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"A dance-like Glory that those walls begot": Yeats, Coole Park, and the "spacious forms" of Inspiration

James Pethica

In *Dramatis Personae* (1936), a volume he originally planned as a memoir of Lady Gregory, Yeats opens by recalling his first impressions of "three great demesnes" located close to one another in the south Galway landscape: Edward Martyn's Tulira Castle, the Gregory estate at Coole Park—both of which he first visited in summer 1896—and Roxborough House, Lady Gregory's family home before her marriage, which he came to know somewhat later. Yeats describes each dwelling at the material level before going on to characterize its occupants; but these descriptions are as much a charting of the cultural and historical topography of the three properties—"so old they seemed unchanging"—as an account of physical actualities (*Au* 385–93). In each case his response to landscape, architecture, and furnishings anticipates his personal judgments of Martyn and Gregory. For Yeats, each home so profoundly shaped its occupant, via its traditions and aesthetics, that house and owner are almost metonymically interchangeable.

Tulira is described first, as an unwieldy hybrid, comprising a large, over-ornate Gothic Revival structure grafted onto an "ancient tower" in which the "monklike" and devoutly Catholic Martyn had his study. Born of a father whose family "was old and honoured" and a mother "but one generation from the peasant," Martyn himself is figured by Yeats as an impotent mass of conflicts, in which his parents' differing heritages had managed to negate one another: "I used to think that two traditions met and destroyed each other in his blood, creating the sterility of a mule" (*Au* 386–88).

Lady Gregory, like Martyn, is also drawn as the product of two contrasting traditions but, for Yeats, the result in her case was a fortuitous and powerful synergy. Coole Park, the estate she came to on marrying the elderly Sir William Gregory in 1880, is described as a place of unbroken tradition and hereditary accomplishment, in which successive generations displayed cosmopolitan breadth of vision, distinction as administrators and politicians, and considerable artistic taste. "Every generation had left its memorial" Yeats writes: "every generation had been highly educated; eldest sons had gone the grand tour, returning with statues or pictures; Mogul or Persian paintings had been brought from the Far East by a Gregory chairman of the East India

Company, great earthenware ewers and basins, great silver bowls, by Lady Gregory's husband, a famous Governor of Ceylon" (*Au* 389). The rhythmic nature of the prose, along with the repeated intensifiers ("highly," "grand," "great," "famous"), signals Yeats's deep investment here in what he relates. His description lingers especially on the souvenirs and trappings of imperial travel, colonial governance, and political success:

> In the hall, or at one's right hand as one ascended the stairs, hung Persian helmets, Indian shields, Indian swords in elaborate sheaths, stuffed birds from various parts of the world . . . portraits of the members of Grillion's Club, illuminated addresses presented in Ceylon or Galway. . . . I can remember someone saying: "Balzac would have given twenty pages to the stairs." (*Au* 391)

His images repeatedly evoke masculine achievement, but it is a masculinity of political prowess, professional success and intellectual command rather than of bodily power. Reflective and self-aware, not merely instinctive, it is able to govern through subtlety and enlightenment rather than by physical force: the swords, shields, and helmets appropriated from the Orient, for instance, are displayed as aesthetically-pleasing furnishings rather than as objects attesting to actual battle. Yeats stresses that the traditions represented here are expansive and enabling, and that social mobility and cultural and intellectual diversity had always been expected and encouraged at Coole: the spheres of influence he evokes range easily from Galway to Ceylon and from London to India. It is also a milieu which, though rooted in classical traditions, is manifestly receptive to new ideas and aesthetic tastes: his description calls attention to the way paintings by Canaletto, Guardi, and Zurbarán hung not far from contemporary "etchings by Augustus John," while "signed photographs or engravings" of Tennyson, Mark Twain, Browning, and Thackeray complemented the finely-bound Greek and Roman texts lining the shelves of the well-stocked library (*Au* 389–91). For Yeats, then, the house embodied a living tradition of artistic and intellectual excellence, an accomplished heritage of practical success and political agency, and a cosmopolitan interest in the larger world beyond its boundaries.[1]

The Persse estate at nearby Roxborough, where Lady Gregory spent her early years, is described last, and in very different terms. Quickly passing over the house itself—"small and plain" and containing "neither pictures nor furniture of historic interest"—Yeats draws attention instead to the nine-mile-long stone wall separating the estate from the adjoining open country, noting that this had required the continuous labour of three or four masons during her youth. The topography he describes is limiting and unimaginative, with the Roxborough inhabitants displaying little inclination to look much beyond their protective,

enclosing boundary: "They had all the necessities of life on the mountain, or within the walls of their demesne." The result, in his account, was a "feudal, almost medieval" environment marked by insularity of viewpoint: "The Persses had been soldiers, farmers, riders to hounds", and "had an instinctive love for their country or their neighbourhood"; but excepting a brief engagement with national politics in the time of Grattan's parliament, "all had lacked intellectual curiosity until the downfall of their class had all but come." After the approving descriptions of Coole Park, this seems unequivocally critical, but when Yeats turns to consider the "daring and physical strength" of "the sons of the house" a more affirmative inflection emerges. His portrait of the Roxborough menfolk casts them as larger-than-life, eighteenth-century figures of action, ruling their lands and tenants with "despotic benevolence" and unselfconscious vigour. In his scheme they are representative types—"Jonah Barrington might have celebrated their lives"—and they epitomize instinctive command and vitality. Almost Nietzschean figures of robust decisiveness, they are made powerful precisely by their unreflective qualities, and Yeats's prose indeed betrays a degree of envy at their seemingly unproblematic masculinity and "visible supremacy" (*Au* 392–94).

This sequence of schematic charting in *Dramatis Personae* bears a close resemblance to the deterministic account of Yeats's own origins coined by his father, John Butler Yeats, who claimed that the union of his family's intellectual heritage with the taciturn "passions" of his wife's Pollexfen roots had "given a tongue to the sea cliffs" and thus made his son's poetic talent possible (*Au* 23). Both narratives, centered on a synthesis of clashing attributes, are forceful efforts of myth-making. Yeats represents Lady Gregory as drawing on two distinctly different strains of Irish Ascendancy culture, and, by implication, uniting them to more powerful effect than either alone could achieve. In his account, the cultivated, liberal, creative traditions of Coole Park enriched and smoothed the "feudal" and potentially thuggish vitality of Roxborough, as well as being significantly revitalized by it themselves. Coole cosmopolitanism likewise mitigated Roxborough insularity, while also benefiting from its single-minded practicality and love of place. And no less significantly, Yeats's schema also quietly suggests that at Coole, Lady Gregory was able to access a form of moderate Protestantism that took her beyond the evangelical sectarianism of Roxborough and the creative sterility of Catholic Tulira.[2] The result was a figure who, for him, combined instinctive forms of assertion with the self-consciousness, intellect and political judiciousness necessary for enlightened governance. In doing so, she reunited and reanimated Protestant capacities for leadership that he viewed as having declined and diverged, to Ireland's cost, since the high-water mark of Georgian Ascendancy rule in the late eighteenth century. As he would sometimes claim directly, and often suggest, these

qualities made her, along with such figures as "Berkeley, Swift, Burke, Grattan, [and] Parnell", one of the few he regarded as the "true Irish people," because of their potential to mould the nation through their imaginative, intellectual or political genius (*Ex* 442). In his scheme, her hybrid background was not only the defining core of her identity, but also made her literary career possible by combining in her a paradoxical mixture of elevated taste and raw instinct and of deep-rooted traditionalism with openness to the new.[3] This heritage, he believed, had crucially facilitated her translations of the Irish epics—for him, her first and finest creative accomplishment:

> Looking back, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* and *Gods and Fighting Men* at my side, I can see that they were made possible by her past; semi-feudal Roxborough, her inherited sense of caste, her knowledge of that top of the world where men and women are valued for their manhood and their charm, not for their opinions" (*Au* 456).

This idealized view became central to Yeats's conception of Lady Gregory after the first decade or so of their friendship. He would latterly portray both her and Coole as last bulwarks against the "filthy modern tide" he saw as engulfing contemporary Ireland (*VP* 611). He was well aware, however, that representing Coole and its chatelaine as ideal manifestations of Ascendancy culture inevitably tempted him toward oversimplification, exaggeration, or outright misrepresentation.[4] So, too, in extolling Coole and Gregory as a center and source of creative influence—Coole, he wrote in 1909, had "enriched my soul out of measure" because of the "spacious forms" he encountered there (*Mem* 226)—he was increasingly conscious of the extent to which doing so subtly compromised or limited his own claims to creative autonomy. Without Gregory's "firmness and care" he admitted in *The Stirring of the Bones*, "I doubt if I should have done much with my life" (*Au* 377). But such admissions, especially those that credited her direct collaborative contributions to his work, necessarily undercut or complicated his sense of independent achievement. This essay will consider Yeats's representations of the materialities of Coole Park, to chart his evolving conceptions of Gregory and the estate, but also to highlight the anxieties about authorial agency and the influence of tradition that were crucially present in his relationship both to the house and estate, and to its chatelaine.

I

Anxiety about whether he was the sole maker of his art, or merely the vehicle through which it came into being, is a core concern throughout Yeats's work. He would acknowledge this most directly in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*

in 1917: "I am full of uncertainty not knowing when I am the finger, when the clay" (*CW*5 32). In his youth, privileging Romantic poetry, he was deeply influenced by Coleridge's investment in the imaginative power of dreams and visions, and by Arthur Hallam's assertion that "pure" art should arise spontaneously and as a result of a refined sensitivity and imaginative capacity, rather than through a pragmatic seeking for images and the instrumental operations of reason and thought.[5] But these precepts, stressing creative sources beyond the writer's fully-conscious control, were in tension with his equal investment in poetry as the apotheosis of individual self-expression, and his accompanying conviction—inherited from Shelley—that poets were "the unacknowledged legislators of the World"[6] and should engage with the real, and influence it directly, through what they wrote. In his evolving theory of the Mask, and in the elaborate systematizations of *A Vision* (1925 and 1937), he would eventually come to an accommodation between these oppositions by conceiving of the artist as a magus or adept, simultaneously both maker and vehicle in being able to access the images of Anima Mundi[7] and thereby voice knowledge from beyond the individual consciousness, while still remaining in and engaged with the ordinary world.

