

August 2023

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Recommended Citation

Paterson, Adrian (2023) “Dolphin-torn, gong-tormented”: Sound and the Material Imagination in Yeats’s Byzantium,” *International Yeats Studies*: Vol. 7: Iss. 1, Article 8.
Available at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/iys/vol7/iss1/8>

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“DOLPHIN-TORN, GONG-TORMENTED”: SOUND AND THE MATERIAL IMAGINATION IN YEATS’S BYZANTIUM

Adrian Paterson

A concentration on texts’ physical existence in the world led to George Bornstein developing analyses of what he termed the bibliographic codes of particular publications, determined to “examin[e] modernism in its original sites of production and in the continually shifting physicality of its texts and transmissions.”¹ Such close scrutiny by Bornstein, Jerome McGann, Patrick Collier, Jennifer Sorenson, and others continues to be inspiring, especially to researchers interested in how poems work on the page, but also in what happens when they slip its physical bonds to make their way in the world. If the bibliographic codes of type, ink, paper, page layout, book design and production, and all the political and social implications of their encounters with readerships are worth the scrutiny of book historians, how much might be conveyed through what Roland Barthes terms “the grain of the voice,” in interior readings, vocal performances, recordings, media technologies, musical settings, implied, actual, and virtual acoustic environments, and all the real and imagined audiences suggested by poems.² Conceptually, such a pursuit is really not so different: Bornstein’s analyses already confessedly draw on speech-act theory’s ideas of utterance and gesture, so gauging different kinds of reception is key to consideration of readers, viewers, and listeners, and media theory’s advances in a digital landscape show renewed interrogation of all that suggests intermedial production. Precise distinctions are anyway productively blurred when, as with Yeats’s poems, so many claim to be songs, or portray sound, or involve music in some way. What to do with a noisy but silent poem, as distinct from a would-be song in imagined performance, is one question this essay seeks to explore.

This essay thus swims in Bornstein’s wake by attempting to examine the intrinsic codes and philosophies of physical materiality and immateriality inscribed in a poem’s textual instance. Concerned to explore poems’ sense of their own “continually shifting physicality,” this essay adapts Steven Connor’s concept of modernism’s “material imagination,” which encompasses both how matter is generally imagined, and what he calls “the materiality of the imaginary,” the different ways imagination is itself implicated and described in the world it imagines. Such a lens can allow attention to a poem’s inner and outer worlds

and their relations. As Connor stresses, “The imagination in Beckett’s work is always a material imagination, always on the alert against its own tendency to levitate or refine itself out of existence.”³ At first glance this hardly seems to apply to Yeats, considered in his youth a poet of escapism, and in his old age a posthumous, if far from posthumanist poet, perhaps all too keen to refine himself out of existence, “out of nature” in “Sailing to Byzantium” (*CW1* 197). Yet to fathom his poems’ profoundly physical interest in the disintegration of matter and the processes that underly immateriality, the essay finds that it must honor the terms and obsessions of his imaginary by looking at matter and energy, stuff and sound together.

Such an approach is supported by retrospective progressions in cultural thought coalescing around what has been loosely termed the “new materialism.” In part this draws on twentieth-century scientific advances to consider how conceiving matter and energy together, for instance in quantum theory’s intertwined principles of particle and wave, need not be so contradictory, sometimes in consequence claiming “a vitality intrinsic to materiality.” This may not be so outlandish when considering the strange situation that, under current estimates, only 5 percent of the contents of the universe are to be accounted for by matter as traditionally understood, with 25 percent made up of invisible but gravitationally measurable dark matter, and as much as 70 percent taken up by the even more mysterious phenomenon of “dark energy.” So, in some way channelling contemporary physics, writers like Karen Barad argue matter “*is* [...] a doing,” meaning focus on “how it moves” can be productive.⁴

None of this is an entirely a new approach, of course. Heraclitus found all the world to be in flux, while the fifteenth-century philosopher Marsilio Ficino, translator of Plato, remarked, “Just as the intelligible world always is, but never comes into being, so the whole sensible world, as Timaeus says, is always becoming, but never truly is.”⁵ Insisting that matter was always becoming led Plato to posit ideal forms, and led the neo-Platonic master Plotinus at times to consider that matter, and what he called the measureless, suggested intrinsic evil. Under the influence of old philosophies and new scientific observations, and casting aside any moral connotations, the twentieth century returned to such theories anew, and aslant. So through discussing memory, Henri Bergson was keen to establish that “matter is here as elsewhere the vehicle of an *action* and not the substratum of a *knowledge*.”⁶ Like Plotinus though in a very different way, Bergson was often avowedly thinking about music; if for Plotinus music provided the measure of the universe, for Bergson it was a model for perception and description. Notably, once let loose on philosophy after the publication of *A Vision* (1925), both Bergson and Plotinus were read and reread by Yeats while preparing many of the poems that made up *The Tower*, *The Winding Stair*, and *Words for Music Perhaps*.

