

November 2018

Introduction: Yeats and Mass Communications

David Dwan

Emilie Morin

Follow this and additional works at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/iys>

Recommended Citation

Dwan, David and Morin, Emilie (2018) "Introduction: Yeats and Mass Communications," *International Yeats Studies*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/iys/vol3/iss1/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Yeats Studies by an authorized editor of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.

INTRODUCTION: YEATS AND MASS COMMUNICATIONS

David Dwan and Emilie Morin

Yeats often aspired to a lofty independence—to an aristocratic form of art that had “no need of mob or Press to pay its way” (CW4 163). But his own desire for an audience—at least of some notable scale—triggered many a descent from the mountaintop and much contact with the throng (Standish O’Grady would rue the way Yeats had “got down into the crowds”).¹ His pursuit of a public necessarily led him into the world of mass media—a landscape populated first by newspapers and later by radios, which he learned to navigate with shrewdness and skill. The purpose of this special issue is to examine Yeats’s various ventures in mass communication—a key component of the literary marketplace in which the poet advertised and peddled his wares. Yeats’s exposure to the demands of journalism, book reviewing, and radio broadcasting also had a decisive bearing on his poetics, influencing his ideas about how art should be received and even structured. “What is popular poetry?” Yeats asked in 1901; the newspaper and the radio gave particular inflections to that question (CW4 5). His lifelong concern with the social purpose of art was also significantly determined by his thinking about mass media. Every society, he suggested, needed its prophet, priest, and king (CW4 191)—with the artist sometimes seeming to serve as a synthesis of each of these roles—but none of these figures could hold sway in the modern world without some mastery of mass media.

Yeats became such a master even though, mostly for rhetorical purposes, he liked to cast himself as a dilettante, a dissenter, or a naïve observer. He was, for a start, a prolific journalist and essayist (MacNeice emphasized his “brilliant journalistic qualities” while also acknowledging his contempt for journalism).² He complained to Katharine Tynan in 1888 about his “ever multiplying boxes of unsaleable MSS—work to[o] strange at one moment and to[o] incoherent the next for any first class Magazine and too ambitious for local papers” (CLI 71); nonetheless, his work would appear in over seventy different newspapers, magazines, and periodicals over his lifetime. Some of his most famous poems—from “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” to “September 1913” (initially published as “Romance in Ireland”)—first appeared in newspapers. Indeed, when it came to the press there was no bridle for this Proteus. He contributed to the Catholic *Irish Monthly*, the evangelical *Leisure Hour*, and the theosophical *Lucifer*. He also published in the Parnellite *United Ireland*, the socialist *Irish Worker*, and the unionist *Daily Express*. When asked by W. E. Henley to review

Ellen O’Leary’s *Lays of Country, Home and Friends* for the “ultra-Tory” *National Observer*, Yeats acknowledged that there were limits to his elasticity: “When I consented to Henley’s suggestion that I should review it for him I had no idea how difficult it would be. If I were a Tory it would be easy enough, or if I could descend to writing as a Tory who did not let his politics quite kill his literary sympathies” (CL4 929). The review never appeared. But fifteen of his poems and several other reviews made their first appearance in Henley’s paper.

Yeats could travel comfortably in the lowlands and uplands of journalism. He was a gossip “Celt in London” for the *Boston Pilot* and a relatively austere judge of “popular journalism” in the *Bookman* (CW9 341). He stooped to the *Girl’s Own Paper*, but he also felt at home in more exclusive journals such as *The Yellow Book* and the *Little Review*. By the late 1890s, the Yeats brand was sufficiently high status to allow journals to trade on his name. In 1897, for instance, *The Dome* smiled at the bafflement Yeats produced among *Daily Mail* readers:

Some person who is quite good enough for *The Daily Mail* has been reading the twelve lines by Mr. W. B. Yeats which appeared in our last number. This “Sonnet,” as he intelligently calls it, had the effect of sending him “careering back to commonplaceness with a sigh of relief.” All humane men and women will feel glad that *The Daily Mail* person returned to his own place so safe and sound, and nice and early, after his venturesome little excursion in foreign parts.³