"Rosa Alchemica," written shortly before his first visit to Coole in 1896, embodies Yeats's early struggles with these fundamental tensions in acute form. He was at this point deeply uncertain how to negotiate the "many pathways" offered by his occult interests and his complex political and literary allegiances (*VP* 845). In "To Ireland in the Coming Times,"[8] for instance, positioned as the closing poem to his volume *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics* (1892), he had charged that he should not be considered any "less" an Irish nationalist poet despite the Rosicrucian and occult concerns trailing "all about the written page" (*VP* 138); but he nonetheless chose to dedicate the poems grouped as *The Rose* to the English decadent Lionel Johnson.[9] Inscribing a copy of the volume in May 1893, he characterized his verses as "A dyed & figured mystery, / Thought hid in thought, dream hid in dream" (*Wade* 27)—a description which savours as much of obfuscation and apology as it does of candour or artistic self-assertion. In "Rosa Alchemica" he represented his conflicted impulses in almost schematic form as a means of investigating his uncertainties about artistic agency, what environment might best allow art to flourish, and above all, how an aspiring writer should position themself in relation to the quotidian and the lure of transcendence.

The story recounts the experiences of a scholar-alchemist-writer who has withdrawn from the world and seeks to use occult insights to raise himself beyond the mortal into an "imperishable" essence, and thereby transmute his life "into art." At the outset, he is in triumph at his ability to hold himself apart from ordinary human experience and emotion, since doing so, he believes, has

made him "individual, indissoluble, a mirror of polished steel" (*Myth* 267–68). In this, the protagonist-narrator closely follows Yeats's belief in the early 1890s that to apprehend "Eternal beauty" it was necessary to withdraw from the everyday world so as to avoid being tainted or distracted by the merely transient. The poet who "would be remembered when he is in his grave" he wrote in 1892, "must give to his art the devotion the Crusaders of old gave to their cause and be content to be alone among men, apart alike from their joys and sorrows, having for companions the multitude of his dreams" (*UP1* 249–50). The narrator soon recognizes, however, that although he has "dissolved . . . the mortal world" he has failed to obtain the "miraculous ecstasy" he seeks. Worse yet, he realizes that his own consciousness, constantly observing and analyzing, inherently compromises and subverts his quest for transcendence: "even in my most perfect moment" he concludes, "I would be two selves, the one watching with heavy eyes the other's moment of content" (*Myth* 269–70). This sudden awareness effectively enacts the narrator's birth into complex consciousness as he realizes, in an estranging experience of Lacanian division, that his selfhood is a dramatic construction, and that he is always simultaneously actor and audience of his own existence. He is thus in key respects a prototypical early Yeatsian protagonist—one whose subjectivity is fundamentally divided and dialogic.

Modelled closely on Huysmans's Des Esseintes, the narrator is also in key respects a figure for fin-de-siècle aestheticism and its limitations. He has withdrawn into an intricately crafted Dublin house designed to spur creative inspiration: tapestries "full of the blue and bronze of peacocks" cover the doors, he has collected "antique bronze gods and goddesses," Renaissance religious art hangs on walls, and books bound "in carefully chosen colour" line his bookshelves. But this elaborately-constructed material environment fails to facilitate true artistry. One reason for this is that in his "desire for a world made wholly of essences" he has cut himself away not just from social exchanges, but from human history itself. His ancestors, he tells us, had made his Dublin house "almost famous through their part in the politics of the city and their friendships with the famous men of their generations"; but he has refused that heritage and removed the family portraits "of more historical than artistic interest" while his tapestries over the doors are deliberately placed to "shut out all history and activity untouched with beauty and peace" (*Myth* 267–68). In his essay "The Autumn of the Body" (1898), Yeats would assert that a reaction against "outward things" and a rejection of "that 'externality' which a time of scientific and political thought has brought into literature" was a defining movement of the era (*E&I* 189). But here, the dangers of actually enacting such a rejection are in plain view, since the narrator's withdrawal and aestheticism have left him fundamentally lifeless. Much like the decadent English artists

Yeats had described in his 1892 essay "Hopes and Fears for Irish Literature"—for whom "literature had ceased to be the handmaid of humanity" and poetry was "nothing to do with life, nothing to do with anything but the music of cadence, and beauty of phrase" (*UP1* 248)—he lacks any convictions that might connect him with, or make his writings relevant to, the wider world.

The story offers an alternative pathway, though, when the narrator's old friend Michael Robartes arrives. With his "wild red hair, fierce eyes, sensitive, tremulous lips and rough clothes," Robartes embodies a passion and vitality that mark him as the antithesis of the cerebral, withdrawn narrator. He comes, in effect, as a tempter-figure—and an early Yeatsian antiself—telling the narrator that if he is to access the knowledge and power of the eternal realm, and avoid the "wavering purpose" of his scholarly aestheticism, he must yield up his selfhood entirely. Whether Robartes uses occult power, drugs, some form of hypnosis, or all three, to gain dominance is unclear—he speaks with "rhythmical intonation" and burns a heavy incense that fills the room—but the result is that the narrator falls into an intense visionary state and consents to join him (*Myth* 271–77). Robartes takes him to the west of Ireland, where in a "square ancient-looking house" by the edge of the sea he undergoes a ritual of initiation into an occult order. In a state of trance, as he dances with "an immortal august woman," the narrator suddenly recoils in "horror," however, on realizing that she is not human, and that she is "drinking up my soul as an ox drinks up a wayside pool"—and collapses into unconsciousness. When he wakes at dawn, the order's house is under attack by peasants who regard the adepts as heretics, and he only narrowly escapes as Robartes and the rest are left to suffer a violent end (*Myth* 280–92). Since then, the narrator tells us, he has sought "refuge" in devout Catholic belief—"the only definite faith." Its regimen of "fixed habits and principles" have protected him from the call of the "indefinite world," he says, even if they have not been enough to entirely quell his residual longing for the ecstasy he felt under Robartes's influence (*Myth* 278, 292).

Neither withdrawal into aestheticism nor full devotion to the occult is endorsed in the story, then: the first pathway leads to disconnection from the everyday world, while the second leads additionally to a loss of subjectivity. So, too, neither a focus on the self as artistic maker, nor submission to a power and knowledge beyond the self as source of inspiration, is figured approvingly. But the narrator's final position of "refuge" is unsatisfactory, too, since by implication it negates his aspirations to imaginative individuality and artistic achievement and leaves him fearful of any challenge to a fixed order of values and beliefs. The conflicted closure reflects a troubled recognition on Yeats's part of his inability to enact a satisfactory synthesis between his own divided impulses at the time he was writing. As he acknowledged

openly in his later autobiographical writings, he had reached a point of creative crisis in 1896 and "did not know what to do"—with "poor health," his precarious finances, the strains emerging in his relationship with Olivia Shakespear, and having "lost" himself in occult study, being among the multiple causes (*Mem* 100; *Au* 376). But the schematic oppositions explored in "Rosa Alchemica" nonetheless come remarkably close to anticipating the imaginative and actual topography Yeats subsequently found, and generated, for himself. Coole Park would soon replace the fictional narrator's Dublin house, offering an "intricate" material and artistic environment such as he had constructed in the story, but one in which history and social connection were visibly present—to vital creative effect—rather than being shut out. And "the old square castle" Thoor Ballylee (which he first saw in summer 1896, was immediately struck by, and professed a wish to buy as early as 1904[10]), would replace the adepts' "square ancient-looking house"—but as a site for solitary occult study, and for self-expression as a writer, rather than a place where the quest for transcendence demanded incorporation into a collective or a complete surrender of individual subjectivity. Each side of the problematic opposition explored in "Rosa Alchemica" was thereby effectively corrected or enriched, and became available to Yeats in material form. He was in due course able to deploy the differences between Coole and Ballylee in almost schematic fashion, drawing on them as productive opposites. As he acknowledged in *The Tower*, he engendered "Images" and inspiration equally from "ruin or ancient trees" (*VP* 410), finding one form of creative sustenance in the tradition and achievement of settled ancestral houses such as Coole—with their extensive woodlands and "great chambers and long galleries, lined / With famous portraits of our ancestors" (*VP* 418)—and another in the "stark" and "crumbling" tower at Ballylee (*VP* 423, 477). He would cast Ballylee as an emblem of "adversity," which guarded him against the dangers of complacency he saw as inherent in inherited wealth (*VP* 420). Removed from the social world, and seemingly outside of ordinary time, it was conducive to withdrawal into the self and to writing. The combination thus gave him both a creative milieu of "excellent company" directly engaged with cultural politics and the Shelleyan "lonely tower" he craved (*VP* 489; *Au* 171). He would deploy these two poles of inspiration centrally in his later work, building them as separate symbols. But ultimately, as we will see, he was able to celebrate them as a creatively connected topography, acknowledging that each component in his schema mitigated and enriched its opposite—thereby allowing a dynamic synthesis much like that he credited Lady Gregory for in combining the divergent heritages of Roxborough and Coole Park.

II

Yeats's first visit to Coole in 1896 remained a "vivid memory" for him even four decades later. The approach to the house, at least, was impressive to the hard-up young poet. From the estate boundary wall and gate lodge on the Galway-Ennis road it was a half mile to the demesne gates, from which the "outside car" on which he arrived had to proceed another quarter mile through an avenue of ilex trees, planted by Sir William Gregory's mother in midcentury, before he got a first glimpse of the house itself, set amid "its great park full of ancient trees." But the heavily-furnished interior of the house was not to his taste, especially after coming from the ornate Gothic excess of Tulira, where he had admired only the simplicity of the old tower house. As he recalled, "I did not like the gold frames, some deep and full of ornament, round the pictures in the drawing-room: years were to pass before I came to understand the earlier nineteenth and later eighteenth century, and to love that house more than all other houses" (*Au* 388–89). Period photographs show the panelled Coole library with its walls lined by bookshelves or covered with artworks, and the room itself densely furnished with chairs and side tables. Photographed at her writing desk by George Bernard Shaw in 1915, Lady Gregory sits with a marble statue behind her and massive gilt-framed mirrors on the walls to either side, while heavy curtains limit the light coming through the high windows.[11] For Yeats, familiar with the emerging post-Victorian aesthetics of artists and writers in London—Oscar Wilde's "all white" dining-room had struck him in 1888 as "perhaps too perfect in its unity" (*Au* 134)—and at this point much-influenced by William Morris's emphasis on craftsmanship, utility, and simplicity of design, the overstuffed interior of Coole, little changed for many decades, may have appeared to be no more than a rather outdated time capsule of Regency and Victorian taste. He was ready to accept the patronage and supportive care Gregory offered, and saw at once the value of the folklore she had begun gathering, but to begin with appears to have regarded the house itself—a largely plain, boxlike structure—as of little architectural or other distinction.

