systematic poetics of elevation, which is exemplified by the complexity of his theory of internal mask and external gyres.

Spiritualism, Revivalism, and Modernism in Yeats and Aurobindo

Pawan Kumar

W.B. Yeats and Aurobindo never met but they stood at a historical juncture from where the intellectual history of Ireland and India took a turn in the colonial times. Interestingly, Yeats and Aurobindo shared similar views regarding ancient literature, spiritualism and creative articulation of mystical endeavors. Aurobindo in *The Renaissance in India* observes, "There is a closer resemblance to the recent Celtic movement in Ireland, the attempt of a reawakened national spirit to find a new impulse of self-expression which shall give the spiritual force for a great reshaping and rebuilding . . ."1 Moreover, like Yeats, Aurobindo was also interested in occult philosophy and mysticism which can act a case study to understand the development of a literary mind and mystic. Aurobindo's poem "Lines on Ireland" (1896), echoes Yeats' lamentation on the colonial subjugation of the Celtic past, "How changed, how fallen from her ancient spirit! / She that was Ireland, Ireland now no more . . ."2 In "Yeats and Occult," Aurobindo suggests: "The perfection . . . of Yeats' poetic expression of things occult is due to this that at no point has the mere intellectual or thinking mind interfered — it is a piece of pure vision, a direct sense, almost sensation of the occult, a light not of earth flowing through without anything to stop it or to change it into a product of the terrestrial mind."3 The paper aims to critically analyze the uncanny resemblance between Yeats and Aurobindo and their take on cultural revival, literary experiments, animism, occult philosophy and congruity of their creative imagination.

Becoming a Nobel Prize laureate: reading W. B. Yeats' nature poems through the Aristotelian lens.

Marie Lucie Lopez

From his early writings until the publication of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, Yeats elaborated a large corpus propelling him to international fame. This ascent represents a poetic pathway marked by the leitmotiv of romanticism, mainly embodied in the use of natural elements. As far as Nature and the Nobel laureate-to-be are concerned, his own elevation and evolution as a poet can be analysed through the lens of action and potency theorized by Aristotle. "Blossoming", "growing", "rousing", nature mimics the poet's destiny in his poems, from a possible creative power to a creative power in action. Hence, we can interrogate the early poetical writings of the Irish poet as an "organic form" of his own human and social ascension. This paper studies the relation between mimesis and physis in W. B. Yeats' early poems, going further into an analysis of both Aristotelian concepts of potentiality and actuality, enhancing a parallel between himself and natural evolution; and a metaphorical association between the permanence of natural elements and the affirmation of creative power. In doing so, I will argue that Yeats implicitly puts into verse his future "great triumph".

The Sacred Heart of W. B. Yeats

Aoife Lynch

“The Circus Animals’ Desertion” is a poem of elevation for Yeats out of creative death. It is the heart of the poet that allows this transcendent art to resurrect within the broken body of his life’s work. The Christian ethic of life, death and resurrection remain central to Yeats’s poetry and indeed to the times he lived through, this paper will contend. The Eucharistic Congress held in 1936 in Dublin forms a backdrop for the writing of the “Crazy Jane” poems and illustrates the poet’s concern for the inclusion of the marginal into the body of this reborn Christian country. Like Crazy Jane herself, the poet accepts “bodily lowliness” and its redemption through the power of the wounded heart. There is a sacredness to all life revealed by Yeats in his poetry and this easter of “terrible beauty” is sustained to the end in the “deep heart’s core” where the poet finds true creative freedom in love despite warring realities, as one of his last poems, “Politics” shows forth: “And maybe what they say is true/ Of war and war’s alarms,/ But Oh that I were young again and held her in my arms.”