Yeats liked to cultivate a similar hauteur. As he confided to Ernest Rhys in his youth, “I use all my great will power to keep me from reading the newspapers and spoiling my vocabulary”—an impressive ambition given how often he would write for them.⁴ His diatribes against journalism were liable to have the same boomerang effect as his attacks on the middle class, but they nonetheless remained central to his self-presentation as an artist. “I hate journalists,” he announced to Tynan in 1888. “There is nothing in them but tittering but jeering emptiness. They have all made what Dante calls the Great Refusal. [sic] that is they have ceased to be self centred [and] have given up their individuality” (CL1 91). Journalists, eternally in thrall to the demands of readers and editors, lacked true self-ownership. Yeats on the other hand wanted to write his “own thoughts—wishing never to write other peoples [sic] for money” (CL1 117). Of course, this was easier said than done and he would remain reliant on newspapers for much of his income for the first two decades of his career. As he confided to Robert Bridges in 1897, “One has to give something of one’s self to the devil that one may live”—a fact which helped to explain why so much of his criticism was, as he put it, “merely conscientious journalism” (CL2 111).

Despite his dealings with the devil, a histrionic antipathy to newspapers became a staple of Yeats’s language of self-legitimization. “[D]istrust

in journalism,” he liked to announce, was “[t]he beginning of success in literature.”⁵ He disparaged the “base idioms of the newspapers” (CL8 18), “the rough-and-ready conscience of the newspaper” (CL8 29), and “a style, rancid, coarse, and vague, like that of the daily papers.”⁶ He thus aspired to “a poetical style where there is nothing ostentatious, nothing crude, no breath of parvenu or journalist” (CW4 167). His commitment to verbal hygiene was often taken at face value, with readers finding “no dilution of journalism in his works.”⁷ Newspapers such as the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent* recirculated his denunciations of newspapers and they were sufficiently well known to become the stuff of parody. For instance, in *Daisy Darley; or, The Fairy Gold of Fleet Street* the press is pronounced an existential threat by a transparent caricature of Yeats (“‘I am glad,’ said the poet, ‘that my back is turned to Fleet Street. Fleet Street is an enemy of the Immortal Moods’”).⁸ His views were more respectfully received by other mandarins of taste. As Richard Aldington declared in the *Little Review*, “Mr. Yeats is right when he complains that newspapers have spoiled our sense of poetry.”⁹ The true artist, according to Auden, needed to be “more than a bit of a reporting journalist,” but Yeats—at least in theory—decried all such mergers.¹⁰

Indeed, Yeats baited newspapers with declarations of his own independence. In a spat with the *United Irishman* in 1902, for instance, he proudly announced: “Writers who write for a very small circle of highly cultivated readers like A. E. and myself, can whistle at the newspapers, for our readers are not influenced by them” (CL3 188). But this was an elaborate fantasy: he had long sought to woo readers for himself and for others through the press. He was an adept logroller. Or, as Tynan recalled, “he was apt, I think, to be over-generous to the work of those he liked.”¹¹ He heaped lavish praise on Æ—“No voice in modern Ireland is to me as beautiful as his” (CW9 284)—and on Lady Gregory. His account of *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*—“the best book that has come out of Ireland in my time”—drew loud heckles (*P&I* 224). Yeats was sensitive to the charge of logrolling, asking Tynan not to sign an interview with him in *The Sketch* in 1893 lest they be accused of underhanded self-promotion. A dotting interview nevertheless appeared with the initials K. T.¹²

Yeats was a good interviewee, offering his views with a carefully weighted mixture of humor, gravity, and earnestness. But he could also bristle at the intrusiveness of journalists. He complained for example about the tactics of the *Daily Mail* in the pages of the *Freeman's Journal*: “It is obvious that the practice of quoting in the Press private conversations, however important in themselves, if generally adopted, would make it impossible to receive a representative of the Press as the equal of men of breeding.”¹³ Here and elsewhere, he was prepared to emphasize journalism’s uncertain social credentials. As Max Weber once noted, the journalist lacked “a fixed social classification,” and belonged as a

result “to a sort of pariah caste, which is always estimated by ‘society’ in terms of its ethically lowest representative.”¹⁴ For Yeats, always sensitive to his own fragile status, being “hated by journalists and groundlings” became a source of pride (CW5 213).