Change in his opinion came gradually. His first summer stay at Coole—of two months, in 1897—made quite clear that Gregory aimed to be a permanent fixture as patron and friend. She was the prime mover in the fundraising that helped make the Irish Literary Theatre project possible, took the sickly Yeats folklore gathering, offered a sympathetic ear as he confided much about his relationship with Maud Gonne, and provided a hospitality and care that was expressly aimed at helping him creatively. On receiving "wine and all manner of biscuits and bottled fruit" from her in Dublin after his stay—a mark of her

intent to keep building the partnership and ensure her support remained in regular view—he wrote fulsome thanks, noting "how well" people said he was looking "& I am better than I have been for years in truth. The days at Coole passed like a dream, a dream of peace" (*CL2* 137). "Peace," "order," and "quiet" would be his signature early associations for the estate, as it quickly became a refuge for him from the frequent controversies of his literary life, the strains in his personal life, and his lack of money. He came to conceive of Gregory herself as a "peaceful Virgil by my side"—a defender, advocate, and guide to whom he could, and did, reach out when needed (*CL4* 10, 18). Dedicating *The Shadowy Waters* to her in 1900—his first published form of return or reimbursement for her support—he included "I walked among the Seven Woods of Coole" as prefatory poem (*VP* 217–19).This highlights the woods' protective peace and seclusion—its forty-four lines feature "hidden," "hides," "hide," and "cover" along with "blind" and "shadows" (three times)—and it celebrates the way that seclusion allowed wildlife and plants to flourish in safety. But the poem further asserts that the woods harbour "immortal" presences amid their shaded recesses. In a series of rhetorical questions in the penultimate stanzas, it wonders whether Eden might in fact be concealed within or beneath Coole's woods, and whether their "green quiet" unobtrusively acted with magical force on those who wandered in them.[12] Yeats's incantatory "Seven odours, seven murmurs, seven woods" further hints at this magical possibility: he was well aware of the historical associations of the number seven with magic, the use of the number in rituals, and specifically with the seven cosmic principles of Rosicrucianism. The actual woods at Coole, then, realized for him some of the possibilities he had imagined in "Who Goes with Fergus?" (1892), in which the poet-King Fergus has abdicated his throne to "live at peace" in the "deep wood's woven shade" (*VP* 795, 125).

He would make these associations, and his public acknowledgment of Coole and Gregory, even more prominent in his 1903 collection *In the Seven Woods*. There, the opening poem extols Coole's woods as an enchanted and restorative place where a personified "Quiet" wanders laughing, and where he can "put away" personal troubles, and the strains, conflict, and noise of the political world (*VP* 198). Notably, this poem was the first true sonnet Yeats ever published (along with "The Folly of Being Comforted" following closely in the same collection).[13] Given that he was at this point best known as a love poet, the formal choice gestures powerfully to the priority he now gave to Gregory and Coole both personally and practically. Much like "I walked among the Seven Woods of Coole," however, the sonnet ascribes power and influence solely to the woods, rather than directly to Gregory herself.

III

With Gregory's increasing centrality in Yeats's life, this distanced form of acknowledgment soon became insufficient. Between 1900 and 1904 she transitioned from being a self-described "amiable amateur"[14]—largely content with the role of supportive patron and folklore-gatherer—to full creative standing. "[A]ll in moment, as it seemed," he later claimed, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* made her "the founder of modern Irish dialect literature" (*Au* 455); *Cathleen ni Houlihan* was the first of some dozen plays they would collaborate on closely; and she began writing plays herself. Yeats acknowledged these changes ever more directly from 1902 onward, crediting her share in *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, in the rewriting of *Stories of Red Hanrahan*—"They are but half mine now" (*Wade* 74)—and in other joint works, as well as acknowledging her growing influence on his practical decisions. Their controlling partnership in the directorial triumvirate at the Abbey theater more openly confirmed them, as she had already recognized in 1902, as effectively "a clique of two."[15] And the demands of the theater, and their power as directors, gradually changed both the dynamics of the partnership, and more significantly, the ways they conducted themselves individually.

Yeats's increasingly autocratic manner, marked from 1904 onward, has often been ascribed to—or blamed on—the influence of Gregory and his stays at Coole Park, where he was given deferential care and widely seen as being treated as "the Sacred Great Man."[16] But hieratic tendencies and a disdain for ordinary life are readily visible in his earlier work: in the words of the outcasts, disturbers, and outsiders of his 1890s fiction, his enthusiastic adoption of Villers de L'Isle Adam's adage "As for living, our servants will do that for us" (*VSR* 5; *Au* 305, 320), through to his dismissal of the "noisy set / Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen / The martyrs call the world" in "Adam's Curse" (*VP* 205). George Moore was astute, however, in observing a suddenly heightened level of assertion and contempt in Yeats following his return from lecturing in the United States—securely in funds for the first time in his life, and with "a paunch, a huge stride, and an immense fur overcoat." His account of Yeats hectoring an audience about the lack of support for an exhibition of modern art brilliantly captures, and mocks, the change:

> It is impossible to imagine the hatred that came into his voice when he spoke the words "the middle classes": one would have thought that he was speaking against a personal foe. . . . "We have sacrificed our lives for Art; but you, what have you done? What sacrifices have you made?" he asked, and everybody began to search his memory for the sacrifices Yeats had made, asking himself in what prison Yeats had languished, what rags he had worn, what broken victuals he had eaten.[17]

From this point on, those hieratic qualities emerged into regular view. Responding to news of Maud Gonne's divorce proceedings in January 1905, for example, Yeats deplored her willingness to let herself be "dominated" by others, rather than asserting herself: "I feal, as I always feal about these things—that strength shapes the world about itself, & that weakness is shaped about the world—& that the compromise is weekness" (*CL4* 9). His determination and success in engineering the transition of the Abbey from a democratically run organization to a Limited Company in autumn 1905 marked a pivotal change in his public persona, and indeed his career. The reform—which Roy Foster has termed a "coup"[18]—left the directors, as Yeats gleefully observed, "absolutely supreme in everything" (*CL InteLex* 228) and thereby ensured that control of the theater would be in the hands of the "natural leadership" (*CL4* 178).

His wish to act on and project that control emerged most dramatically, and unpleasantly, in the last week of 1905 and first of 1906, when Yeats threatened to charge Abbey actress Maire Walker with breach of contract, wanting to assert dominance over the company's players and "get it into these peoples heads that we are dangerous—that one director at any rate has an awful temper" (*CL4* 271-72). This was in part a self-dramatizing pose, but also a genuine test case for whether he could bend the theater to his will. He told Synge that his instinct for "determined action" toward Walker came from sources far beyond intellectual "reasoning": "Instead of merely deducing ones actions from existing circumstances, one has to act so as to create new circumstances by which one is to be judged" (*CL4* 276). Poets, in other words, should be "creators of all values" in a direct and muscular sense, rather than merely through their art.[19] If the world did not appreciate, understand, or conform to their vision, they must act to change the world such that their vision could be upheld. His actions drew sharp condemnation from his sisters and father, carefully worded criticism from Gregory of his strategic "mistake" in "bullying" Walker,[20] and a withering letter from George Russell, who delivered a devastating indictment of his old friend's doctrinaire and high-handed behaviour. Yeats now had "few or no friends in Dublin," Russell observed, having alienated former allies and supporters by his now-routine habit of speaking "contemptuously of everyone not your equal." Yeats, he warned, would end up marginalized if he continued to assume the position of "general autocrat in literary, dramatic and artistic matters in Dublin or Ireland" (*LTWBY1* 152–55).

But Yeats's view that poets should be "creators of all values" subsequently only hardened, particularly following the altercations over *The Playboy of the Western World* in 1907. As he acknowledged, seeing the "howling mob" of protestors against the play made it clear to him that he was watching "the dissolution of a school of patriotism that held sway over my youth" (*E&I* 312). Retreating to Italy with Gregory that spring, he found there in the "ancient"

Renaissance courts and "little walled towns" a model of aristocratic self-possession, patronage, and appreciation of tradition that he embraced as exemplary in facilitating Art. His essay "Poetry and Tradition," written that summer, constitutes a new manifesto, asserting that the "courtesy and self-possession" and "ancestral memory" of aristocracy, combined with the fearless "recklessness" of the artist, offered the best soil for creativity: only by finding "a company of our own way of thinking" and access to the "ancient records" of tradition might one come to "the mastery of unlocking words" (*E&I* 251–56).

IV

From this point on, Yeats began to figure Coole as an Irish Urbino, where aristocratic values and respect for Art still flourished, and where "excellent company" could congregate—away from the "ignorant" and "the weak" (*VP* 256, 265). His approving references to the "rich minds" of the elect likewise proliferated in tandem with his condemnations of the "ill-breeding" of manners and mind he saw in Ireland (*Mem* 151, 142). Synge and Lady Gregory were "the strongest souls I have ever known," he wrote in January 1909, since neither lost "the self-possession of their intellects" and both isolated themselves "from all contagious opinions of poorer minds" (*Mem* 154). His terms "rich" and "poorer" here nominally embody cultural and intellectual rather than economic judgments—but only nominally: he now increasingly saw long-established wealth as the crucial precondition for sustaining culture, intellect, and tradition; and the word "contagious" betrays his fundamental disdain for those who lacked the capacities he valorized. Ireland had become "sterile," he asserted, because power had passed "to men who lack the training which requires a certain amount of wealth to ensure continuity from generation to generation, and to free the mind in part from other tasks" (*Mem* 178). His private writings of the period are littered with references to the need for "authority" and the leadership of an elect to counter the "democratic envy" of an "Irish public" that he judged were "jealous" of individuals with "free" minds or "a position of importance." Worst of all, this envious Irish public would "not accept the pre-eminence of one or two writers—of Lady Gregory, let us say" (*Mem* 168–69).

When Gregory's life seemed briefly in danger following a collapse in February 1909, it was a massive threat to him personally and to his idealized conception of Coole. His journal registers his distress in striking terms: "I cannot realize the world without her—she brought to my wavering thoughts steadfast nobility. All day the thought of losing her is like a conflagration in the rafters. Friendship is all the house I have" (*Mem* 161). Much like the fire "in my head" in "The Song of Wandering Aengus" (*VP* 149), "a conflagration in the

rafters" initially evokes a mental and emotional state: the prospect of Gregory's death causes psychological and intellectual rupture, and a fundamental sense of loss of self ("I cannot realize the world without her"). The following sentence, however, tightens the figurative and literal associations between Gregory and the actuality of Coole as a house: her death would end not just the friendship—his emotional home—but also, effectively, Yeats's access to the house itself and the material home and refuge it provided. House and owner are figured here as inseparable: neither has its meaning alone.