Such readings might provide a point of entry. Yeats has often been counted among sceptics of matter, and it is true that some of his reading in philosophy might support this. Yet rather to *extend* existing conceptions of matter seems very much in line with his reading in Plotinus and modern philosophy, as well as his research in hermetic authors and his admittedly idiosyncratic but animated approach to modern science. Moreover, judging by his annotations, his reading was always dialogic, even confrontational, and strongly affected by the currents and technologies of his time: all of which should be a reminder that philosophical and scientific speculations are not abstract but depend on a wider historical and cultural field, which itself vibrates with the kinds of arts, readings, and technologies in play. So how our relationships with moving matter have been affected by changing media technologies finds, for instance in Jussi Parikka's investigations of media archaeology, a verdant field.⁷ Any critical approach interested in what might seem to be the latest science (or cultural theory) cannot then anachronistically neglect historical specificity, and the vibrations of individual readings. As it happens this is a central premise of Nietzsche, "that strong enchanter" of Yeats's reading and imagination (*CL3* 284), who contends that the lack of a "historical sense" is an "inherited failing" of modern understanding: "All philosophers have a common failing, that they start out from humans of the present."⁸

This essay, therefore, partly though not exclusively through Yeats's own readings and drafts, attempts to honor a historical sense with respect to the people and philosophy of the past—especially when their concerns are *with* the past, as when the poet sets sail to Byzantium. Determined, as Nietzsche (and Bornstein) demanded, to eschew anachronism (however self-conscious) when considering the terms and images of Yeats's material imagination and the "continually shifting physicality" they present, it deliberately concentrates on such changing milieu and therefore returns to source by considering not simply contemporary readings of old problems but tracking fundamental movements in nineteenth-century understandings of matter, and their technological, formal, and aesthetic embodiments in cultural phenomena. Like Yeats, this reads through Bergson's theories and those of Plotinus, to focus more closely on Hermann Helmholtz's work on sound waves and energy. Because it is obvious that the local roots of later conceptions of energy and waveform came partly through nineteenth-century advances in acoustic science still resonating in the twentieth century. And, again, like Bergson and Plotinus, Helmholtz's pioneering advances in this field came through thinking about the nature of music.

Still, this essay is not just about *hearing* music; it concerns the wider material effects of sound. Gaston Bachelard argues that conceptually modern philosophy is too concerned to delineate opposites, overly determined by

borders of things erected by the mind, decrying the “absolutism” in what he calls “the dialectics of here and there.” Instead, he suggests, “If we multiplied images, taking them in the domains of lights and sounds, of heat and cold, we should prepare a slower ontology, but doubtless one that is more certain than the ontology which reposes on geometrical images.”⁹ Although the emphatic opening deictic of “Sailing to Byzantium” (“That is no country for old men”) seems to insist on the inviolability of here and there (and not withstanding Yeats’s recourse to the “geometrical images” of gyres), the course of the poem reveals rather the inextricability and complexity of here and there, through lights and sounds in particular. In fact, considering multiplied conceptions of stuff and a greater diversity of sensory cues and “images / That fresh images beget” seems to be just the kind of thing that Yeats’s poetry is often doing, especially when it comes to Byzantium (*CW1* 252). Sounds don’t stay put, rarely confining themselves to here and there. Moreover, a deep-rooted perceptual synaesthesia, when sight, touch, hearing, balance, and other senses merge, contributes to a wider blurring of fast definitions of self and soul, matter and energy. Reading the presence of sound in the matter of Byzantium with attention to vibrations, waveforms, and energies thus seems a helpful way of honoring new materialism’s interests and yet still probing historical specificities with regards to influences like Helmholtz. Examining this wider cultural field might just penetrate some of the mechanisms of Yeats’s material imagination to discover something of how fresh images beget themselves from sensory sources and cultural obsessions. The intention here then is to develop an analysis of the kinds of “material imagination” as well as sensory perception assumed by artists and writers when confronting the ancient city of Byzantium.

Given such broad ambitions the essay perforce appraises a very small field of texts. “Byzantium,” one of Yeats’s most scrutinized poems, is central, as so intimately involved with philosophies and conceptions of materiality. “Byzantium” appeared in *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems* (1932), a handmade Cuala Press book handprinted with hand cut paper, itself a valuable but precarious material object. It thereby looks forward to other poems collected under the title *Words for Music Perhaps* as much as it looks back to “Sailing to Byzantium,” with which it is more typically compared. Framing it through its material printed housing potentially thus sets up surprising resonances with materiality through sound and music, perhaps.

Viewed in situ like this, it quickly becomes obvious that “Byzantium” joins many of the poems in the sequence *Words for Music Perhaps* in being sequels, answer poems written self-consciously to follow something. They thus play with the notion of secondary matter, imitations, versions, revisions, copies, or offcuts subject to decay or depreciation (and in consequence revisionary material from manuscripts can be especially illuminating). As it happens,

many are also sequels to Romantic-era effusions of very different origins and audiences. The Crazy Jane poems, for instance, stem from a ballad by Mathew "Monk" Lewis recycled into nineteenth-century stage songs, broadsides, and a whole series of spin-offs.¹⁰ While apparently venturing into exotic territory, Yeats's *Byzantium* poems in fact return to ground well-trodden by poets of this Romantic period. So, following Bornstein's pioneering work on Yeats's close affinities with Shelley, this essay turns to more unfamiliar precursors from the Romantic era, finding it instructive when considering their material imagination to view "Byzantium" through slightly different frames than usual.