Fractional encounters with the nationalist press stimulated his hostility to newspapers. The deep connection between newspapers and nationalism in Ireland is of course well known, and became part of the folklore of nationalism itself.¹⁵ The notion of the press as a constitutive power in the life of a community was advertised in the very title of *The Nation* newspaper; moreover, the idea that that the journal had brought a “new soul” to Ireland was rehearsed by a long line of newspapers, competing for a stake in national soul-manufacture. Yeats famously blew hot and cold about the legacy of Young Ireland, applauding its communitarian ambition while decrying its instrumental view of literature and its aesthetically compromised results, but the group certainly confirmed for him the immense power of journalism. Indeed, by 1909 he was convinced that the national spirit was dying because the influence of *The Nation* was passing away (*Mem* 180). Of course, the national spirit was not dying; it had simply assumed a form that Yeats disliked. The *Playboy* riots—and their long gestation—convinced him that public opinion in Ireland had become ever more Catholic, shabbily bourgeois, and exultantly philistine. Newspapers, he believed, had effectively killed J. M. Synge. Reflecting on the baseness of journalists in his diaries in 1909, his mind turned to his friend, “dying at this moment of their bitterness and ignorance” (*Mem* 161). In his great essay on Synge published the following year, he duly rounded on “the pomp and gallantry of journalism” and queried its “right to govern the world” (CW4 227). The autonomy Yeats claimed for himself, he now extended to his dead friend—a man “all folded up in brooding intellect, knowing nothing of new books and newspapers, reading the great masters alone” (CW4 225) —a portrait of Synge that required active repression of the fact that he had written a significant body of journalism.

The *Playboy* controversies marked the high point of Yeats’s disenchantment with nationalist newspapers, but he had attacked newspapers on nationalist grounds in other contexts. For instance, in *The Celtic Twilight* in 1902 Yeats described how the devil initially presented himself to a woman from Mayo in the guise of a newspaper floating down the road: “She knew by the size of it that it was the *Irish Times*”—and, presumably, by the same paper’s unionist connections—that it was the devil in disguise (CT 62).¹⁶ Nationalists often cast the destruction of tradition in Ireland as a process of Anglicization, so the unionist *Irish Times* in this context was a serviceable symbol for the ways in which modern mass communications encroach upon traditional life-worlds. Newspapers for Yeats were simply the most aggressive expression of modern

print-capitalism: a discursive system that was, he felt, gradually supplanting traditional forms of oral culture. Though the distinction between oral and print cultures was never as secure as Yeats liked to think, he consistently deplored those who would “substitute for the ideas of the folk-life the rhetoric of the newspapers” (CW8 59). The press was often lauded as an agent of enlightenment in Ireland, but Yeats decried its terrible disenchantment of the world. As he put it in the *Scot’s Observer* in 1889:

Most men know the prophecy of Thomas of Ercildoune: “The time is coming when all the wisdom of the world shall centre in the grey goose quill.” So much of prophecy has been fulfilled. Tradition seems half gone. Thomas of Ercildoune and his like go with it. The newspaper editors and other men of the quill, this long while have been elbowing fairy and fairy seer from hearth and board.¹⁷

This anti-journalistic journalism was a curiously paradoxical art. Indeed, Yeats often seemed to operate as if the only cure was in the poison itself: he published a large swathe of folk and fairy tales in newspapers. This blurred the very terms of the opposition (oral culture versus print technology; folklore versus journalism) he used to sanction such publication ventures. As John Kelly has shown, the elision of boundaries became embarrassingly evident when Augustus O’Shea challenged Yeats’s claim to have first encountered the story of the Countess Cathleen in the West of Ireland:

Mr. Yeats told me he heard it in the west of Ireland. This would be a surprising coincidence were it not [...] that I had it printed in the *Shamrock*, of Dublin [October 6, 1867] which largely circulates among Irish people. [...] Singularly enough, it was reprinted in the same periodical at a comparatively recent date. (CL2 539)

Yeats often lamented the lack of an educated audience in Ireland (“No Irish books were read except books of rhetorical or melodramatic journalism, bound in staring green, and covered with Shamrocks”),¹⁸ but he would also attack the culture of the book. Reading, he believed, undermined face-to-face interaction and separated the individual from the broader life of the community: “When a man takes a book into the corner he surrenders, so much life for his knowledge, so much, I mean, of that normal activity that gives him life and strength; he lays away his own handiwork and turns from his friend” (CW8 97–98). Here he sponsored the communitarian nature of oral culture over the individualizing tendency of print. “It is a much more natural thing,” he insisted, “to listen than to read.”¹⁹