These associations, written privately, emerge into published view in Yeats's poem "Upon a House Shaken by the Land Agitation," composed in August 1909 following a ruling by the Irish Land Courts that rents at Coole were to be reduced by roughly 20 percent—a judgment that called into doubt the estate's future viability. The core ideological proposition of the poem is clear in the prose "subject" he initially drafted: even if the Coole tenants, and "a hundred little house[s]," were better off as a result of the ruling, the "world" overall would not "gain" if Coole's traditions and influence were thereby lost (*CISW* 201). But in what follows, Yeats's references to money and wealth are repeatedly equivocal or evasive—signalling his underlying doubts about the validity of that proposition, and how it might be viewed. His assertion that "where all must make their living they will live not for life's sake but the work's & all be the poorer," for instance, proposes that working for a living is inherently impoverishing in human terms (*CISW* 203); but in making the word "poorer" a matter of creativity and self-fulfillment, Yeats ignores or deliberately downplays the economic reality that the Coole tenants would now be financially richer, and thereby more able to "live" for matters beyond just their employment. His prose commentary after completing a first draft directly acknowledges that the accomplishments of the Coole lineage had been made possible by the Gregorys not having to work for money—"Here there has been no compelled labour no poverty thwarted impulse" (*CISW* 203)—but the poem itself merely implies this, and even then only in its final line, itself a late revision, which casts those accomplishments as the result of "ease" (*CISW* 205). As with his earlier terms "rich minds" and "poorer minds," words like "gain" and "values" are deployed in the poem as if they are purely or predominantly matters of culture, rather than matters of money.

Obfuscations or slippages of this kind are visible throughout the drafts. Yeats's prose "subject" indeed immediately registers a degree of vacillation or lack of conviction as to what Coole should actually be credited or honored for. He begins by stressing that "here power has gone forth or lingered." But the term "power"—with its potential implications of Roxborough-style "despotic" assertion, rather than Gregory judiciousness—is quickly left aside in favor of an emphasis, first, on "energy"—deleted twice—and then "precision," with

these attributes all being airily credited as having given "beneficent rule" to an unidentified "far people" (*CISW* 201). Even this proposition is abandoned in the first drafted verse lines, however, which make no claims for Coole's effect on the wider world. "How should the world gain" is replaced by "How should the world be better" and this in turn is revised to the final "How should the world be luckier" (*CISW* 201). "Gain," with its potential to evoke material and financial considerations, gives way to "better"—a cultural value-judgment—and then "luckier," a word that not only effaces questions of money, but also conveniently downplays matters of politics and agency. The drafts are similarly evasive about the poem's core suggestion that benefit to "a hundred little house[s]" would not outweigh the damage to one ancestral house. Yeats's line "Mean roof trees were luckier for its fall" is repeatedly revised, with "luckier' being deleted in favor of "wealthier," then "sturdier," then "stronger," before "sturdier" is restored as the final choice (*CISW* 201). The initial "luckier," which manages to imply that the tenants' victory in getting their rents reduced was somehow a matter of chance, is replaced by a nearer acknowledgment that this was indeed a question of money ("wealthier"), before the final change evokes, instead, just the material and structural condition of the "houses" in question, again leaving considerations of money and politics largely effaced. Only the dismissive adjective "mean" remains to keep Yeats's disdain for the outcome, and the tenants, in view. Evasiveness likewise registers in the poem's changing titles. His initial "To a certain country house in a time of change" is markedly nonspecific about the nature of the "change" and its causes; "Upon a Threatened House" more nearly acknowledges the political context, but only in terms of menace. He then briefly considered "Upon a House Shaken by the Land War" before replacing "Land War" with "Land Agitation"—a wording that avoids situating the rent dispute explicitly within the larger historical and political contexts of the conflict between landlords and tenants in Ireland since the late 1870, and that also manages to diminish the threat to Coole to the level of a mere "agitation" (*CISW* 205). As finally published, then, the poem retained Yeats's core dismay at the challenge to the Gregorys' position and income, but with referents to money and politics largely removed or muddied. Even the high abilities of the elite that it evokes in its final lines are cast as "gift[s]" (*VP* 264), as if they were matters of fate and good luck rather than a result of wealth and dynastic lineage.

But if "Upon a House Shaken" is evasive about the material resources that sustained Coole, it is direct and assertive about the yield Yeats ascribes to tradition. The closing lines emphasize that the highest and final "gift" born of settled privilege is "a written speech / Wrought of high laughter, loveliness, and ease": in other words, artistry in language, made out of the cultivated conditions of aristocratic life and the "eagle thoughts" of those who can look

beyond the quotidian (*VP* 264). While Yeats began the poem in reaction to the challenge to the Gregorys' fortunes and Coole's future, the finished work is thus as much or more about Art, and, more pertinently, about his own creative needs and generativity, than it is about the political circumstances at Coole in 1909 or the Gregorys themselves. His opening ascription of "passion and precision" as the hallmarks of the estate's occupants, for instance, might readily be glossed as expressing exactly the combination of feudal Roxborough vitality and Coole self-awareness, or raw instinct and elevated taste, he ascribed to Lady Gregory in *Dramatis Personae* nearly thirty years later. But the formula equally and more consequentially delineates his conviction that his own poetry should embody intense personal emotion ("passion") shaped and made more forceful by the discipline of form and technique ("precision"): that it should be a "living voice" raised to intensity by artistry (*Ex* 217–19). These were matters he theorized sustainedly in his experiments in chanting during the decade,[21] and they are highlighted in the closure to "The Fisherman" in 1916—his most emphatic manifesto about his poetic aims at that time—in which the speaker hopes to be able to write at least "one / Poem maybe as cold / And passionate as the dawn" (*VP* 348). In this formulation, Yeats was revisiting the long-standing recognition by poets over the centuries that intense emotion has to be tempered and heightened by exacting artistry if it is to be more than raw, shapeless, or "inarticulate"—a recognition best articulated by Marianne Moore in her essay "Feeling and Precision" a few years after Yeats's death, but with which he was well familiar in Wordsworth's "emotion recollected in tranquility" and other similar coinages.[22] We might likewise take Yeats's reference to the "eagle thoughts" bred by conditions at Coole as applying only, or primarily, to the house's denizens rather than to the poet who was their guest. But in "To a Wealthy Man," written in December 1912, he would indict rich patrons for failing to provide "the right twigs for an eagle's nest" by their refusal to give full support for Hugh Lane's proposed gallery of Modern Art (*VP* 288). Given that Ezra Pound had by this point begun to refer to Yeats as "the eagle," a significant degree of self-interest and self-referentially lurks in his accusation.[23] In the Macmillan trade edition of *Responsibilities* (1916), Yeats positioned his newest poems first—under the title "*Responsibilities, 1912-1914*"—with poems "*From the Green Helmet and other Poems, 1909-1912*" following them (*Wade* 123). In this arrangement, a reading of the "eagle thoughts" in "Upon a House Shaken" is directly inflected by our already having encountered the closing image of "To a Wealthy Man," making us far more likely to suspect that in 1909, too, Yeats was as much or more concerned with his own creativity and the conditions that supported it as he was with the fortunes of his Gregory hosts.

V

While “Upon a House Shaken” makes idealizing claims for the cultural and creative power of Coole and its traditions, then, the poem equally registers Yeats’s anxiety about the estate’s survival and much uncertainty about the validity of his own idealizations. He had earlier credited Coole’s woods, rather than Gregory herself, as having magical and restorative power; here he notably credits the material presence of the house, rather than its occupants, as the source of creative influence to be honored: “This house has enriched my soul beyond measure.” We might take “house” as metonymic—just as “House of Capulet” might stand more for the denizens of that household than for their palazzo—but even so, the final poem’s concern that “this house” might become “too ruinous / To breed the lidless eye that loves the sun” comes oddly close to locating even Coole’s reproductive capacity in the actual building itself (*VP* 264). That deliberate displacement masked Yeats’s suspicion, recorded in his journal in September 1909, that, rent reductions aside, Coole was likely to decline anyway, because of Robert Gregory’s “courteous incompetence, or rather sheer weakness of will” (*Mem* 230); that its ruin would stem from an internal failure to “breed” worthy inheritors, rather than from external causes. His initial prose subject for “Upon a House Shaken” had titled the poem “A falling House” (*CISW* 201), with the present continuous tense likewise registering a process he saw as having already begun, rather than being merely prospective. For all his assertiveness about the value of aristocratic tradition, and his admiration of Lady Gregory, then, Yeats was already questioning whether inherited wealth, settled order, and tradition, were as inherently conducive to cultivating “the best” as he wanted to believe.

Once Robert Gregory entered into negotiations with the Congested Districts Board in 1910 to sell the estate, Yeats began to expect, rather than merely fear, its dissolution. In “The New Faces,” written in December 1912 after Robert received a first formal monetary offer, he imagines Coole after Gregory and he are dead, with the “old rooms” now occupied by “shadowy” future owners. The poem defiantly asserts that his ghost and Gregory’s ghost will still “rove the garden gravel” there and that their “shadows” will seem more alive than the future occupants of the house (*VP* 435). But this defiance is undercut by his opening profession that if she were to die first, he would not return to Coole during his own remaining years of life. In February 1915, the sale of over 3,500 acres of the Coole estate was finally agreed, leaving the Gregorys with only the core demesne and woods. Yeats clearly anticipated that this, too, would likely not be retained permanently by Robert and his wife, Margaret, given her lack of affection for the property. His poem “The Wild

Swans at Coole," written in 1916, is a veiled elegy for the estate, and obliquely registers his intention to declare a measure of independence and separation both from Lady Gregory and from the house that had been his summer home for nearly two decades—an intention fulfilled by his purchase of Ballylee in 1917.[24] Following Robert Gregory's death in action as a Royal Flying Corps pilot on the Italian front in 1918, the dissolution of Coole became even more likely, and from this point on Yeats's figurations of the estate, and Lady Gregory herself, are cast primarily in terms of what is already past or passing, rather than in terms of active vitality and anticipated continuing power. The final stanza of "A Prayer for my Daughter" (1919), for instance, hopes that his child will grow and develop "Rooted in one dear perpetual place" and eventually come in marriage to "a house / Where's all's accustomed, ceremonious" (*VP* 405)—in short, some equivalent of Coole Park. But the drafts of the poem show that he could no longer convince himself that Coole itself would still retain the force he had hitherto ascribed to it. Over several pages of drafts, comprising three planned stanzas, he imagines his daughter "aged five & 20" coming to Coole after his death and drawing uncanny sustenance both from the place itself and his hovering spirit—"Nor think that being dead I cannot hear" (*CMRD* 183–85).[25] Perhaps recognizing how much self-persuasion and self-involvement this embodied, however, he wisely abandoned the effort, and omitted these stanzas from the published poem.