In a recent essay, Helen Vendler dissects Yeats's late adjectives, finding a potent classic example "in the famous compound adjectives closing 'Byzantium,'" "That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea", asking: "Can a sea of mire and blood be torn? Can a gong torment a sea? Such questions help us penetrate Yeats's imaginative moves; without understanding those we cannot understand the poem." Vendler's is a subtle and for her unusual piece ("I have normally written about Yeats's poems as wholes," she confides), focussing on the "notable and often odd adjectives in the later poetry," though she doesn't here dissect particular adjectives in "Byzantium" any further, or their relation to simpler surrounding epithets or other sources. Her questions then remain as an important challenge—trying to answer them, as she says, helps penetrate Yeats's imaginative world—"its idiosyncrasy, its leaps, its conjunction of dissimilar categories of thought, its assimilation of several categories in a single phrase."¹¹ It's interesting her language falls just as it does. For as well as noting their tendency to assimilate, and thus resist strict definitions in porously merging categories, describing the process of what happens when wholes are taken apart and remerged is precisely what these adjectives seem so concerned about. Together, they imply that physical essence rests in its tendency to be troubled and torn, rather as Crazy Jane will define the wholeness of something when "rent." One answer to such questions then is that such words are representing, as Finn says, "the music [...] of what happens" to matter under threat, reflecting the intense pressure of this collision in compressed conjunctions of material and immaterial stuff (*Ex* 26). Tracing this music, attending to its sounds and effects is therefore something the essay seeks to do.

1: BYZANTIUM

It is usual, and probably inevitable, to compare "Byzantium" to its immediate predecessor. Following an impassioned philosophical correspondence about the nature of reality, the poem can be read as reply to the artist and poet Thomas Sturge Moore:

Yes, I have decided to call the book *Byzantium*. I enclose the poem, from which the name is taken, hoping that it may suggest symbolism for the cover. The poem originates from a criticism of yours. You objected to the last verse of "Sailing to Byzantium" because a bird made by a goldsmith was just as natural as anything else. That showed me that the idea needed exposition. Gongs were used in the Byzantine church [Oct 4, 1930].¹²

A chorus of subsequent effortful commentaries indicates how little this difficult poem innocently titled "Byzantium" makes a ready explanatory gloss". A. G. Stock notes, for instance, "'Sailing to Byzantium' explains itself but 'Byzantium' [...] is powerful before it is intelligible." According to Yeats's comment, the poem has at least some interest in explicating, or rather exhibiting or exposing, the essential nature of things, natural and artificial.¹³ In fact, these poems connect at a deeper level even before Moore's critique: looking at the drafts it can be seen how elements from the conception of "Sailing to Byzantium" reemerged in the second poem. Initially, the speaker had been sailing to Byzantium

That I may look in the great church's dome
On gold-embedded saints and emperors
After the mirroring waters and the foam
Where the dark drowsy fins a moment rise
Of fish that carry souls to Paradise.¹⁴

Yet with so much in common, including such materially embedded domes and dolphins as feature here, this snatch of canceled verse really goes to show how different these poems are in atmosphere, attitude, and sheer physicality. There's a detached frieze-like calmness to the close of "Sailing to Byzantium" drowned out by the poem "Byzantium" which plays itself into sound-tortured frenzy. F. A. C. Wilson agrees the poems are "very different," though his reasoning seems to be that instead of opposing "sensual music" of the world to an intellectual singing school, "Byzantium" wholly represents "the intellectual world [...] a symbol of life after death".¹⁵ If so, with William Empson we might wonder why it is so physical, so tactile, so earthly, so viscerally present—and so noisy.¹⁶ This is probably the chief question confronting us if we are to untangle Yeats's adjectives. Though Stephen Connor differentiates Beckett from the "heroic kind of modernism represented by William Butler Yeats," finding "Beckett's work will never sanction a letting go of the world"—just when Yeats's work seems most likely to espouse exactly such a letting go, it doesn't.¹⁷ What ought to be ascetic detachment instead plunges back into visceral embodiment. As Vendler says elsewhere, attaching the poem only to the afterlife and its neo-Platonic sources is to read it "without coming to grips with the poem's

link with experience.”¹⁸ Hence, this essay tries to reconnect “Byzantium” to perceptions of the world as well as conceptions of what is beyond.

Necessarily, in so self-conscious an artistic sequel, any such link posited with experience mobilizes and works through ideas of perception and aesthetic theory. Giorgio Melchiori remarks the “strictly visual inspiration” of the first poem’s first drafts, finally concluding the poet was “thinking mainly in terms of the visual arts.”¹⁹ Well, maybe; given the importance of music to the poem’s “singing school” so definite a conclusion is to be doubted. What can be said is the afterlife of “Byzantium” is more physically present than its predecessor. Perhaps this is because it cleaves close to aesthetic theories of Byzantine world? Robert S. Nelson has influentially argued, “Because the optical rays that issue forth from the eyes were thought to touch the object seen, vision was haptic, as well as optic, tactile as well as visual. Vision thus connected one with the object seen, and, according to extramission, that action was initiated by the viewer.”²⁰

In ancient Byzantium, then, following Saint Augustine and others, to view an icon might be to reach out and touch it with the eyes. Seeing was touching. At certain moments the Yeatses’ spiritual instructors found the same facility: “In another sleep the Spirit was said to obtain the quality of touch by seeing us touching.”²¹ Recently, the idea has become so ubiquitous that, with Michael Squire, Robert Betancourt feels bound to critique “the same steadfast adherence to tactile sight,” concluding that “the primary sources demonstrate that there was no single visual theory that was by any means restrictive or canonical for the ancient world.”²² “Byzantium” then inherits what are potentially tactile but certainly shifting perceptual and aesthetic categories. Certainly, a world where flame “cannot singe a sleeve” is not straightforwardly one of touch. In this Byzantium the senses merge, going beyond even symbolism’s synaesthetic tendencies to achieve a hallucinatory fervor. The second poem transmutes visual imagery into tactile presence, creating from what might have been a flat mosaic frieze and wind-up golden music box a moving animation of singular physicality.