The Poet as Public Intellectual

Sirshendu Majumdar

From Julien Benda to Edward Said, critics and commentators have visualized the role of public intellectuals in different ways. The common strain, despite these various perceptions of the nature and role of the public intellectual, is however, that the public intellectual must have a dispassionate mind and play a significantly oppositional role vis-à-vis different forms of social, political, economic and other forms of oppressions, injustices, orthodoxies and dominations. In modern times, the public intellectual’s perceived role is one that transcends national barriers and addresses questions of global importance. Said, though uneasy with Benda’s idea of the intellectual as the ‘clerisy’ (a term first used by Coleridge and then elaborated by Arnold) because the term inheres ideas of truth and justice that are transcendental, himself unconsciously attributes to the intellectual an Olympian mind and faculty that enables him to take up public issues in opposition to the state on the basis of ‘universal principles’. This instantly reminds us of the poet’s role in Yeats’s play, *The King’s Threshold* where the poet asserts his power over the king; or where the claims of intellect struggle against political supremacy. Despite Yeats’s intense nationalist commitment and his engagement with the political events of his time both in Ireland and in Europe, he always upheld the claims of culture (he interchangeably uses the word intellect/intellectual movement in his essays and letters) over that of politics. This paper will attempt to argue how Yeats’s politics of culture (as defined by Eliot in one of his essays) gave him the distinctive role of a public intellectual whose active participation in the political processes of his nation did not smudge his commitment to an ideology of culture over politics as the foundational basis of national and human redemption. Moreover, Yeats differed from other intellectuals of his times in that he co-opted the peasantry as part of his cultural/intellectual scheme. That is why, John Carey in his book *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia 1880-1939* excludes Yeats from his study, making a passing reference to him. In other words, Yeats could be seen more as a ‘traditional intellectual’ in an emerging modern nation.

Sacredness, Heroism and Laughter in Yeats’s Drama

Akiko Manabe

This paper continues to explore what I discussed in an earlier paper given at IYS in 2022, specifically, the meaning of sacredness in Yeats’s dramas. I will classify characters into three main groups: heroes like Cú Chulainn, sacred beings in the religious world like saints and Christ, and finally common people, especially those who live on the margins of society like the physically challenged and beggars. Among the physically challenged, blind people in Yeats’s work demonstrate special characteristics. “Laughter”

is a key focus here so I will describe the relevance of *Nohgaku* —both Noh and *kyogen*. The motifs of crossing the boundaries of this world and the other world will better delineate how people in these three categories have unique characteristics. To give this study a broader perspective, I will introduce how Ezra Pound treated a Noh play entitled, *Kagekiyo* that deals with a Japanese tragic warrior Kagekiyo who became blind and lived like a beggar in his old age.

“How far away the stars seem”: W. B. Yeats and the Constellations of Heaven

Neil Mann

The heavens and their constellations are a recurrent presence in Yeats’s poetry, from the “cloths of heaven” and “Crooked Plough” of the 1890s to the “fierce virgin and her Star” and “Berenice’s Hair” in his later poetry. Though, he and his wife were deeply engaged with astrology, the starry skies are not really part of that system, and they also transcend the sublunary world that is the focus of much of *A Vision*. The stellar images are archetypal and mythological, but the stars themselves also mark the almost imperceptible change of the great cycles of time, with the precession of the equinoxes becoming a key element in Yeats’s vision of history. They thus represent, on the one hand, *anima mundi* and humanity’s unconscious, and on the other, irresistible necessity and inexorable fate. In Yeats’s conception, the cosmos bears out the Smaragdine Tablet’s dictum, “as above, so below; as below, so above,” in some unexpected ways.

“Dreams that Fly”: Symbology of Transcendence and Ascent as Connection to Sacred Universality in the Works of William Butler Yeats

Laura McCloskey

William Butler Yeats’ participation within anticolonial discourse through the early twentieth century served as a catalyst for his proclivity for the esoteric. In particular, he demonstrated a keen fascination with the potential links between Celtic and Indian spirituality. Great importance was placed upon early legends, mythology, and theosophy: the naturalistic imagery and themes in Indian philosophy and texts struck a familiar chord with Yeats, as his knowledge of the occult and Irish mythology shared many similarities with Vedic and Hindu notions of the powers of the phases of the moon, the cyclic passage of time, and the emphasis on dreams and dream-states as being passageways to other states of being. My paper explores Yeats’ understanding of these concepts in *Per amica silentia lunae*, *The Wild Swans at Coole*, and *The Tower*. Of particular focus will be links between transcendence, elevation, and the sacred as embodied in the actions of birds, the process of flight, and sacred dance (in both conscious and unconscious or universal realms). Visual parallels in ancient and contemporary Celtic and Indian art will be dually explored to underscore the immemorial connections contemplated by Yeats.