The violence of the Anglo-Irish war and the bloodletting of the civil war between 1919 and 1923 in which prior structures and expectations of humanity, law, and government seemed to have been swept away, and established culture and tradition had signally failed to prevent the advent of a "nightmare," dealt a seemingly terminal blow to Yeats's previous confidence that settled wealth and aristocratic tradition generated and preserved the "master-work of intellect or hand" (*VP* 429). In the opening section of "Meditations in Time of Civil War," written at Coole and Ballylee some six months after Gregory's childhood home, Roxborough House, was torched by the IRA, he voiced an apparently startling reversal of the model of patronage, cultivation, and artistry he had pronounced so confidently in "Poetry and Tradition" in 1907. "Ancestral Houses" begins by proposing that the life of wealthy ease must surely foster imaginative and creative freedom. Not having to "stoop to a mechanical / Or servile shape"—much like avoiding the "poverty-thwarted impulse" he had deplored in his notes to "Upon a House Shaken"—must surely allow the rich to choose their own course of life without concern for others' opinions. But the following stanzas wonder whether such ease, and the "gentleness" of "slippered Contemplation," instead merely erode the power, drive, and "violence" needed to establish wealth and landed position in the first place. Rather than being a "glory" that attests to or even magnifies the "greatness" of an estate's

founders, "levelled lawns and gravelled ways" and "great chambers and long galleries, lined / With famous portraits of our ancestors" might end up, instead, fostering complacency, entitlement, and eventual feebleness in later inheritors: "maybe the great-grandson of that house, / For all its bronze and marble, 's but a mouse" (*VP* 417–18). Robert Gregory's distinguished wartime record of courage in action had by this point sharply refuted Yeats's earlier criticism of him (if not the envy that had been one of its key components); his concern with degeneration here is more generic, and was by now long-established. But with Robert dead, and Lady Gregory remaining at Coole only on a lease from Robert's widow, Coole nonetheless now offered an undeniable example of a tradition coming to its end.

This iconoclastic and deliberately polemical opening is immediately followed, however, by "My House," in which Yeats proposes his "ancient tower" at Thoor Ballyee as an alternative to the failings of a settled order. Built as a redoubt in times of conflict, and now again located amid fighting, the tower is figured as a befitting emblem of "adversity" (*VP* 419–20). The remainder of the poem offers no optimism about the future or expectation that the starkness of the tower might prevent "declension" of his own lineage ("Through too much play, or marriage with a fool"), but its long endurance, and its witness to centuries of war and change, present it as an appropriate vantage point for meditative reflection on the flow of history itself, and hence a place where selfhood, and some renewed sense of tradition, might be "founded," however provisionally (*VP* 423, 420). As he had declared in "A Prayer on going into my House" Yeats determined to have nothing but "simple" furnishings in the tower—"nothing / But what the great and passionate have used / Throughout so many varying centuries"—thereby deliberately resisting the changes of fashion and opinion, and indeed the very idea of change (*VP* 371). If Coole with its woods, its gravelled walks, its library, and its long heritage of accomplishment had failed, the simplicity and minimalism of the tower offered a would-be corrective, where all would be stripped down to create a setting better conducive to reflection and creativity. Yeats's letters show the exacting care with which the renovation and furnishing of Ballylee was carried out. So as to avoid "ugly manufactured things" he commissioned beds, tables, chairs, and other furniture to be made using local materials, and he and his wife, George, oversaw all aspects of the interior with close attention to aesthetic effect (*CL InteLex* 3438). As he reported to Ezra Pound in September 1918, "As George moves about she would shock your modern mind by composing into 14th century pictures against the little windows with their orange curtains, & the rough whitewashed walls" (*CL InteLex* 3483). More revealingly, he describes his aim as being to create "an ideal poor man's house" (*CL InteLex* 3438). The aspiration registers William Morris's lingering influence; but given the considerable expense of the

furnishings—all individually designed and made—the project might equally be seen as no less ostentatious in motivation than, and merely a medievalizing counterpoint to, Oscar Wilde's white drawing room. "[P]oor man's" tellingly signals how fully this was a deliberate reversal and refusal of the "intricate" material environment of Coole. Ballylee represented not just a topographical independence from Lady Gregory, but a liberating aesthetic, personal, and creative independence too. In establishing his own residence—the first he had outright owned—Yeats was significantly relieved of the burden of obligation and gratitude that had always been a looming factor in his years as a guest at Coole, and more importantly, of some of the anxiety about creative autonomy that his long stays and years of close collaboration with her there had generated. Gregory herself certainly registered the extent to which Ballylee had effectively replaced Coole, and the degree to which her personal intimacy with Yeats had declined since his purchase. But it was the ways he was now conducting his creative life more independently of her that seems to have been most hurtful. After reading the poems he published in *The Nation* and *The Dial* in November 1920—all later collected in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*—she wrote telling him that it was "quite a strange sensation—a little sad too, seeing for the first time in print a poem of yours, & not in your own writing."[26] She tacitly signalled her displeasure at his personal apostacy, his withdrawal to live in England during the Anglo-Irish war, and his relative silence on the conflict, by not telling him of her authorship of a series of six articles about conditions in Kiltartan that she published, anonymously, in *The Nation*, between October 1920 and January 1921; one, indeed, appeared in the same issue in which "Yeats's "Meditations in Time of Civil War" was first printed. Yeats was told in a conversation at Oxford that the "remarkable" Lady Gregory was the anonymous contributor, but blithely reported to her that the attribution was made "mistakenly I imagine" (*CL InteLex* 3815).

VI

The Tower and *The Winding Stair* attest to the remarkable new flow of creativity and inspiration Yeats drew on after purchasing Ballylee in 1917; and his self-distancing from Coole was a factor, among others, initiating that flow. But however inclined he was—as in "Meditations in Time of War"—to see "Ancestral Houses" such as Coole as depleted bastions of cultural power, Lady Gregory herself would prove far more resilient, creatively forceful, and personally impressive, than expected. After the 1916 Rising she had repeatedly encouraged Yeats to take up an assertive and central role in the shaping of a changed Ireland: "I believe there is a great deal you can do, all is unrest & discontent. There is nowhere for the imagination to rest, but

there must be some spiritual building possible just as after Parnell's fall, but perhaps more intense"[27] Determined, characteristically pragmatic, and markedly optimistic about the future, she now again urged him to return and take a leading role in the new dispensation. Tempted by the possibility of a ministerial appointment, he resumed residence at Ballylee in March 1922, remaining there for most of that year, resolving, as he told her, "to be 'that old man eloquent' to the new governing generation" (*CL InteLex* 4046). The restoration of his regular visits to Coole likewise spurred a fresh respect for Gregory's indomitable character, with her defiance of a death threat in April 1922, which he later mythologized in "Beautiful Lofty Things," offering a prime example.

Following his election to the new Irish Senate in late 1922, Yeats became for the next few years a "public man" centrally involved in the politics of the new state (*VP* 443). The gradually narrowing and prescriptive notions of how the country should be constituted, and then the rising climate of censorship, moved him toward an evermore conservative politics, and increasingly emphatic praise of the Ascendancy Protestant heritage. His speech to the Senate on June 11, 1925, during the debate on the prohibition of divorce, decisively marks that shift. It was "tragic" he declared, "that within three years of this country gaining its independence we should be discussing a measure which a minority of this nation considers to be grossly oppressive." In a magisterial peroration he spoke accusingly to his audience, identifying himself as a proud representative of that minority:

> We against whom you have done this thing are no petty people. We are one of the great stocks of Europe. We are the people of Burke; we are the people of Grattan; we are the people of Swift, the people of Emmet, the people of Parnell. We have created the most of the modern literature of this country. We have created the best of its political intelligence.

With degeneration as his theme, he defiantly added that facing oppression and marginalization would test whether the Ascendancy class, and he or his own children, "have lost our stamina or not": "If we have not lost our stamina then your victory will be brief, and your defeat final" (*SS* 99). From this point on, Yeats would adopt a consistently combative posture and deliberately seek to record and promote the "spiritual part of free Ireland" in his autobiographical writings and elsewhere (*CL InteLex* 4046). This was always purely a rearguard action, however, in a conflict already lost in political terms. As with his figurations of Coole after 1912, Yeats was celebrating—and elegizing—what was already past or quickly passing.