For many reasons, then, we might doubt the singularity of attachment to the visual arts only in “Sailing to Byzantium.” Given its status as an answer poem, it is the more curious, and telling, that Yeats’s “Byzantium” is so concerned with the physical effect of sound. In doing so it gathers to itself some new elements, not least the cathedral gong that Yeats solemnly explains to Sturge Moore has a historical precedent of use in the Byzantine church. This piece thus proposes that sound, and more than this, musical sound, has a profound influence on the poem’s conception of materiality; and that Yeats draws on historical sources as well as contemporary science in making it. While taking account of the preoccupations of “Sailing to Byzantium,” then, it is important also to reckon contrasts between the poems. Finding other perspectives with

which to compare “Byzantium” might be both conceptually and aesthetically illuminating. The sound of that gong matters.

2: ROMANTIC BYZANTIUMS

Yeats was not the first poet to write a poem called “Byzantium.” As it happens, exactly one hundred years before his attempt there was a spike in numbers, as Byzantium was the given theme of that year’s (1830) poetry competition, the Chancellor’s Medal, at Cambridge. Several were separately published in years following, by the university itself, or as pamphlets for circulation among friends and acquaintances, in part advertising the talents of lawyers beginning their careers. These efforts were hardly revolutionary but reveal an Orientalist preoccupation with eastern cities as representative of empire only too legible in the expectations of prize-setters, authors, and audiences. (Other themes for the competition included Delphi, Jerusalem, and the North West Passage; before we mock too swiftly, it should be remembered that “Timbuctoo: A Poem,” which won the prize the year before [1829] was written by a certain A. Tennyson of Trinity College, Cambridge.)

As if to emphasize just how much Yeats’s early Byzantine efforts were potentially playing with cliché, dome and waters naturally receive a good deal of attention in these poems too. The couplets of B. A. Marshall’s attempt take the waters to symbolize a wider Romantic-Platonic harmony that unfortunately tends to dull placidity:

All nature then is harmonized and calm
While the light breeze distils a smoothy balm²³

William Chapman Kinglake’s exclamatory style provides a bit more tidal energy at the opening, finding like “Sailing to Byzantium” some sonic interest in the abstracts of time and eternity:

Roll on thou Bosphorus! – in wrath or play,
Rous’d by the storm, or gilded by the ray,
With thy blue billows to the boundless sea
Roll on, like Time unto Eternity [...]
Roll on, the rock-build City shall decay
Man sleep in Death, and kingdoms pass away;
But thou unbow’d shall steal, like Music, by
Or lift thy Titan strength, and dare the sky.²⁴

While echoing the sentiment of Shelley's "Ozymandias," it is interesting that the poem features the action of water and music so centrally in expressing time. Naturally these poems are derivative, and while generally drawn to light, within quotation marks the Reverend J. Venables even shows a cursory Romantic interest in the music of birdsong:

In lordly towers the worm hath crept along
And the night bird hath sung her dismal song²⁵

It would probably be a mistake to read too much into any perceived coincidence of birds or towers, beyond a common ground in Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" and Shelley (notes for *The Winding Stair* record that "Shelley uses towers constantly as symbols" [CW1 607]). What might be said of all of these Byzantium poems, their poets (and many readers) likely never having been to the city in question, is that these are consciously literary and accepted as such (Oscar Wilde was unusual as well as fortunate that for the 1873 Oxford University Newdigate Poetry Prize the theme of "Ravenna" arrived after he'd just been to the city, and he was well able to picture its Byzantine basilicas and scenery, and a fanciful arrival on horseback).²⁶ Undoubtedly, all these Byzantiums had bookish sources in common. The same is true of Yeats's poems, which, notwithstanding his visits to Byzantine mosaics in Ravenna, Venice, and Sicily (and neo-Byzantine designs in Stockholm), were compiled from books. Many texts, like Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and various puddles of spilt Shelley, Keats, Coleridge and Byron, Yeats shared with his more obscure Romantic-period forbears. So much is clear when in the 1823 preface to his earlier poem Edward Poole quotes *Childe Harold* and begins a reflection with Gibbon's title contending how "pregnant with interest" is "the gradual decline and fall of an ancient empire":

On viewing all that gave splendour to dominion, and sublimity to grandeur
sinking into ruin; on beholding that ruin complete; the retrospection of
the past compared with the reality of the present cannot fail of inspiring a
melancholy satisfaction, whilst the mind pours forth its chastened soliloquy
over the ashes of departed magnificence and beauty.²⁷

Using the word "that" with considerably less rhetorical effectiveness than Yeats, his poem strains to declare:

but know
That Byzantium, though she holds but yet one soul
Still is Byzantium!²⁸

But these claims always come with the knowledge “she” is “doomed, doomed, to fall.” Such a consciously historicized aesthetic emerges as in common to many Byzantium poems. So, Kinglake’s poem (the winner of the prize), views the city with a familiar knowing anachronism:

still my soul surveys
A Vision of Delight, and still I gaze
Proud City on the past.²⁹

Though its bird will even mention what’s “to come,” as in “Sailing to Byzantium,” it is clear, that like many observers of literary Byzantium, that this poet has sailed into the past by means of careful research.