This partly explains Yeats's attraction to the radio in the last decade of his career, though it evidently took him some time to adjust to the fact that people didn't listen to it as a crowd, but "singly or in twos and threes" (*CW10* 234). In the texts of Yeats's BBC broadcasts we can trace his own acclimatization to this new medium, and his many attempts to conceive of radio in light of the already familiar. The audiences he imagines in the introductions to his BBC broadcasts occupy a range of semi-public, semi-private spaces in which sociability can thrive according to pre-established rules—the theater, the lecture hall, the university, the rural cottage, the pub, the parlor.²⁰ He liked to exaggerate his lack of acquaintance with the oral world of radio, and to recall his long experience of publishing as a poet and a journalist. "My Own Poetry Again," a BBC broadcast from 1937, begins with Yeats invoking the time when he "made [his] living reviewing books" in London and explaining how the homesickness from which he suffered spurred him to write "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" (*CW10* 290). In an earlier broadcast, "Poems about Women," he observed that the experience of reading his own poems on radio should—at least in principle—"be no worse than publishing love poems in a book" (*CW10* 234). When he eventually purchased a wireless set, he did so as a present to his wife, and through the BBC. This was a gift but not a surprise: "I am getting you a wireless through the B.B.C, I get a discount which should pay the tax, & they are getting it should be the best," he wrote to George (*CL Intelix* #6669). His friends poked fun at his technological incompetence—Lennox Robinson reported how Yeats, unable to confirm to the BBC whether or not his Dublin home had electricity (it didn't), had to wire George for an answer.²¹

Nonetheless, in practice Yeats would soon become a keen broadcaster, at home in the BBC's London studios and endlessly fascinated by the powers of the microphone. In his dabblings with radio he found greater fulfilment, it seems, than in his sustained involvement with journalism and the world of print more broadly. Ronald Schuchard has emphasized the significance of radio broadcasting to Yeats's late career, showing how his collaboration with the BBC enabled him to refashion his ideas about the "spiritual democracy" he had yearned for all his life; as Schuchard argues, radio also led Yeats to give new articulations to ideas about minstrelsy and ancient bardic traditions which had long preoccupied him.²² Emily C. Bloom has demonstrated how much radio brought to Yeats's approach to his poetic practice, to his understanding of his own public, and to "the auditory poetics of his late lyrics;" radio, as Bloom shows, "played a pivotal role as a medium through which Yeats performed, publicized, and published poetry at the end of his life."²³ Radio also provided a whole new grammar for thinking about perception and became the site of another paradoxical alliance of interests, in which Yeats's different and sometimes competing interests as private spiritualist and public poet could be expressed

simultaneously. Indeed, the new medium often encouraged Yeats, in his radio texts of the 1930s, to borrow from the spiritualist rhetoric and associations that he had explored as part of his experimental psychical research with George Yeats in the early years of their marriage.²⁴ The Yeatses' performative occultism, as Margaret Mills Harper observes, was always sharply attuned to the cultural changes taking place around them, and registered the "shock of new technologies that recorded and transmitted symbolic and linguistic information, such as photography, film, and recorded sound."²⁵