In late January 1927, Lady Gregory told Yeats that her daughter-in-law had determined to sell the Coole demesne to the Forestry Department. The finalized agreement allowed Gregory herself to remain in the house as paying tenant for the rest of her life, but transfer of ownership of the property and woods, some 611 acres in all, was completed that March. The possibility of her death in 1909 had been a fundamental shock to Yeats's security and sense of self; now, though long-anticipated, her increasing infirmity, and the certainty that Coole's Gregory lineage would end with her, was again deeply jarring to him. As she recorded in her journal, he told her that he and George had "come to the conclusion to give up Ballylee, because without me they would not care to come there."[28] He would hold to this intention: summer 1927 was his last substantial visit to Ballylee and he thereafter resumed his old practice of staying at Coole. The wider impact of the news on his creativity, however, has not been sufficiently stressed. "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" and "Blood and the Moon," written at Ballylee in July and August 1927, register a significant shift. The tower, which he had purchased for its starkness, and furnished simply as a "corrective" alternative to Coole's elaboration, is now declared in "Blood and the Moon" to be squarely part of the Ascendancy tradition: Goldsmith, Dean Swift, Berkeley, and "haughtier-headed Burke," the poem charges, had all actually ascended its "ancestral stair." The proposition is couched as in mockery of a nation now "Half dead at the top," but it effectively reincorporates the tower as part of, and extending the historical sweep of, Ascendancy rule, rather than a place Yeats had moved to as an independent redoubt in the face of the failings of landed heritage (*VP* 480–82). In "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," the images of sword and its scabbard wound in the embroidery from a woman's dress, negotiate a complex of contraries: gender difference, war versus settled civilization, and artistic fixity against the shapeless uncertainty and vitality of ordinary life, among others. But here, too, the poem's effort at reconciling or combining what is seemingly unchanging with what is transient, and what is conducive to independent intellect and artistry with the realm of the social, embodies a desire to reunite the very categories Yeats had represented as separate in the "corrective" assertions of "Meditations in Time of Civil War"—and as so unreconcilable, years earlier, in "Rosa Alchemica." He would draw these associations in directly material terms in 1930 when a chair at Coole, covered in silk "from a dress worn by Lady Gregory when presented at Court," reminded him of "my Japanese sword wrapped in a piece of silk from a Japanese lady's Court dress" (*Ex* 320). Both poems thus embody a movement toward allying the symbolic force of Coole and Ballylee to joint purpose in his combative celebrations of the "spiritual part of free Ireland." His elegy for the Gore-Booth sisters and Lissadell House, written in October 1927, likewise notably returns to the language of admiration for the big house tradition he

had adopted between 1907 and about 1921. Prominently positioned as the opening poem in *The Winding Stair*, it evokes the material actualities of "that old Georgian mansion"—"Great windows open to the south"; "that table"; the "silk kimonos" worn by the sisters—and these stand as indexes of the aesthetic and personal beauty, and the cultivation, the poem seeks to memorialize. The poem is nostalgic, and fully aware that the two sisters, and the world of these remembered actualities, has recently passed away, but it skillfully presents the kimonos, table, and windows as tangible and objective correlatives that will generate "Pictures of the mind" for the reader and thereby give fixity and an enduring literary afterlife to this lost past (*VP* 475).

VII

Conjuring a lasting celebratory image would be Yeats's deliberate aim, too, in "Coole Park, 1929," his finest tribute to Coole and Gregory. Promised to her specifically to serve as "an introductory poem" (*CL InteLex* 5194) for her last substantial work—*Coole*, her own memorializing account of the home she had made famous—it was first published in that volume in May 1931, and then not reprinted until after her death.

James Joyce is said to have once remarked that if Dublin were ever destroyed, it could be rebuilt brick by brick using *Ulysses* as a guide. In *Coole*, Gregory attempted a similar project of affectionate recording and mapping. The volume offers a detailed sequence of placements, describing material objects in specific locations in the rooms of the house, but also positioning them within historical, political, and personal contexts. Titles of individual books are given, for instance, with anecdotes about their authors, mention of which particular shelves the volumes are kept in, and often, even mention of the colour or style of their bindings; portraits on the walls are described, along with extracts from their subjects' correspondence, to animate their personal or political histories; we learn about the statue seen in the photograph Shaw took in 1915, and even find out that the ornate gilt frames Yeats had disliked in 1897 were "Florentine . . . brought from Italy as was a century ago the fashion."[29] Precise material detail abounds. Gregory acknowledges early on in the volume that she expects before long to be "divorced"[30] from the "companionable shelves" of the library—a wording that evokes her close, emotional bond with the objects she describes in terms of intimate union, as if house and its contents, and the writing self, are directly connected. If not quite interchangeable, as in Yeats's metonymic association of house and owner in 1909, tangible possession and possessor are tightly, almost physically, linked. Closing her chapter on the library, Gregory reminds us that "all these volumes . . . have felt the pressure of my fingers" to reinforce the point.[31] Throughout the book we are also given

sporadic alerts as to exactly when Gregory was writing, and even how she was feeling: "(March 27. 1927). I have written all this to-day. Now my back aches and I am tired."[32] These diary-style interjections shuttle a reader between her reflections on the long sweep of Irish history and moments of specific temporal immediacy and presence, and likewise between the material actualities she describes and the subjective. The effect is to eerily combine past and present, the personal and the political, and the tangible and the conceptual, thereby animating and extending the power of each category. Given Yeats's singular skill in marshalling tenses and movements between past, present, and future in his poetry, he was in no need of example or prompting from Gregory, but his reading of the volume in 1927 surely affirmed his own methods, and left some mark in the poem he wrote to accompany it.

The force of the published text of "Coole Park, 1929" as a commemoration of the "excellent company" of creative minds that congregated at the estate, a celebration of the "Great works constructed there," and an encomium to the "powerful character" of Gregory herself (*VP* 488–89), has long been acknowledged. The composition of the poem, however, shows how much difficulty Yeats encountered in determining how to represent and praise Gregory, and his continuing anxiety about creative influence and autonomy. His first surviving prose "subject" registers both strains almost immediately: "Speak of the rarity of the circumstances, that brought together such concords of men. ~~each man more than himself~~ through ~~whom an unknown life speaks~~".[33] The final poem directly credits Gregory for keeping her guests "in formation" and focused on their work, but both his vague "circumstances" and the deleted words here show him uncertain how to source the creativity generated at Coole. His erasure suggests he immediately recognized that to imply it came from beyond the human realm—from "Anima Mundi"—risked diminishing his own and the other artists' roles as makers of the work "constructed there," besides undercutting the value of Gregory's influence. His assertion that each artist had been made "more than himself" at Coole would remain at the heart of the poem, however, but with the task of defining how that had actually occurred posing a constant challenge.

The opening draft verse lines reflect the problem. Coole is introduced as a "bare" and simple "old square white washed house," which is nonetheless "intricate." Within five lines, Yeats joins the two key terms, offering the oxymoronic declaration that he will "sing a bare intricate ancient house." The words "intricate," "intricacy," or "intricacies" appear thirteen times on just this first draft page, highlighting the complexity these lines want to credit, but do not yet know how to explain (*CWMP* 107). With "Meditations in Time of Civil War" and "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" in mind, a reader might already intuit that the combination of "bare" and "intricate" is closely filiated with the contrast

between Coole elaborateness and Ballylee starkness that Yeats had sought to reconcile or unite in the latter poem; but as yet, in the draft, the terms are little more than descriptive. The Coole woods are likewise presented as full of "intricacies" (*CWMP* 107), and this is also hardly more than a rough descriptor at this point; suggestive of the shadows and seclusion Yeats had evoked in "I walked among the seven woods of Coole" but not, as yet, directly hinting at the magical power that earlier poem had represented those shadows as concealing.

By the second and third surviving leaves of verse drafting, this core opening tension comes into even sharper view. The "intricacies" and "amities" of Coole are first characterized as "miraculous," and then termed "unnatural" and "strange." Yeats would alternate between these adjectives over many pages before permanently deleting "miraculous" in favor of "un[n]atural" (*CWMP* 107–11, 157). At stake is a difference between depicting Coole's power as fundamentally religious—and able to cause spiritual and material transformation—or representing it as uncanny in ways that are troubling or even insidious. If "miraculous" strains toward excess praise, "unnatural" suggests resistance and some discomfort. And neither pole of possibility serves to explain the power in question: "miraculous" credits something beyond human understanding, "unnatural" implies both an unwillingness and an inability to understand.

This struggle between casting Coole as a place of miracle, and as a place where some uncanny and unsettling form of magic had occurred, repercusses throughout the drafts. At one point Yeats evokes Matthew 18:20—"where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,"—a gesture that suggests that he and the other guests were akin to Jesus's disciples (*CWMP* 127, 129). Doubtless recognizing that this might imply rather too much for Gregory as host, he quickly abandoned the analogy.[34] But religious terms like "consecrate," "eternal," and "resurrection" linger in the drafts, and it was only a late revision that changed the wording of the poem's final line from "A moment's memory to that sacred head" to "laurelled head" (*CWMP* 147, 157, 169). Gradually, however, evocations of some inexplicable, almost pagan, form of magic take priority in the drafts, and Gregory herself is increasingly figured as being beyond the scope of ordinary nature and humanity in her influence and impact. Her guests at Coole were able to complete "Great works" there, the completed poem suggests, not just because of her "powerful character" and the intellectual traditions of her home, but also because of some power she and Coole fostered "in nature's spite"(*VP* 488-89). Yeats had already made similar claims of Maud Gonne—her beauty was "not natural in an age like this" (*VP* 257)—and the two women had long been closely associated in his imaginative economy as totemic figures whose effects on his creativity he paradoxically both desired and feared.[35] In the drafts of "Coole Park, 1929" Gregory and Coole are specifically credited with conjuring a "magic circle" that manages to make time

literally stop or even run backward (*CWMP* 155). In the evasive metaphor of the finished poem's third stanza, this is recast as an orienting "compass-point" whose lines "cut through time or cross it withershins" (*VP* 489). The common meaning of the word "withershins" is "counter clock-wise"—a movement the "wrong" way, contradicting general habit or convention. But as Yeats well knew, the term had deeper and more unsettling resonance in Celtic literature, evoking insidious occult capacities, often associated with witchcraft. The single word thus significantly complicates the poem's celebration of the "glory" of Coole, by acknowledging a darker, more intimidating aspect to Lady Gregory's "powerful" ability to marshal her famous guests and keep them "in formation."

Other elements in the published poem likewise mark the residue of the tensions explored in the drafts. Early in the compositional sequence, Yeats credits the works achieved at Coole as stemming from "~~amities of skill, amities of thought / made in friendship, & in skill / Friendship, imagination, or skillful skill / skill, imagination, friendly~~ thought"—an indecisive cocktail that nonetheless prioritizes the existing abilities of individual writers and the ways those flourished in convivial company (*CWMP* 109). This is immediately followed by the proposition, retained through to the finished poem, that the great works are "A dance-like glory that those walls begot" (*VP* 488): a formulation that echoes "Upon a House Shaken" in assigning an almost biblical "begetting" to the material actuality of the house itself. In a later stage, however, one leaf begins "The woman of the house was half the tale" (*CWMP* 131)—as if an admonishing reminder that Gregory's influence must be praised—but this in turn introduces another set of vacillations. She is credited alternately with the domestic and gendered accomplishment of having "watched over all . . . our health, our happiness," in a poem in which all the artists and creatives who are named are men, and then with the more assertive achievement of having "printed her seal" or "impressed her character . . . as with a seel" on her guests (*CWMP* 133, 137). The latter conceit quickly prevailed, but Yeats was clearly unable to find satisfactory wording that might clarify how that process of impression had occurred, or exactly what it had involved. He experimented with "Roman agate seel" and "agate ancient seel" in what looks like an effort to convey greater specificity, but then abandoned the image altogether (*CWMP* 141). The final poem, instead, crisply charges that Gregory's "powerful character / Could keep a swallow to its first attempt." The writers' existing skills, and Gregory's influence, are both credited in this formulation, but the awkward question of adjudicating exactly how and why Coole fostered "intricate" art is neatly finessed: "power" is assigned expansively, and diffusely, to Gregory's character, to the "intent" of her guests, and to magic of "the dreaming air" of the estate itself (*VP* 489).