Like Yeats’s “Byzantium,” though, some poets did try to get up close to the past. While also referring directly to Gibbon, Venables’s “Byzantium” proceeds to construct in the mind’s eye a city famously best viewed from the water:

Then rose bright shapes of living marble there –
Then burnished domes pierced the profound of air.
And roofs of gold shone from the tower-crowned steep
In the blue surface of the silent deep.³⁰

Domes, water, gold, marble, air all feature in common with Yeats’s “Byzantium.” This topographical vision of elements arrives as if from a painter’s view. This passage likely draws from the fashion for watercolors or the cloth backdrops of vastly popular public dioramas. The same year most of these poems were published (1831), Drury Lane’s blockbuster exhibition *Venice and Its Adjacent Islands* featured a sequence of city scenes painted by Charles Stanfield on translucent calico cloth illuminated from behind, achieving new effects with light. It was because of such visual experiences (all “the many theatre scenes, Dioramas, Panoramas, and all other ramas”) that when he arrived in 1857 the poet and painter Edward Lear found his understanding of foreign cities like Venice came previewed, preexperienced.³¹ As a much more accessible destination than Constantinople, Venice, which had controlled the eastern city, would be key to the rediscovery of Byzantine art.

If it seems unlikely these early Byzantium poems are direct sources for Yeats, they represent illuminating parallels and contrasts. Such reciprocities of poet and painter would be axiomatic to Ruskin, who remarked, “Turner saw things as Shelley or Keats did.”³² But it was in visiting and discovering Venice’s local details that fired Ruskin’s championing of Venetian Gothic and the city’s Byzantine survivals. *The Stones of Venice* concluded it was a “mistaken supposition” “that manual labour is a degradation when it is governed by

intellect," inspiring Byzantine patterned revivals in pre-Raphaelite handcraft: William Morris declaring Byzantine art "new-born Gothic."³³ In his turn, and in honor, Yeats's valorization of Byzantine design and handcraft workers referred in *A Vision* to the specific origin of the mosaics at Saint Mark's in Venice from Byzantine illuminated gospel manuscripts, its unified interior, "the work of many that seemed the work of one, that made building, picture, pattern, metal-work of rail and lamp, seem but a single image" (AVB 280).³⁴

So it was that the arts and crafts focus of the intervening nineteenth century encouraged Yeats's ideas about "image," which almost seem to sanction Melchiori's comments on the visual arts. It was finding descriptions and illustrations in books and then following up on focussed, guided visits that probably encouraged their illustration by fragments, a close-up mosaic preoccupation that supports the multiart, handcrafted, anonymous picture of artistic labor, but perhaps in its concentration on details challenges the idea of a single image, except as experienced by the overwhelmed visitor in totalizing impression. No doubt as a result of this aesthetic previsioning, Yeats's versions of Byzantium don't always make clear what is real and what is art: the ekphrases of "Sailing to Byzantium" subtly, glimmeringly, refer to the artistic world and real world together; so the careful phrasing of "sages standing in god's holy fire / As in the gold mosaic of a wall" leaves open the question of whether wall is really, physically there: precisely the same question, it is worth observing, about the sages (CWI 197). Above all, and in this not unlike the Romantic-era effusions, in the sequel poem "Byzantium" we come upon a city in déjà vu, already preexperienced through layers of art and artifice, in this case including Yeats's own previous poem. And yet, while similarly dependent on past visions, "Byzantium" is qualitatively different again. By now we have really arrived: we understand the city intimately by being guided through the midst of all its sights and sounds. Artwork here is not evoked by simile, but in or near death has come to magnificent terrifying life. And this, it seems to me, is not only a matter of aesthetics or historical sources, but a change in the understanding of matter.

Given the matter, in both senses, of "Byzantium," such contrasts soon become tangible. There's something immediate about a city that is not contemplated from afar, even as the visionary outcome of a quest, but instead inhabited, present tense, forming a site of disorienting direct experience. Some of these differences, of course, can be explained by historical setting. The poems are set at different times, in different milieu, different Byzantiums; Yeats's first, according to *A Vision*, in the idealized age of the emperor Justinian, "early Byzantium," a unique moment when "religious, aesthetic, and practical life were one" (AVB 280). The second poem by contrast takes place nearly five hundred years later, as the original theme explained:

Subject for a poem.