“High and airy”: Yeats, Hyde, and the altitudes of “At the Abbey Theatre”

Peter McDonald

This short paper will examine Yeats's 1911 poem 'At the Abbey Theatre', in the light of the poet's developing interest in height of perspective, elevation of diction, and a superior overview of contemporary controversy, which his theatrical involvements were generating at the time of composition. This interest expresses itself in the poem partly by the engagement with Ronsard in a free translation, and partly by the distance this particular engagement establishes between Yeats and Douglas Hyde, whose position on the Abbey, and in particular its successful productions of Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, the poet had been finding irksome. The paper will offer a fresh reading of this important poem, and suggest how far the short work suggests further possibilities (artistic and otherwise) for Yeats in the cultivation of various forms of elevation.

Yeats, William James and the Personal Equation

Nicholas Meihuizen

A central Yeatsian question is: how do we tell the difference between the intervention in our lives of that which truly comes from beyond ourselves, and apparent intervention based on our need to believe in such a possibility? Yeats's achievement was to centre his engagement with his world through his own idiosyncratic interests and means of expressing those interests in the light of his contradictory nature, at once scientific-structuralist and romantic-impressionist. The structuralist in him craved system and proof, the romantic intimations of immortality, even from the most dubious quarters. One means of appreciating this contradiction benefits from William James's mention of his 'personal equation' in relation to certain psychic phenomena. First derived from a calculus of observational error in astronomy, eventually the personal equation designated the manner in which investigators manage only to see what they are led to expect by their own preconceptions. Yeats was perpetually plagued by his awareness of (in effect) his own personal equation, and always sought to move beyond it. His awareness of this predisposition provided a basis for the creation of great art, apparent in the tension between concrete expression and transcendent ideas manifest in his work.

Yeats and the Nobel Prize Process

Britta Olinder

Nobel Prizes have been awarded since 1901. The first time Yeats's name was suggested was already in 1902, the second year, when he was one of 34 writers on the list with names like Leo Tolstoy, Emile Zola, George Meredith, Herbert Spencer, and Henrik Ibsen. On this occasion Yeats was nominated by W. E. H. Lecky in his capacity as Correspondent of the Institute of France and later Yeats would be put forward by a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature or by members of the Swedish Academy. The list of nominees would then be discussed by the selected committee. Permission to access material of this kind has, however, not been granted until at least 50 years have elapsed, but now we can read the reports of the committee to see what works were considered, what attracted the attention of the members, and to what extent they corresponded to Alfred Nobel's conditions. In Yeats's case it is of special interest to study which poems or plays attracted the attention and discussion of the time.

The Sacred in Yeats and Nikos Kazantzakis's *A Vision* and *The Saviors of God*

Dionisius Psilopoulos

The paper examines Yeats and Kazantzakis's revelatory philosophical and religious manifestos, *A Vision* (1925) and *The Saviors of God* (1923) respectively. Being students of the esoteric tradition, they were aware of the theory of the Great Wheel and believed that they were living at the end of one cycle and the birth of the new one. Yeats's purpose in *A Vision* is to comprehend, reconcile, and transcend the opposites, the Great Wheel, in order to perceive the 'absolute reality'; humans would thereby achieve, on a microcosmic level, 'Unity of Being' that would enable them to realize the God within, and thus liberate themselves from the fetters of the material illusionary world. Yeats declares that his manifesto will "proclaim a new divinity" (27), hinting that a new religion is about to replace patriarchal Christianity. In "Dove or Swan," he provides the example of Heracles, who managed to realize his own divinity and become through his apotheosis a true Anthropos. Yeats implies that the new divinity stands for the apotheosis of humanity, a state achieved through a process of turning inwards and passing through the Great Wheel that also exists in the human psyche. The Great Wheel is also pivotal to Kazantzakis's *The Saviors of God*. Echoing Yeats, he affirms that "I am writing *The Saviors of God*, a mystical book wherein I trace a method by which the spirit may rise from cycle to cycle until it reaches the supreme Contact" (12). The 'Supreme Contact' is the inner ever-evolving new divinity that is struggling to unite with us and can only be reached through the transcendence of duality. By

transcending the ‘Great Wheel’, by realizing the divine powers within us, transubstantiating matter into spirit, Kazantzakis believes that we become gods and metaphorically the saviors of God.