The completed poem achieves an extraordinary synthesis of elegy and celebration, but it also notably aims to simulate the magical time-crossing effect it ascribes to the "compass-point" at Coole. The opening stanza begins with a present tense event—the poet meditating on a swallow's flight. As the title tells us, this occurs at some particular moment in 1929, at Coole Park. Night is falling, and only a "luminous" western cloud retains the last light of day. The lines evoke imminent dissolution: darkness, Gregory's death, and the parting of a final swallow—by implication, Yeats himself. The poem then quickly shifts to past tense, memorializing what had been achieved, with the deictic "There" suggesting an accompanying physical or mental movement away on the poet's part, as if, in looking back, he can no longer be "present" either literally or figuratively. But then the "Here" at the start of the final stanza precipitates the poem startlingly into an imagined future, summoning people not yet born to come to the actual spot where the house of Coole stood, to pay tribute to Gregory with "eyes bent upon the ground," an image that retains a hint of the religious associations explored in the drafts, though without directly suggesting that they should bend their heads. The effect of these shifts, like Gregory's movements between register in Coole, is to defy linear time. In "The New Faces" in 1912, Yeats had claimed that he and Gregory had "wrought that shall break the teeth of Time" at Coole, and that future occupants of the house would seem more "shadowy" than their ghosts (*VP* 435). "Coole Park, 1929" more nearly enacts this aspiration. The house of Coole, it acknowledges, will in the future be no more than a "shapeless mound"; but like his elegy for Lissadell, the poem generates compensatory "Pictures in the mind," giving fixity and a form of enduring afterlife, to what is already imagined as gone.

VIII

Privately, Yeats was less able to see things in such heroic terms. In September 1930 he recorded having "a dream which I dream several times a year" featuring a "great house" that reminded him of both Coole and "Sandymount Castle", a property owned by relatives and located some 200 yards from the rented villa where he was born. In the dream, the house was "about to pass into other hands, its pictures auctioned. I remember looking at a picture and thinking that it would now lose its value, for its value was that it had always hung in a particular place and had been put there by some past member of the family" (*Ex* 318–19). The detailed material mapping and descriptions of objects' histories Gregory had laid out in *Coole* was likely present in his mind here, but, if so, he was acutely conscious of the limitations of that project. The actuality of the coming dispersal of Coole's contents will, he realizes, be a permanent destruction of "value": the house "will be before long an office and residence for foresters, a

little cheap furniture in the great rooms" and, perhaps most dismaying for Yeats, "a few religious oleographs its only pictures" (*Ex* 319). As with his distressed "I cannot realize the world without her" in 1909, the prospective destruction of Coole again involved a fundamental loss of self, since the dream associates Coole with his own place of birth origin, and both are "ruined."

Watching Gregory's final decline during his long vigil at Coole in 1931 and 1932, Yeats evidently needed to come more fully to terms with these recognitions. Indeed, he began his elegy "Coole Park and Ballylee 1932" by conceiving it as a revision or extension of "Coole Park 1929": "I am turning the introductory verses to Lady Gregory's "Coole" (Cuala) into poem of some length," he told his wife, adding that it would feature "various sections with more or less symbolic subject matter" (*CL InteLex* 5583). The completed poem makes no attempt to soften the losses it anticipates: cultural decline and an ominous "darkening flood" are in progress, while symptomatically, Gregory is present only as a sound from an upstairs room as she "toils" with a stick to move "from chair to chair"—as if Yeats cannot bear to see her directly or allow the reader to do so (*VP* 491). But the poem's "symbolic subject matter" would achieve liberating revisionary force as Yeats revisited the terrain of his earlier work. Old images or wordings—the swans at Coole, the "All changed" of "Easter, 1916," the seven woods, Ballylee, and the "big house" iconography of his Coole poems—are present here in decisively new deployments. In "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" he had attempted to ally the symbolic power of Coole and Ballylee to joint purpose in his elaborate metaphor of sword and scabbard. Here, they are depicted as quite literally connected by the water that flows past the tower, runs underground, and then rises in "Coole demesne." The "moor-hens" mentioned in the opening lines evoke the "living stream" of "Easter, 1916," in which "long-legged moor hens dive" (*VP* 393): this is a flow of life itself, running between the two properties. But more importantly, it is a creative as well as actual topography. Yeats names the place where the river disappears as "'dark' Raftery's 'cellar,'" thereby associating it with Antoine Ó Raifteiri, the blind Irish poet of the early nineteenth century, whose work he and Gregory had collected early in their friendship. It is by implication a place of artistic making, hidden from view, where ordinary, vital life is transformed into something enduring and expressive of "the generated soul" (*VP* 490). Crucially, this symbolic mapping—in the finished poem, at least—shows no sign of the anxieties about creative origin and primacy present in so many of Yeats's earlier writings about Coole.

The drafts of "Coole Park and Ballylee 1932," however, show that its celebration of collaborative union was only achieved after much struggle. Headed "Coole Park II", the earliest surviving manuscript leaves begin with a direct continuation of his troubled attempt in "Coole Park, 1929" to define

the source of the creativity generated at Gregory's home. In an opening that anticipates "the end" of the estate, Yeats recalls the sudden appearance of a swan taking flight from Coole lake, a sight that he describes variously as an "Image of inspiration," a "concentration of the sky," and an "image of the souls uncertain flight" (*CWMP* 171-73, 177). The swan's appearance "sets all right," producing a moment of aesthetic, intellectual, and creative insight in which an image of "minds brief light" is suddenly "flung out" (*CWMP* 177). But the drafts show Yeats signally unable to pinpoint the underlying cause of that visionary expansion: the phrase "no man knows why" appears ten times in just three draft leaves, along with repeated use of the word "strange." He can only explain his heightened experience of perception as the result of a vague "something" that "stirs the stream" and "alters everything" (*CWMP* 177–81). On the sixth page of the surviving drafts, this stumbling effort of explanation finally peters out, and Yeats begins to recast the recollected "image" of the swan, firstly as a "metaphor," and then as an "emblem." The shift anticipates the way that the finished poem became, as he had told his wife it would, a series of sections of "more or less symbolic subject matter" rather than, as it began, a description of the actualities of Coole and its woods ("Great trees upon the lawn, "the track, made by the foresters," "the glittering reaches of the flooded lake") (*CWMP* 171, 173). Next, in generating a fresh working draft of the full poem, Yeats reworked the four leaves centering on the sight of the swan into a single eight-line stanza, and, crucially reordered the sequence of the seven sections he had drafted. Rather than opening with the image of the swan, the poem now begins, as it would in its finished form, with a stanza set at Ballylee, evoking the river running from below his window as it passes toward the underground course that will take it to Coole. The reorganization produces a dynamic and dramatic structure for the poem, akin to the time crossing effects he had created in "Coole Park, 1929." At the start Yeats positions himself at Ballylee, then journeys to Coole's woods, and finally enters the "Great rooms" of house itself—the place he loves but knows is soon to be lost. There, symptomatically, he is unable to look at, or directly represent, the offstage Gregory herself, whose fast-approaching death will initiate and confirm the impending dissolution he fears. The reorganization significantly heightened the emotional force of this powerful elegy, but in the process Yeats effectively submerged, or simply cut away, the concerns so central to "Coole Park, 1929" and which had animated his first draft pages—his anxiety and uncertainty about what had made Coole and Gregory such catalysts for creativity. This liberation from the effort to explain or to apportion credit surely intensified the celebratory tone of the finished poem.

There, in the connecting, umbilical river flowing from Yeats's tower to Gregory's estate, the miraculous transformation that produces Art occurs, figuratively, not at either Coole or Ballylee alone, but in "'dark' Raftery's cellar"

somewhere in between. So, too, by implication, that creative yield is not the product of single imagination, or needing to be attributed to begetting "walls" or magical "dreaming air." He and Gregory drew on "Traditional sanctity and loveliness," the poem asserts—with the "Great rooms" of Coole being part of that tradition—but also on "The book of the people" (*VP* 491–92). This was Raftery's own phrase for an oral lore constituting cultural and political history, and it specifically evokes the folklore collaborations that had marked the first and most enthusiastic phase of Yeats's and Gregory's collaborative partnership. The poem hence situates their accomplishments within, and as contributing to, a tradition beyond single authorship: the last stanza begins with a decisive "We." What had been drawn as separate in "Blood and the Moon" is here reconnected, with multiple traditions and resources being united to collective benefit.

IX

The poem nonetheless ends with images of creative failure: the "high horse"—Pegasus, which might take a rider to Helicon, source of poetic inspiration—is now "riderless" (*VP* 492). In this, Yeats accurately anticipated the effect on him of Lady Gregory's eventual death from cancer in May 1932. In his preface to *The King of the Great Clock Tower*, dated November 1934, he admitted to having written "no verse" for a two-year span following her terminal decline—a period of lyric silence rivaled only by that he experienced after the traumatic shock of Maud Gonne's marriage to John MacBride in 1903. "I had never been so long barren" he acknowledged; "Perhaps Coole Park where I had escaped from politics, from all that Dublin talked of, when it was shut, shut me out from my theme; or did the subconscious drama that was my imaginative life end with its owner?" (*VPl* 1309). His letters in the weeks afterward register his sense of a changed landscape in which a key source of certainty and security had been permanently removed. He wrote, days after, to Shri Purohit Swami, "I have lost the friend who was my sole adviser for the greater part of my life, the one person who knew all that I thought or did" (*CL InteLex* 5683). And to Mario Rossi: "I have lost one who has been to me for nearly forty years my strength & my conscience" (*CL InteLex* 5684).

The absence of that "conscience" and orienting compass registered sharply in his personal life too. Had Gregory lived on, she would surely have tempered, or at least challenged, the increasingly strident political views Yeats adopted in the late 1930s, much as, given her staunch views about propriety and taste, she would have disapproved of Yeats's more extravagant late poems of "lust and rage." And it is hard to imagine that Yeats's relationships with women after her death would have so frequently followed the often ill-advised and extravagant

trajectories they did.[36] He certainly tried to find some form of replacement for her, with Dorothy Wellesley—titled, and chatelaine of an old estate at Penns-in-the-Rocks—being the nearest to doing so. But his poem celebrating her and the "famous old upholsteries" and "chamber full of books" in that stately home feels perfunctory and self-persuading. Tellingly, it closes expressing only the "hope" that she is above "common women" and that she and her environment will lead him to revelation (*VP* 579). Wellesley was flatteringly deferential to the "great" man[37] but manifestly lacked the steely strength Gregory had shown; the poetic yield of their relationship was a mix of turbulent enthusiasms, far from the productive "order" and "peace" he had found at Coole.