To the BBC, even in the early days of broadcasting, Yeats was a pioneer—often unbeknownst to himself, since George Yeats dealt with much of the correspondence—as well as a safe investment. His approach was hands-off, as a letter to the Society of Authors from 1923 makes clear: "I leave the matter of fees entirely to you. I know nothing about the capacity of wireless to pay, & you do. Whatever you arrange I shall be satisfied with the result" (*CL Intelix* #4361). His plays—particularly *The Land of Heart's Desire* and *The Shadowy Waters*—were perceived as ideal radio material by the BBC from 1924 onward and were broadcast frequently thereafter, while his poetry became a regular fixture on air throughout the 1920s and 1930s.²⁶ The publics that these broadcasts reached were international, diverse, and of considerable size. Through these early radio adaptations, with which Yeats had no involvement, his poems and plays were widely disseminated to Irish, British, and international audiences, including in areas covered by the BBC Empire Service. When he turned to broadcasting, the poetry readings that he conceived for the BBC were widely praised and remembered. The *Manchester Guardian* received his readings particularly warmly, noting how Yeats's voice came across as a welcome antidote to "that dismal and often portentous droning of verse which is too often heard from the BBC."²⁷ Certainly, his was one of the voices that many of his contemporaries could recognize. By the mid-1930s, he was such a strong presence that he could be introduced in the pages of the *Radio Times* as the poet whose work "has something to say to everyone."²⁸ The poet had certainly come down from the mountain. But he also attempted to train his audience, using radio to develop a different kind of musical literacy whose experimental nature, for Adrian Paterson, resonated with contemporaneous innovations in music composition.²⁹ Many were struck by his peculiar style of recitation; the *Manchester Guardian* radio critic observed, in the wake of "Poems About Women," that "[w]hen the poems were read we began to think that after this perhaps no poems should be read except by their authors."³⁰ On occasion he felt that the medium was beyond him, in spite of his long experience working with sound and speech, and could not be domesticated. The "Abbey Theatre Broadcast," to which he had taken an experimental approach, was a "fiasco," he complained to George Barnes, his BBC producer, in February 1937:

Every human sound turned into the grunt roar bellow of a wild [beast]. I recognise that I am a fool & there will be no more broad cast [sic] of verse from the Abbey stage if I can prevent it. [...] Possible all that I think noble & poignant in speech [sic] is impossible. Certainly I have no knowledge of what is possible. Perhaps my old bundle of folk tricks is useless. [...] I am an humbled man—when you get those “records” you will know all about it. (*CL IntelLex* #6798)

Between radio and television there was only a short step. To the BBC, Yeats’s plays were also secure territory for experimental television: they had been integrated into radio programs from the early days of the Corporation’s existence, and Yeats’s non-interventionist approach made further experimentation possible in the late 1930s, when the author’s radio days were coming to an end. The plays selected by the BBC were *The Words upon the Window Pane*, *The Shadowy Waters*, and *Deirdre*. Sadly, traces of these televised performances are scant, but the performances broadcast live in 1937 and 1938 earned fulsome praise in newspaper reviews.³¹ It may be that Yeats would have become more involved with television if ill-health had not hindered the continuation of his broadcasting career. His last meeting with Barnes after his final BBC reading in October 1937 ended with a speculative discussion about a television appearance from Alexandra Palace (*Life* 2 601). By that stage, the moving image industries were familiar territory. As Megan Girdwood has shown, Yeats had a number of interactions with the film industry in the Irish Free State—as Senator and as Abbey Director—and played various roles in opposing film censorship and facilitating film projects during the 1920s.³²

The collaboration that Yeats initiated with the BBC generated more than just broadcast programs: several poems from this period were broadcast before appearing in print, notably “For Anne Gregory,” “Roger Casement,” “Come on to the Hills of the Mourne,” “Sweet Dancer,” and “The Curse of Cromwell.”³³ When writing for *The Listener*—the BBC publication conceived to complement the *Radio Times*, which aimed to initiate fruitful discussions of broadcasting—Yeats also produced a slightly different kind of journalism. The text of a planned broadcast entitled “I Became an Author,” published in *The Listener* in August 1938, is a remarkably candid confession, which comes across as a sequel of sorts to another *Listener* essay from 1934, “The Growth of a Poet,” and other texts in which Yeats returns to his career as a poet. In “I Became an Author”—one of his last publications before his death—Yeats recalls his early years in London as “one of the rising poets” and as a struggling amateur journalist: “As a professional writer I was clumsy, stiff and sluggish; when I reviewed a book I had to write my own heated thoughts because I did not know how to get thoughts out

of my subject" (*CW10* 300). He repeatedly returns to his difficulties with learning and presents his career as a succession of accidents:

How did I begin to write? I have nothing to say that may help young writers, except that I hope they will not begin as I did. I spent longer than most schoolboys preparing the next day's work, and yet learned nothing, and would always have been at the bottom of my class but for one or two subjects that I hardly had to learn at all. [...] Greater poets than I have been great scholars. Even today I struggle against a lack of confidence, when among average men, come from that daily humiliation, and because I do not know what they know. (*CW10* 297)