“Soul Clap Its Hands and Sing”: Ficino and Yeats’ Sailing to Byzantium

Adrian Paterson

‘Sailing to Byzantium’ appears as a gloriously visual poem full of the glamour of gold mosaics and metalwork, referring ekphrastically to a number of arts. Yet while its persona denounces ‘sensual music’ and strives to leave the body and material things to be gathered into ‘the artifice of eternity’, it returns back to alight upon song as vehicle and time as medium. The question is, why, and how, does such a posthumous artistic ascent demand the time-bound art of song to emerge from the mouth of a golden bird? Is this also a melophrastic poem about music? One reason, this paper argues, is the influence of Renaissance translations and philosophy on conceptions of soul and body, as both Yeatses found their magical researches overlapped with ideas about music. As good neo-Platonists Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola naturally spoke of the harmony in the heavens, but also a resonant sympathy created as the *pneuma* (breath) or *spiritus* (spirit) mediates between body and soul, vibrates with the world soul (*anima mundi*), and thus proves capable of action at a distance, and elevation of the self. Careful to skirt demonic and thus dangerously heretical types of magic, both claim primacy and effectiveness for other kinds of natural magic and philosophy, all the while citing pagan and Christian authorities from Plato and Plotinus to Augustine and Aquinas. Ficino remains to a degree sceptical of power of images to affect at a distance, though notably for the poem he is more positive about the ‘hammering’ that produces sculpture. But, fortified by scripture, he is even more sanguine about song, investigating the nature and value of music’s spiritual and therapeutic operation, even conceiving and performing songs to an instrument with modes and rhythms attuned to the stars. So when Yeats’s poem refers to ‘the singing-masters of my soul’ and claims that ‘soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing / For every tatter in its mortal dress’ it is referring directly to specific philosophical concepts and magical practices Yeats found in Renaissance texts. Examining the origins and elaboration of Ficino’s theories about soul and music, his own musical practices, and magical suggestions, this paper discovers why and how song can be used to elevate the soul as it leaves the body, but also is able to animate the whole man, making possible not only ‘Sailing to Byzantium’’s spiritual elevation but also its strange deflating return with its sung reflection on time.

Beautiful and lofty: A self-annulling poetry of *New Poems*

Wit Pietrzack

In *New Poems*, Yeats, as was his custom throughout his life, seeks to stitch the drama of everyday life – old friendships, unhinged new acquaintances, sociopolitical scandals, the ailing body’s last pangs – into the poetic form. What is unusual about the collection, the last that Yeats personally shaped into a book, is a tension between poetry on the one hand and the sublime and beautiful on the other. Counterintuitive as this suggestion certainly seems, *New Poems* sets forth and puts into practice an idea that truly elevated beauty reaches a degree of perfection that admits of no motion, no change, no verb – a perfect equilibrium of opposites that is maintained in a precarious balance: such that Yeats had imagined before in, for example, ‘Vacillation’ and its ‘twenty minutes more or less’ when ‘It seemed, so great my happiness, / That I was blessed and could bless’. And yet, the lyrics in *New Poems* repeatedly insist that poetry is also the province of metamorphosis and its attendant lowly aspects of life. In this sense, the collection quests, ever in vain, after the lofty repose that is, simultaneously, at odds with ‘the foul rag and bone shop’ of poetry. Thus, paradoxically, *New Poems* seeks those moments of static perfection that cancel out the space for poetry. In my presentation, I would like to explore this search for self-annulling poetry as it unfolds throughout *New Poems*, with particular attention paid to that still

under-appreciated gem 'Beautiful Lofty Things', a poem about elevation that reaches an extreme of stasis which hollows out the very poem that invokes it.