As Yeats had intuited, Lady Gregory and Coole Park were so tightly linked in his imagination that both effectively ended together. Returning to Coole the morning after her death, he spent that night in the house with her coffin. As he later recorded, when Margaret Gregory expressed surprise that he would not mind doing do, he told her, "'[I]t is not the coffin that [w]rings my heart but all this' pointing to the books and the paintings. She said 'Yes it is your home too that is broken up.'"[38] The material actuality was, as he understood, already in the process of losing its "value" and human meaning. After the funeral, Margaret, whom he judged had been "remoulded" by Gregory's influence and "by the house," unlocked for him "the big room upstairs where I have slept & written when a young man" so that he could "look my last at the woods through its windows."[39] Much as he had resolved in "The New Faces," he did not subsequently return.

But Coole would continue to haunt his imagination, providing a key model for the "big old house" that is destroyed in *Purgatory*—with its "intricate passages," its books with "eighteenth-century French bindings," and its colonial governors as owners. "[To] kill a house / Where great men grew up, married, died" should be a "capital offence" the Old Man in the play declares (*VPl* 1044). All that remained for Yeats was to try to generate "Pictures of the mind" that might imaginatively restore and almost photographically "fix" what was lost. His last poems about Gregory leave us, again, with material objects firmly in view: Gregory's portrait, hanging on the wall of the Municipal Gallery (*VP* 602); and Gregory herself—named directly for the first time in his poetry[40]—"seated at her great ormulu table," and just about to speak (*VP* 577–78).

Endnotes

1 Yeats was aware that the Coole estate had been founded on the wealth Robert Gregory (1727-1810) had amassed as chairman of the East India Company but does not seem to have questioned the colonial aspects of that fortune. His drafts for "Upon a House Shaken" allude only—and in approving terms—to the "beneficent rule" given to a "far people" by

an unnamed Gregory ancestor. See David Holderman, ed., *"In the Seven Woods" and "The Green Helmet and Other Poems": Manuscript Materials by W. B.Yeats* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 201 (hereafter identified as *CISW*). His lionization of the Gregory heritage is also notably silent about the fact that Lady Gregory's husband, the "famous Governor of Ceylon," had been obliged to sell off two-thirds of the Coole estate in the 1850s to pay off his gambling debts; and also that Sir William's authorship of the "Gregory clause" had denied smallholders public relief in the last years of the Famine and thereby forced many poor tenants to choose between abandoning their land or starving. When claiming that "every" generation of Gregorys "had left its memorial," he likewise had to conveniently forget his own earlier assertions that Lady Gregory's son Robert had made little mark at Coole or elsewhere by the time of his death in 1918 (*VP* 341).

2 As Oliver Gogarty observed, "Yeats hated Edward Martyn because he was a R[oman] C[atholic]," as well as because of his envy of Martyn's settled social position; see Roy Foster, *W. B. Yeats, A Life, 1: The Apprentice Mage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 168. Yeats's hostility is apparent even in the small material details presented in *Dramatis Personae*, where he depicts Martyn as sitting in a darkness broken only by the light from "a little Roman lamp." His religious prejudice is perhaps at its most overt in a passage from his journal in 1914: "The whole system of Irish Catholicism pulls down the able and well-born. . . . A long continuity of culture like that at Coole could not have arisen, and never has arisen, in a single Catholic family since the Middle Ages" (*Mem* 271).

3 In "The Municipal Gallery Revisited," written in 1937, a year after the publication of *Dramatis Personae*, Yeats would further emphasize the paradoxical aspects of Gregory's personality, though there less as a matter of explication than as a means of stressing the difficulty of representing her adequately: "But where is the brush that could show anything / Of all that pride and that humility?" (*VP* 602).

4 See note 2 above. I use the old-fashioned term "chatelaine" here advisedly, since Gregory was never the "owner" of Coole Park. After Sir William Gregory's death in 1892, she oversaw the property until their son, Robert, for whom it was held in trust, reached his majority in 1902. After Robert's death in 1918, it was the outright possession of his widow, Margaret. Yeats was generally careful and evasive regarding Lady Gregory's legal position at Coole, but incorrectly (and pointedly) termed her its "last inheritor" in "Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931" (*VP* 491), presumably to register his disapproval of Margaret, who had shown no interest in Coole's heritage or in retaining the property.

5 See Pethica, "'The man who suffers and the mind which creates': Arthur Hallam, W. B.Yeats, T. S.Eliot and 'genuine inspiration,'" *The Yeats Journal of Korea* 44 (Summer 2014): 15–30. For Coleridge's notion of a poem as a "waking dream," see R. A. Foakes, ed., *Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lectures 1808-1819: On Literature*, vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 425.

6 Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, eds. Donald Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York: Norton, 2002), 535.

7 Yeats's term for a collective transhistorical memory or storehouse of ideas and images, which he described in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* as "the general mind where that mind is scarce separable from what we have begun to call 'the unconscious'" (*CWS* 16).

8 The poem was titled "Apologia Addressed to Ireland in the coming days" until 1895.

9 Although born and raised in England, Johnson claimed Irish roots and converted to Catholicism in 1891. He also highlighted Irish themes and sympathies in his writing, most notably in the long (and wretched) opening poem, dated 1894, in his volume *Ireland with Other Poems* (1897).

10 See B. L. Reid, *The Man from New York: John Quinn and His Friends* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 306; and Pethica, "'Uttering, Mastering it?': Yeats's Tower, Lady Gregory's Ballylee, and the eviction of 1888," *YA*21, 213–18 and *passim*.
11 See Colin Smythe, ed., *Seventy Years* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), illustrations between 300–01.
12 After 1900, Yeats progressively removed the stanza breaks present in most early printings of the poem. From 1922 onwards, only the final quatrain of the poem is separate from the remainder of the poem's text.
13 See Helen Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 157–60.
14 Lady Gregory to Yeats, December 24, 1900, Berg.
15 Lady Gregory to Yeats, December 1, 1902, Berg.
16 Nicolette Devas, *Two Flamboyant Fathers* (London: Collins, 1968), 127.
17 George Moore, *Vale* (London: William Heinemann, 1914), 164–66.
18 Foster, *W. B. Yeats, A Life*, 337.
19 Yeats dictated this phrase to Gregory in 1903 in an early prose scenario for *The King's Threshold*—a play centrally concerned with asserting his Shelleyan view that artists should be accorded respect as key cultural "legislators"—adding that "No crown would glitter if they [poets] had not made it glitter. No woman would be beautiful if they had not praised beauty." See Declan Kiely, ed., *W. B.Yeats, The King's Threshold: Manuscript Materials* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 27.
20 Lady Gregory to Yeats, January 3, 1906, Berg.
21 See, especially, Ronald Schuchard, *The Last Minstrels: Yeats and the Revival of the Bardic Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
22 Marianne Moore, "Feeling and Precision," *The Sewanee Review* 52, no. 4 (1952): 499–507; Wordsworth, "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), in *Wordsworth's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Nicholas Halmi, (New York: Norton, 2014), 92, 79.
23 See Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz, eds., *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909-1914* (New York: New Directions, 1984), 39.
24 See Pethica, "'Easter, 1916' at its Centennial: Maud Gonne, Augusta Gregory and the Evolution of the Poem," *International Yeats Studies* 1, no. 1: 42–44.
25 Thomas Parkinson ed. with Anne Brannen, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer: Manuscript Materials by W.B. Yeats* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994) 183-85. Hereafter identified as *CMRD*.
26 Lady Gregory to Yeats, November 15, 1920, Berg.
27 Lady Gregory to Yeats, August 20, 1916, Berg.
28 Lady Gregory, *The Journals: Volume 2*, ed. Daniel J. Murphy (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987), 164.
29 Lady Gregory, *Coole* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1971), 57.
30 Gregory, *Coole*, 17.
31 Gregory, *Coole*, 28.
32 Gregory, *Coole*, 50.
33 David R. Clark, ed., *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems: Manuscript Materials by W.B. Yeats* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1999) 105. Hereafter referred to as *CWMP*.
34 The drafts also circle repeatedly around the question of "who" or "what" was the animating creative force at Coole, with Gregory represented at several points as teacher of her assembled guests. Yeats briefly figured Coole as akin to the "Academy" (*CWMP* 123–25), thereby implying that Gregory herself filled the role of a Plato or Aristotle. As with his evocation of Coole's "swallows" as Jesus's disciples, he quickly abandoned this analogy in the drafts. The association remained in mind for him, however, and after her death he

included a passage in a lecture he gave during his American tour of 1932-33, "Modern Poetry," asserting that she had "sought in the depths of her mind and expressed habitually in all she said and did [the] virtue which Aristotle calls 'magnificence, greatness of soul'"; W.B. Yeats, "Modern Ireland: an Address to American Audiences 1932-1933", *The Massachusetts Review, 5*, no. 2 (Winter, 1964), 259.

35 Pethica, "'Easter, 1916,'" 31.

36 His liaison and poetic collaboration with the unstable Margot Ruddock, and his embarrassingly adolescent dalliance with radical social gadfly Ethel Mannin, come first to mind—with both these women being half the age of the seventy-year-old Yeats. These years were marked by fleeting alliances with a diverse cast of name hunters, and with would-be bohemians and hostesses, from the self-styled Lady Gwyneth Foden to the inevitable Ottoline Morrell.

37 *Letters on Poetry from W.B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 101, 197.

38 W. B. Yeats, "The Death of Lady Gregory," in Lady Gregory, *The Journals: Volume 2*, ed. Daniel J. Murphy (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987), 634.

39 Yeats, "The Death of Lady Gregory," 636.

40 It remains uncertain which of the two late poems in which Yeats names Gregory directly—"The Municipal Gallery Revisted" and "Beautiful Lofty Things" —he wrote first. The former was first to appear in print, but only in a limited circulation publication. "Beautiful Lofty Things" precedes "The Municipal Gallery Revisited" in both *New Poems* and all editions of *Collected Poems*, so I treat it here as "first".