There are many candid admissions in Yeats's radio broadcasts too. The texts he composed for the wireless often pivot upon his own declared ignorance, deployed to different rhetorical ends. In his first broadcast, conceived to accompany a production of *Oedipus the King* broadcast from Belfast the following week, Yeats emphasizes his lack of acquaintance with radio and presents himself as a naive listener-to-be: "If the wireless can be got to work, in the country house where I shall be staying, I shall be listening too, and as I have never heard a play broadcasted I do not know whether I shall succeed in calling into my imagination that ancient theatre" (*CW10* 220). In an interview to the *Northern Whig and Belfast Post*, published the day after the talk was broadcast, he stresses once again his complete ignorance of broadcasting, but takes the opportunity to comment on the development of industry and mass communications:

Gone are the days of the poet's licence, thinks W. B. Yeats, Ireland's greatest living poet, who made his debut "on the air" by broadcasting from the Belfast Radio Station last night. "Nowadays," he remarked to a *Whig* reporter shortly before he went before the microphone for the first time in his life, "a poet must aim at perfect precision and accuracy of movement." [...] Describing his feelings at approaching the microphone for the first time, Mr. Yeats said he was not experiencing any sensation of "stage fright." "The only thing about it," he said, "is that instead of speaking to a great many people altogether I shall be speaking to a great many people who will be separated. What it feels like to listen to a man speaking over the radio I do not know, for although I have heard music broadcast have never listened in to anyone speaking over the wireless." Discussing the opening up of the countryside by means of such developments as rural motor bus services, the Shannon electricity scheme, and the introduction of talking picture houses into the remote country towns, Mr. Yeats said that there was a danger of the culture of the Irish countryside being lost unless the old folk lore was maintained by means of the printed word.³⁴

Print, once cast as the ravager of folk-life, now functions as its great preserver. But as ever Yeats managed to sound both nostalgic and avant-garde at the same time. The manner in which his comments tie the wireless to “rural motor bus services, the Shannon electricity scheme, and the introduction of talking picture houses into the remote country towns” is less predictable, however, and points to Yeats’s perception of a modernity integrated into all aspects of domestic, urban, and rural life, in which radio acts as a vanguard phenomenon.

The texts of Yeats’s BBC broadcasts reveal how quickly radio became the technological setting in which he could pursue his fantasies about the public poet and bring them a few steps closer to reality. His first BBC broadcast ends with a reminder that the Abbey Company are about to cross the Atlantic, “to play the Abbey plays all over the United States as far west as California, as far south as Texas” (*CW10* 223). This meditation on audiences across the globe prompts Yeats to fuse theater and radio publics, and to reflect on the large and elusive mass of his radio listeners—who include the thirty million Irishmen and women “scattered throughout the world [...] ready to share our imagination and our discoveries” (*CW10* 223). To these millions in exile Yeats—speaking on behalf of the Abbey—is “sending a vision of the new Ireland, so full of curiosity, so full of self-criticism” (*CW10* 223). In January 1937, in anticipation of the BBC’s Abbey Theatre broadcast in which “Roger Casement” was read for the first time, he bragged about contacts in Egypt and articulated his hopes that radio would enable the poem to reach a much broader and naturally sympathetic audience: “The Casement poem will be sent out on the wire-less from Athlone either on Feb 1 or Feb 9—it has to be sung on the Abbey stage & the date depends upon the plays—it can only go on if the play is short. The ‘record’ of it will then be sent to Cairo where the wireless is in Irish hands” (*CL InteLex* #6786). Ireland’s spiritual democracy looked set to become an empire. In contrast to the press, laden by too many agendas that Yeats resented, radio seemed to him to be a freer medium, which could provide the perfect conditions for creating the ideal audience he had always dreamt of finding.