High Pitch in Yeats

Adam Piette

The paper will be looking at pitch contour as a feature of Yeats' poetics, exploring the moments of elevated pitch in the Innisfree recordings and collaboration with Florence Parr. What will be tested is both the idea that Yeats' reading style combines emotional and rhetorical pitch contour as key to the music of his lines, and the supposition that pitch and raised voice are motifs in the work, often associated with what seems their opposite, a performed stony low monotone in the heart and voice. The paper will seek to suggest that Yeats saw high pitch as a rare and paradoxical sign that broken emotion and stony-hearted heroics were in play in the vocalisation of specific key lines in his poems and drama.

“A player, a playwright, and the most famous poet in the world”: highs and lows in *The Player Queen*

Alexandra Poulain

With a characteristic mixture of arrogance and self-irony, W.B. Yeats seems to have anticipated and playfully sabotaged his consecration as Nobel-prize laureate in *The Player Queen*, written between 1908 and 1917 and published in November 1922, just a year before he received the news that he had been awarded the award. The (very drunk) lead character introduces himself saying: “I am Septimus, a player, a playwright, and the most famous poet in the world” — to which Second Man responds: “That name, sir, is unknown to me.” (CW II 340) Not only has no-one in town ever heard of Septimus, but in the course of play he is consistently ignored, silenced, and eventually expelled out of kingdom. In this paper, I depart from the usual reading of the play as an illustration of the Yeats's theory of mask. On the one hand, I argue, Septimus's failure to share his vision and to achieve a form of consecration is a comment on the absence of a competent audience. However, *The Player Queen* also reflects on the artist's own responsibility and possible failure to attend to what is really happening in troubled times.

Yeats, Swedish social democrats and the patronage of the arts

Jack Quin

In the 1920s, W.B. Yeats saw the potential in Scandinavian models of art and state patronage to emulate in the emergent Irish Free State. Following his visit to Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature in December 1923, Yeats used his influence with Irish officials to invite the architect Ragnar Östberg and Erik Palmstierna, the Swedish ambassador to Great Britain, to various cultural events in Dublin. He also persuaded the sculptor Carl Milles to compete in the Free State coinage competition 1926-28, and tried to replicate the Nobel Prize committee through his own Tailteann literary prizes. As Yeats's correspondence and 'The Bounty of Sweden' essay show, this was a decidedly Swedish renaissance that the poet wished to emulate in Ireland.

In this paper, however, I will primarily home in on the realpolitik of state patronage by tracing Yeats's brief but engaged interest in Swedish National Romantic style, the policies of the governing Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the co-operative potential of the Swedish iteration of the Arts and Crafts movement. This Nordic model of public art and patronage can be separated from Yeats's growing interest in early fascist Italy and the state-sponsorship of the arts under Benito Mussolini. Furthermore, Yeats's connections to the social democrat Palmstierna and advocates of the SDP Folkhemmet ('the people's home') civic model like his Swedish publisher Thorsten Laurin and the architect of the Stockholm Town Hall, Östberg, complicates our picture of the late Yeats as increasingly engaged in fascist European politics and civic arts.

Joyce Sparring with Yeats: The National Library Episode of *Ulysses* as a Laboratory of the Literary

Irina D. Rasmussen

In the “Scylla and Charybdis” episode of *Ulysses*, James Joyce famously stages a debate about Shakespeare and the controversy surrounding his authorship. Stephen Dedalus delivers his theory of Shakespeare as a provocation to challenge the gathered literati’s romantic valorization of inspired creativity. The setting of the National Library and pervasive presence of the otherwise absent Yeats calls for a careful attention to the distinctions among the literary figures assembled in the episode. Apart from challenging the cultural authority of these senior Revivalists on the scene, Stephen also probes the aesthetic program of the more recent expressions of the Irish Literary Revival, associated with the intellectual authority of W. B. Yeats, and represented in the library scene by George Russell, who acts as the movement’s main spokesman using the pseudonym A. E.. Russell was a known historical personality and a close associate of Yeats and the Abbey Theatre group. In the library scene, he voices the group’s aspiration to forge a distinctly Irish cultural identity and literature, the very sentiments Stephen tries to resist. Stephen’s skepticism about Russell’s nostalgia for Ireland’s Celtic roots and rural culture replicates what Joyce, as a young aspiring Irish writer, saw as Yeats’s aestheticism and populism—or what he called, Yeats’s “floating will” and “treacherous instinct of adaptability.” This paper discusses the conceptual and literary stakes involved in the fictional figuration of the spat between two literary visions.