Describe Byzantium as it is in the system towards the end of the first Christian millennium. ~~The worn ascetics on the walls contrasted with their splendour.~~ Flames at the street corners where the soul is purified. Birds of hammd gold singing in the golden trees. In the harbour dolphins there beckon to the wailing dead that they may carry them to paradise. [3]

A walking mummy – a se spritual refinement and perfection, amid a rigid world, a [?] sigh of wind – Autumn leaves in the streets. The divine life born amidst [?natures] decay. April 30, 1930.³⁵

Yeats's published self can seem inevitable where the drafts are only provisional. This note was tidied up and altered, apparently to fit the final poem, when *Pages from a Diary Written 1930* was published to make a little book for the Cuala Press (and later included in *Explorations*) with the claim "these subjects have been in my head for some time" (*Ex* 290). No longer fitting the aesthetic of the finished poem, the worn ascetics, rigid world, and autumn leaves (and some associated spiritual moralizing) are gone from this later version, while dolphins not having the anatomy to beckon instead are "offering their backs" to the dead. Even so, in these late, decadent, passing times, there is a present-participle simultaneity to the action that intimates more than just decay. This is audible in all the singing, wailing, and sighing here. All of which rather suggests the poem was conceived together with its sound-world.

Compare this with Poole's "Byzantium: A Dramatic Poem," set dramatically during the fifteenth-century fall of Constantinople, at that final decisive iconoclasm of Islam. It is dramatic in genre, too, allowing scenes to be played, as the poem states, at the '*Cathedral of St Sophia – Night*', or on the ramparts like *Hamlet*, picturing as on some imagined stage the present-tense doom of the city. Like Yeats's later poem, this admits the presence of death in drunken corruptions and ghostly night walkers:

My midnight walks crossed ever and anon
By some foul demon from the other world
Grinning with ghostly pleasure, as 'twould cry
"Death is at hand!"³⁶

These lines disclose a contrasting theology, but a comparable proximate presence of would-be noisy ghosts to meet the speaker. In its own night walks, Yeats's poem is rather more generous toward its spiritual conductor, who naturally recalls Dante's purgatorial guide Virgil, but the figure possesses a syntactically and semantically uncertain presence:

Before me floats an image, man or shade,
Shade more than a man, more image than a shade;

For Hades' bobbin bound in mummy-cloth
 May unwind the winding path;
 A mouth that has no moisture and no breath
 Breathless mouths may summon (CW1 252).

If this circling does privilege the image as it claims, it could be said to be following the dictates of Byzantine custom. Michael Squire's work has directly contrasted the period's theological aesthetic to the text-based Protestant reformation and Byzantium's own iconoclastic ructions. This "Byzantium not only declared images equal to texts, but went even further and privileged the image, claiming that words could lie but images conveyed the truth [...] This was not an easy position to maintain" notes Averil Cameron, drily, especially with a series of iconoclasms from within and without challenging this orthodoxy.³⁷ Yet does the poem really privilege the image? If so, what could this image look like? Following Augustine's understanding of sight, could we reach out and touch it with our eyes? It would seem not. Both words and images here rest on shifting sands of syntax, showing an evident philosophical concern with blurring too-defined categories. Finally, any image is simply impossible to see: it is a self-identifying image of itself only. The reader, like the persona, is confronted by a presence, not venerating an icon, confounded by meeting a floating mummy, not studying a mosaic. Rather than calling up the dim cultural memory of backlit dioramas, translucent cloths all color, or the bright reflected light of iconic golden sages, in Yeats's new Byzantium a closely bound, strangely embodied physicality must somehow be unwound.

"Byzantium" is thus more open about its holes and doubts. Its shifting definitions probe the limitations of representation, the inconsistencies in perceptual theories, the gaps of stuff—and of its double, art. Words here are especially in doubt, insufficient for the task, mistrusted to represent. And just as the syntax turns on itself the shape described here is unassimilable, ungraspable. Paul de Man famously described Shelley's "shape all light" from "The Triumph of Life" as being "referentially meaningless," concluding the poem was a series of "repetitive erasures."³⁸ Even if this were so, the figure does its job in representing something ineffable. Next to this, the syntax of "Byzantium" seems deliberately to emphasize the indefinability of its referents, and its repeated self-corrections do not erase what has gone before, admitting something like Wittgenstein's sense of the limits of language but leaving referential possibilities wide open. Already the poem starts to shape the idea it is not in words or things that substance will endure but forces, cycles, energies, anticipating Vendler's aesthetic conception of the next stanza's "shuddering poise of energy."³⁹ In the broadest possible sense this is compatible with post-quantum-theory claims by new materialism or new science that matter exists

rather as an energy, a waveform. The difference, of course, is that the poem here makes no claims about matter as it is generally understood—language is instead pushed beyond usual understandings of sense, to refer to the impossible miraculous existence of the afterlife.

How can such a floating mummy have such an effect on this world or the next? One answer, as it prepares to speak, is by mouth. As I've written elsewhere, it's curious in Yeats that a literal materiality in textiles should come so entangled with orality.⁴⁰ Except this is a weird kind of orality, an almost disembodied mouth apparently without its usual living quality, breath. In an interesting coincidence, scholars of Byzantine music were, through the 1920s, wrestling with the meaning of puzzling "voiceless" (*αψωβον*) signs in ancient neume notation. Finally, it was concluded that rather than modifying the pitch, these symbols must have rhythmic value.⁴¹ By thus associating themselves with the pronunciation of words, these voiceless neumes might have confirmed Yeats's sense of the inextricability of words and music in Byzantium, as in Ireland and Greece and elsewhere. "A mouth that has no moisture and no breath" might still (as in the line's own pattern) articulate itself rhythmically and meaningfully.