The texts, contexts, and moments discussed in this special issue reveal the importance of print and broadcast media to Yeats’s artistic ventures, legacies, and reception, and draw attention to his industrious output and evolving thought on mass communications. As the following essays show, Yeats’s views on his real and desired publics, on the vagaries of his profession, and on the dissemination of his work are played out loudly and clearly in his perspectives on the newspaper, print, film, and radio cultures of his time. Radio for Yeats was not simply a means of artistic expression: it was also, as Emily Bloom demonstrates, a particularly valuable tool for emphasizing the contingency of historical meaning and for shaping historical memory. Bloom focuses on the Easter Rising poems that Yeats broadcast on the BBC—which included “On

a Political Prisoner,” “The Rose Tree,” and “Roger Casement,” but excluded “Easter, 1916”—and traces in Yeats’s broadcasting practice a reframing and reshaping of the historical memory of the Rising in the early years of the Irish Free State. Clare Hutton focuses on other forms of refashioning that Yeats pursued among his hodge-podge of magazine and periodical contributions. She examines Yeats’s brief associations with the modernist little magazine self-consciously poised at the cutting edge of experimental writing, the *Little Review*. Ezra Pound, who was the magazine’s “Foreign Editor” for a time, initially had no plans to include Yeats, but arranged for the publication of a series of poems between June 1917 and January 1919—including “The Wild Swans at Coole,” “In Memory of Robert Gregory,” and many others—as well as *The Dreaming of the Bones*. Hutton shows how Yeats used the *Little Review* as a form of draft publication and sets Yeats’s submissions in dialogue with other contributions by Joyce, Pound, and Eliot. *The Little Review* purported to make “no compromise with the public taste,” but Yeats often worried about the direction the public taste was taking. Noting Yeats’s fascination with new technologies such as the radio and the cinema, Charles I. Armstrong explores Yeats’s concerns that literature might have a diminished status in a brave new world of culture. He focuses in particular on an unpublished fragment from *A Vision* entitled “Michael Robartes Foretells.” Melissa Dinsman shares the view that Yeats was something of an innovator when it came to his use of the radio, but she also argues that his radio work needs to be situated alongside his interest in authoritarianism and eugenics. In “In the Poet’s Pub” and “In the Poet’s Parlour,” Dinsman discerns coded fears about cultural degeneration and shows how Yeats used the radio as a means of disseminating frequently contradictory ideological beliefs.

“Between my politics and my mysticism I shall hardly have my head turned with popularity,” Yeats announced to Lady Gregory in 1901 (*CL3* 72–3). But Yeats would always have his head turned toward some kind of public and he had a rare ability for turning heads. Here the newspaper and the radio became his circus animals, while his skills as a mass communicator never deserted him.

Notes

1. Standish O’Grady to Yeats, December 12, [1900], *Letters to W. B. Yeats*, vol. 1, eds. Richard J. Finneran, George Mills Harper, and William M. Murphy (London: Macmillan, 1977), 77.
2. Louis MacNeice, *The Poetry of W. B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), 203.
3. “Four Notes,” *The Dome* 3 (Michaelmas 1897): 93; cited in Caroline Sumpter, *The Victorian Press and the Fairy Tale* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 134.
4. Ernest Rhys, “W. B. Yeats: Early Recollections,” in *Interviews and Recollections*, vol. 1, ed. E. H. Mikhail (London: Macmillan, 1977), 36.