Phantasms as Signposts of the Invisible: Yeats’s Mask Theory Revisited

Hedwig Schwall

This paper will focus on Yeats’s ideas of “masterful images” and trace how they “Grew in pure mind”, and “out of what [they] ...began”. The concept of the phantasm as elaborated by Plato, Aristotle and Lacan will prove useful. As “the site of the soul’s most extreme experiences” (G. Agamben) it elucidates passages in Autobiographies and Essays and Introductions in which Yeats reaches out to the unconscious, to “Life” as he calls it. But like Perseus who needed a polished shield to approach Medusa, Yeats needed intermediaries, images and “thoughts, tested by passion” to get in touch with that Other in himself. Didi Huberman’s concept of the phantasm will further allow us to show how the self in Yeats is an “act of appreciation” in which the visible and the visual interact. This will be illustrated by poems going from “The Indian Upon God” over “Ego Dominus Tuus” to “Long-legged Fly”.

“Yeats in Sweden”

Lars-Håkan Svensson

The main aim of my talk will be to throw new light on the process resulting in Yeats being awarded the Nobel Prize in 1923. I will base my discussion on a survey of mainly Swedish material in the form of journal articles and newspaper writings but will, in addition, attempt a reconstruction of the deliberations of the Academy. While the process leading up to Yeats being awarded the prize is known in broad outline, a thorough examination of the available (Swedish) sources makes it possible to modify and develop the findings of previous scholars. In closing, I will make some remarks on the reception of Yeats in Sweden after 1923, commenting on a variety of translations, essays and scholarly works.

Revelation by Chance *and* Choice: The Path of the Chameleon and the Peacock’s Tail

Charika Swanepoel

Yeats’s lifelong captivation with occult, esoteric, and religious ideas acquainted him with a great deal of powerful imagery capable of expressing the need for and pursuit of revelation. Many of Yeats’s images were informed by alchemical writings and the mystical philosophy of the Golden Dawn. For instance, Yeats employs the images of *Hodos Chamelionis* (the Path of the Chameleon) and *Cauda*

Pavonis (the Peacock's Tail) as symbols of the volatile process of spiritual revelation. I compare these images in an exploration of Yeats's notion of revelation as it figures in the chapter "Hodos Chameliontos" from the second volume of Yeats's *Autobiographies*. Here, Yeats considers creative innovation and genius as "the re-creation of the man" through art. This revelation is found by taking the dangerous Path of the Chameleon, by venturing forth into "all that multiplicity of interest and opinion" while, at the same time, discovering a philosophy through methods of meditation and or mediumship. Revelation involves a type of conjuring, a wilful calling up of an image but, as Yeats notes "our images must be given to us, we cannot choose them deliberately" (CW3 216). This chapter of *Autobiographies*, therefore, illustrates Yeats's understanding of revelation as "at the same instant predestinate and free". I read this chapter in tandem with the 1896 short stories "Rosa Alchemica" and "The Tables of the Law". The interplay between Chance and Choice is further contextualized with references to relevant poems.

Absence and Disembodiment in Yeats's Plays

Melinda Szuts

The paper will investigate Yeats's uses of a dramaturgical device that the playwright first began to explore in the composition of his dance dramas, and used extensively and more innovatively in his later works. This is the employment of absent or disembodied characters as a means for dramaturgical emphasis, characterisation, and narration, which are often interrelated with experimentations with sound and voice. The first applications of the device could be found in *At the Hawk's Well*, where it was already paired with the employment of sound effects. The complementary juxtaposition of absent places, actions, or characters with effects for sound or incidental music appears in all of the dance dramas, and gains its most complex form in *Calvary*. Both the device of absence and its complementary dramaturgical tool, the employment of disembodied voices are used extensively in Yeats's late plays, such as in *The Resurrection*, *The Words upon the Window-Pane*, *the Full Moon in March*, *The King of The Great Clock Tower*, and *The Death of Cuchulain*. The paper is going to explore the evolution of this dramaturgical tool from the dance dramas to the late plays, drawing on its uses in *Calvary* as a most complex example. It will also analyse the performative aspects of the tool through examples from the discussed plays' production history, and will point towards new perspectives in their interpretation and staging.