Whatever the precise, rhythmic charge of its voice it does seem in the poem as if the mummies' open mouth has philosophical value. In this case ancient Egyptian sources confirm the association. Critics have made much of the reference to Greek myth in "Hades' bobbin," but although the Greek author Plutarch is a major source for the Isis and Osiris regeneration stories tied so closely with the revivifying of the body, they are as Egyptian as their mummies in origin, as confirmed by the *Golden Dawn* and studied in-depth by Yeats, MacGregor Mathers, and Florence Farr at the British Museum (so much is evident from the "mummy truths" of "All Souls' Night").⁴² Archaeologists had long recognized that the lower jaw of embalmed corpses falls down in a "mummy gape," opening their mouths.⁴³ And the way Egyptian mummies were wound mattered: to the left, invariably, implying an eastern orientation. For years anatomists had conversely to unroll mummies in the other direction to discover the secrets of what went on inside (now CT scans do the job). With a breathless mouth gaping before us, the implication now is real answers are not to be found like that—a literal body might not be there, the unwinding path followed another way. More subtly, at Egyptian funerals, a ritual prayer was performed and a feather poised before the face in a ceremony called the Opening of the Mouth, with the aim of restoring the possibility of breath to the deceased.⁴⁴ After many trials in the afterlife, the deceased's purified heart was balanced with another feather, in the process becoming "justified," or "true of voice," as Farr recalled significantly to Yeats in a letter from Sri Lanka.⁴⁵ Enlightenment therefore came via orality,

according to the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*. Gaping “breathless mouths” might say much worth hearing.

So now, once again, in Yeats's *Byzantium* as in the ancient world, mummies can speak, even if their breath was not literally the transparent stuff of air, but something even more immaterial. Judging by the drafts, this strange image is indeed speaking, as here it is the mummy that “Cries out the summons.” This, too, has an ancient analogue. In their tombs, Egyptian mummies were accompanied by canopic jars containing their viscera, in case needed in the afterlife. For aristocratic figures they also came with ornaments and other worldly goods, and significantly, model figures, *ushabti* or answerers, who replied to the call of their masters for labor in the afterlife. That these worker figures often carried oars or musical instruments showed how nearly death could be like life. The final poem retains this eerie centripetal force, calling us all like these tomb-dwelling answerers to attention, to worship, perhaps like the poet to acclamation:

I hail the superhuman:
I call it death-in-life and life-in-death (*CW1* 252).

The poet's job here is, vocally, to answer the summons. Just as this chiasmic reference to Coleridge and Heraclitus tries to emphasize a renewed continuity of ancient philosophical thought, like the winding cloth its chiasmic turning back seems to emphasize a renewed continuity of sound. In response to this summoning image, the poet hails and calls reflexively, the voice actively operative in whatever this world might be said to be.

That the circling syntax of the stanza before conspicuously repeats in the next to describe **bird**, **handiwork**, **miracle**, only confirms its supernatural significance, as words wind around another nodal point giving corresponding shape to its form. This gyrating movement spins mummified body and artistic bird into corresponding movement, through a process of (failed) representations, making them less static objects of adoration than vortexes, shapes of sense, which rather explains and exemplifies the mummy's oral function as a guide to this world, exerting a more powerful call than Ruskin's detailed guidebooks. Hence the mummy's breathless yet apparently perceptible summons and now, the paradoxical phenomenon of the handcrafted golden bird, a loud miracle, its definitions wound about it yet no mere windup mechanism.

Miracle, bird, or golden handiwork,
More miracle than bird or handiwork,
Planted on the star-lit golden bough,

Can like the cocks of Hades' crow,
 Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud
 In glory of changeless metal
 Common bird or petal
 And all complexities of mire or blood (CW1 252)

Rather than placidly half-lulling its audience (as Sturge Moore claimed, like Homer and Shakespeare, the last stanza of "Sailing to Byzantium" did), this bird noisily wakes us to our feeble reality. From conception in the drafts this birdsong was already audible, as the bird "mutters," "carrols" [*sic*], as well as "sings" "What the birds of Hades know."⁴⁶ Now, with a cacophonous k-sounding squawking rendition of farmyard jeering, it "can like the cocks of Hades crow." Or through an astonishing transitive verb of sonic defiance, can "scorn aloud / In glory of changeless metal," with brazen permanence apparently disdaining all the passing matter of the body. Saving the presence of Yeats's looming occult moon such a sound might be almost futurist; anyway, its ancient golden technology now sounds highly modernist in its brassy, rhythmic, metallic *chante mécanique*.⁴⁷

However we account for it, through the historical schema of *A Vision*, or the poem's attempt to reply to Sturge Moore, sound in this poem has undergone a marked change. In his contemporary introduction to *The Resurrection*, Yeats remarks "it has seemed to me of late that the sense of spiritual reality comes whether to the individual or to crowds from some violent shock" (*Ex* 399). How much this shock registers in "Byzantium" sonically can be seen by comparing the sedate perspective of earlier poems. So Poole's drama includes a sonic tribute:

Even now
 I hear the slow and measured step – the chaunt
 Byzantium's maidens raise, borne on the gale
 As the last sounds of music o'er the sea
 Dying melodiously away – Virgin,
 Receive the hymn humbly attuned to thee⁴⁸