5. "The Theatre and Ireland: Lecture by Mr. W. B. Yeats," *Irish Times*, March 4, 1910, 9. See also *Irish Independent*, March 4, 1910, 6.
6. Yeats, "To all Artists and Writers," *To-Morrow* 1, no. 1 (April 1924): 4. Though he was its author, Yeats did not sign the editorial—Francis Stuart and Cecil Salkeld did.
7. "Mr. W. B. Yeats: An English Tribute," *Irish Times*, November 19, 1923, 4.
8. William P. Ryan, *Daisy Darley; or, The Fairy Gold of Fleet Street* (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1913), 166.
9. Richard Aldington, "A Young American Poet," *The Little Review* 2, no. 1 (March 1915): 24.
10. W. H. Auden, "Psychology and Criticism," in *The Complete Prose of W. H. Auden. Volume 1: Prose and Travel Books in Prose and Verse, 1926–1938*, ed. Edward Mendelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 132.
11. Katharine Tynan, *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1913), 190.
12. K. T., "William Butler Yeats," *The Sketch* 4, no. 44 (1893): 256, reprinted in Carolyn Holdsworth, "'Shelley Plain': Yeats and Katharine Tynan," *YA* 2 (1983): 84–88.
13. Letter to *The Freeman's Journal*, May 2, 1901, 4.
14. Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and eds. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, new edn. (Abingdon: Routledge, 1991), 96.
15. On this point see Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press, 1850–1892* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1999); David Dwan, *The Great Community* (Dublin: Field Day, 2008), 141–168; and Ann Andrews, *Newspapers and Newsmakers: The Dublin Nationalist Press in Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).
16. He expressed his contempt for the paper in a letter to Florence Farr in 1905: "The 'Irish Times' is the most influential paper here—so God help us—or rather he does for we find the papers have no influence on our public" (*CL4* 113).
17. Yeats, "Scots and Irish Fairies," *The Scot's Observer* 1, no. 15 (March 2, 1889): 410.
18. Yeats, *The Union of the Gael in '98 Centennial Association of Great Britain and France: Report of Speeches etc.* (Dublin: Bernard Doyle, 1898), 8–9.
19. Yeats, "Four Lectures by W. B. Yeats," ed. Richard Londraville, *YA* 8 (1989): 84.
20. Notably, he had a marked tendency to approach the new medium as an extension of the theater. See Charles I. Armstrong, "Pub, Parlour, Theatre: Radio in the Imagination of W. B. Yeats," in *Broadcasting in the Modernist Era*, eds. Matthew Feldman, Erik Tonning, and Henry Mead (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 23–37.
21. W. R. Rodgers, "W. B. Yeats: A Dublin Portrait," in *In Excited Reverie: A Centenary Tribute to William Butler Yeats 1865–1939*, eds. A. Norman Jeffares and K. G. W. Cross (London: Macmillan, 1965), 7.
22. Ronald Schuchard, *The Last Minstrels: Yeats and the Revival of the Bardic Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xix, xx, xxiv, 191–218.
23. Emily C. Bloom, "W. B. Yeats's Radiogenic Poetry," in *The Wireless Past: Anglo-Irish Writers and the BBC, 1931–1968* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 29.
24. See Emilie Morin, "'I Beg your Pardon?': Yeats, Audibility, and Sound Transmission," *YA* 19 (2013): 191–219.
25. Margaret Mills Harper, *Wisdom of Two: The Spiritual and Literary Collaboration of George and W. B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 156.
26. The first recorded trace in radio programs of a broadcast drawing on Yeats's work was a reading by C. A. Lewis from a selection of unspecified texts by Yeats, broadcast on March 17, 1924 on the BBC London station 2LO, as part of a St Patrick's Day "Irish Night" including songs and music. *Radio Times*, March 14, 1924, 451; "Broadcasting," *Irish Times*, March 17, 1924, 6. For more detailed chronologies, see Jeremy Silver, "W. B. Yeats and the BBC: A Reassessment," *YA* 5 (1987): 181–85; Emilie Morin, "W. B. Yeats and Broadcasting, 1924–1965," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 35, no. 1 (2015): 145–75.

27. "Review of Broadcasting," *Manchester Guardian*, April 3, 1937, 14.
28. *Radio Times*, June 7, 1935, 56.
29. Adrian Paterson, "'Music Will Keep out Temporary Ideas': W. B. Yeats's Radio Performances," in *Word and Music Studies 12: Performativity in Words and Music*, eds. Walter Bernhart and Michael Halliwell (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 43–76.
30. M. C., "Week-end Broadcast: A Byrd Mass," *Manchester Guardian*, April 11, 1932, 10.
31. Joyce Grenfell, "Broadcasting: Two Good Short Plays," *Observer*, September 26, 1937, 26; E. H. R., "Television," *Observer*, March 20, 1938, 24; "Television," *Observer*, May 15, 1938, 3.
32. Megan Girdwood, "W. B. Yeats, the Abbey Theatre, and the Cinema: 1909–1939," *Irish Studies Review* (2018), DOI: 10.1080/09670882.2018.1515878. We thank Megan Girdwood for sharing her forthcoming article with us.
33. See Bloom, "W. B. Yeats's Radiogenic Poetry," 25–63.
34. "Yeats's 'Hello to Everybody!': Famous Irish Poet 'On the Air' For First Time," *The Northern Whig and Belfast Post*, September 9, 1931, 3.