"A Vast Design" of Artistic Unity that W.B. Yeats found in the Stockholm City Hall

Yuki Takahashi

W.B. Yeats, as senator of the Irish Free State established in 1922, made efforts to promote Irish art industry. Such his position was unique when the newly founded government was more concerned with deciding the political directions rather than seeking for the social role of artistic activities. In fact, this period coincided with the final stage of the Irish Arts and Crafts movement, after marking its heyday in the 1910's. However, certainly never before this period had the idea of co-operative harmony of arts, especially in the sense of synthesis in architectural arts, ever been expected. This ideal appears to correspond to Yeats's response to the Stockholm City Hall (Stadshus), the venue of the Nobel prize ceremony which he was awarded in 1923. This building's beauty impressed Yeats as he wrote in *The Bounty of Sweden* (1925). The concepts epitomised in the interior decorations are even reminiscent of 'a vast design' of non-individual, artistic unity that Yeats envisaged in *A Vision* (1925). By tracing his keen observation of the multiple creativities integrated in Stadshus, this paper attempts to illustrate how Yeats and his contemporaries found out the ultimate ideal of the Irish Arts and Crafts movement before its decline.

Poetic Legacy and Revision in “The Tower”

Yuki Tanaka

Yeats's complex sense of time has received much critical attention in recent years. In some of his most famous poems, Yeats assumes the role of a prophet, as in “The Second Coming” and “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen,” predicting that some form of apocalypse will happen. At the same time, he tends to put his prophetic statements as questions, hence casting doubt over what will actually happen. This combination of certainty and uncertainty characterizes the way he copes with the future. I'd like to locate this uncertainty in a poem that seems quite certain of the future, “The Tower” (1928). In this poem, the speaker seems to dictate what the future should look like by composing a will and choosing the inheritors of his poetic legacy. However, once we compare the published version of the poem to draft versions, the poem reveals Yeats's uncertainty over the future and how much of his legacy will survive. By analyzing the drafts of “The Tower,” I will argue that for a fuller understanding of Yeats's temporality, we need to bring his revision process into conversation and take his poems not as fixed end-products, but as they move and change through time.

Romancing Romance: William Morris, Early Yeats and the Religion of Art

Tom Walker

‘Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing’ proclaims the opening line of William Morris's *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70). As Florence S. Boos suggests, this apology detaches Morris's poem from epic's traditional supernatural cosmology, aligning ‘it with an alternate, secular tradition of narrative and romance’. Yeats's acquaintance with Morris and his circle c.1888-1890 has long been noted, not least in Yeats's own writings. One reason later given by Yeats for his eventual estrangement from this group was its indifference to religion. Likewise, Yeats's assessment of Morris's poetry in ‘The Happiest of Poets’ (1903) points to the limitations of Morris's earth-bound sense of vision and romance, arguing that his Grail was ‘not the Grail of Malory or Wagner’. Such distance from Morris and his work, however, was not straightforwardly acquired. A significant intersecting complication was also the wider nineteenth-century growth of what Stephen Cheeke describes as ‘the idea or fantasy that art had effected a substitution of religion’. Looking back to Yeats's work of the 1880s and early 1890s, this paper will see explore its parallels with Morris's work in relation to the mode of Romance, set against the backdrop of the wider relationship between art and religion in the nineteenth century.

Inspiration, Elevation, Decadence: Yeats, Symons and Pater Revisited

Giles Whiteley

This paper approaches the question of Yeats and elevation in reverse, as it were, by returning to Yeats' early relationship with literary Decadence. Scholars have tended to downplay Yeats' interest in Pater, paying lip service while reducing it programmatically to a few paragraphs of the infamous ‘Conclusion’ to his *Renaissance* (1873), and apparently misled by the seemingly Eliotesque critique of Pater's influence on the ‘untidy lives’ of Symons and Johnson in the *Autobiography*. Where value is placed on Yeats' early interest in literary Decadence, it has focused on a French-coterie of Symbolist writers mediated via Symons, which has been read as formative on Yeats' later interest in *Anima Mundi*. This paper, however, returns to an early scene of these debates in ‘The Symbolism of Poetry’ (1900), Yeats' response to Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899). While the aesthete remains unnamed, the essay shows Yeats' significant engagement with Pater's ideas. As I will demonstrate, Yeats' theory of poetic Symbolism owes more to Pater than has hitherto been recognized, and his ideas of spiritual elevation find ‘inspiration’ (a key word in the essay; literally ‘to breathe into’) in Pater's

theories of influence, passion, rhythm and style which Yeats drew less from the ‘Conclusion’, than Pater’s influential novel, *Marius the Epicurean* (1885) and his essay on ‘Style’ (1888).

Our Poet as Esoteric Protestant Prophet Confronting a Sacramental Universe

Kathryna Wills

Yeats was a man haunted by a beloved childhood religion of which he had “been deprived by Huxley”, and this drove him to create his own faith, based on a “fardel” of stories passed on from generation to generation by poets, philosophers and theologians: “Whatever I can imagine these mouths speaking may be the nearest I can get to truth” (*Autobiographies*). Yet for all that, this cultural and atavistic Protestantism left traces throughout his writing. His religion was, therefore, post-secular and, ultimately, Romantic. The poems about Yeats’ visions, or after- death experiences such as “The Second Coming” and “Byzantium” combine elements of this Protestantism, his occult narratives, and an instinctive need for a Blakean opposition of contraries. Yves Bonnefoy, a major French poet translates these poems with a similar form of cultural Christianity – but this time Catholicism. This reveals the Protestant use of the image as idol, in terms discussed by the French phenomenologist, Jean-Luc Marion. Bonnefoy’s own use of images also highlights the sources of the sacred in Yeats’ own poetic imaginary. This implies that a Catholic Yeats and a new work of art are generated in the poems, begging the question: to what extent are these poems still Yeatsian?

Spectral Aesthetics in Yeats and Strindberg

Joakim Wrethed

Strindberg’s and Yeats’s relations to the literary Nobel Prize must be construed as a strict opposition. The whole spectacle of the Strindberg feud and his antagonism towards Heidenstam and the Swedish Academy appears in bright contrast to Yeats’s own pleasure of receiving the prize and his praise of Sweden in the essay “The Bounty of Sweden”. However, anyone may also immediately recognise aspects that do not set these prominent authors apart, for example as regards the influence of figures such as Craig, Maeterlinck, Swedenborg and Madame Blavatsky. In addition, we can think of the famous Yeatsian account of his meeting with a silent Swede—that turns out to be Strindberg—who according to Yeats seems to be looking for the Philosopher’s Stone, which actually also was one of Strindberg’s main occupations at the time of the encounter. Alchemy was a type of material elevation Yeats saw as an analogy to artistic creation in “an endeavour to condense as out of the flying vapour of the world an image of human perfection”. Moreover, in terms of their general attitude towards occultism and ghosts, there are a number of significant similarities. Though a huge amount of scholarly work has been done on pinpointing the existence of such phenomena in these authors’ creative work, there has been less written on the actual *aesthetic function* of the textual prominence of occultism and spectrality. This paper will tentatively outline a hauntological aesthetics that serves to radically distance both artists from *the ontic*—i.e. hypostatised (falsely) given reality in the Heideggerian sense. This type of aesthetics instead moves towards a spectral dynamics that I argue is essential in substantial parts of the two authors’ respective oeuvres. In Strindberg’s *The Ghost Sonata*, it is stated that the student, the clairvoyant Sunday child, “can see what others cannot see”, which I understand as a major distinction. In Yeats’s work, the poet’s outlook is completely dependent on belonging to those who truly see: “A ghost may come; / For it is a ghost’s right, / His element is so fine / Being sharpened by his death...”. This exquisitely fine material shapes the transcendental spectral aesthetics in both authors’ writings by opening up a vaster domain of creative possibilities.