Though supposedly addressed to a pagan goddess, music here plays a reconciliatory role, gently allowing any differences in theology to melt away, and this song potentially to elide into a Christian hymn for a Virgin mother. Elsewhere for Kinglake, the prospect of the right kind of music does provide an antidote to baser sensual instincts:

O Stambol! thou who once didst clasp the Sign,
 What if again Sophia's holy shrine
 Should, deaf to creeds of sensual joy and strife,

Re-echo those words whose gift is life?
 If down those aisles the billowing Music's swell
 Should pour the song of Judah, and should tell
 Of sinners met in Penitence to kneel⁴⁹

Here through Christian music, hymns, and psalms, the song of Judah is called to replace alleged Islamic sensuality with a cleansing rationality. "Sailing to Byzantium" had also accused the living world of being "caught in that sensual music" (even though its afterlife might replay it), calling for a more purifying kind of singing (*CWI* 197). The deeper realities of Yeats's sound-obsessed "Byzantium" instead assault us with the irrationality and irresistibility of sonic power. In such a reading, Yeats's second poem might almost seem to travel in the opposite direction to the first, toward a spiritual music that is still sensual. Certainly, although apparently scorning living matter, by exciting plunging dolphins and souls to dance in ecstatic frenzy, the poem does anything but leave music and sense behind. Whether through cloth's unwinding summons or metal's indifference, readers have entered a vastly different sound-world, with direct effects on physical and metaphysical reality, finding amid a sense of sonic shock a music that seems to scorn matter yet affects the senses. In the system, it would seem, after all, that sound comes closest to having measurable effects on both worlds—even if, in its real but paradoxical way, this force is not directly operating by touch.

3: GONGS AND THE SENSATIONS OF TONE

So, what force could operate so dynamically and profoundly on all the living and the dead? Something of its effect can be gauged when considering the gong, and its marked persistence throughout the poem. This "great cathedral gong" bookends a decade beginning with the great Christ Church Bell of "All Soul's Night." While Charles Poole, with unconscious anachronism, expounded "the gloomy bell tolls forth the hour," Yeats's magpie research tendencies can leave scholars embarrassed.⁵⁰ As he noted to Sturge Moore, Yeats had tracked down Byzantine gongs, directly marking an important passage about them in his copy of an acknowledged bookish source for Byzantium: W. G. Holmes's *The Age of Justinian and Theodora: A History of the Sixth Century* (1907). There can be found a description of the totemic effect of this religious instrument's monumental sound, arriving "at the boom of the great *semantron*, a sonorous board suspended in the porch of each church, and beaten with mallets by a deacon."⁵¹ So the Byzantine gong was a wooden instrument fashioned not, as some have assumed, as a single, round metallic answer, never mind a series of midnight bell chimes. Instead, lending itself to rapid striking in repeated

rhythmic patterns, the *semantron*'s hammered beats produced something dynamic, energetic, variable, a sound with relatively fast aural decay, but, potentially, if it was continuously played, of long duration (historically speaking even longer, Holmes's note confirming what is still true in some monasteries, "The instrument is still in use in the Greek church"). Resounding at the poem's beginning and end, the sound of this continually, maybe continuously beaten gong pervades the sound-world of the poem: for T. R. Henn it "reverberates back over the first movement, symbolizing perhaps in its violent conjunction the meeting of the religions of the East and West," something traditionally placed in Byzantium.⁵² If so, it marks a notable assimilation of Western and Eastern music, not necessarily in purely Christian harmony (its banging drone noise seems far from decorously-harmonized nineteenth-century hymns). So far, so grand, yet the drafts encourage also a conjunction between religious and secular worlds; between sensual and sounded:

And silence falls on the cathedral gong
 And the drunken harlot's song
 When Death like sleep beats down the harlot's song⁵³

Associating the two sounds in asyndeton brings them together, marking the importance of secular music in Byzantium—and mirrors Holmes's own turning to the gong directly from the "ribaldry and obscenity" of Byzantine theater with its "lewd songs and dances," "a contemporary music hall, without its enforced decency."⁵⁴ The drafts singular "drunken harlot's song" attracts a frisson of prostitution that certainly survives into the plural "night-walkers' song." And, like the odd further canceled line where Death "beats down" this song, the final revision implies a musical revelry continues "after" for a time among this group even after the pause of the religious *semantron*, their cadences echoing about the emptying streets. In other words, secular and religious sounds overlap, and there builds a residual sonic charge carried through this night-time silence, the more emphasized when the word silence disappears from the final poem. This is hardly a quiet atmosphere, whatever the looming presence of moonlit cathedral dome might do momentarily to dissipate the cathedral gong and sounds on the streets. Emissaries from Kiev to the city of Constantinople confessed on being confronted by the sounds and immensities of the Eucharist in the Hagia Sophia Cathedral "we knew not whether we were in Heaven or Earth [...] and we know not how to tell of it."⁵⁵ Any opposition the poem sets up between secular and religious worlds comes to seem less pronounced when recalling Yeats's comparable description of "a building like St Sophia where all, to judge by the contemporary description, pictured ecstasy" (AVB 193). The poem rather conceives parallel forms of

ecstasy, ways of standing outside or leaving the body altogether. It is not something the poem tells us directly, but it seems to me its sonic capacity makes it plain ecstasy comes in many forms: religious, sexual, and in that moment of transition between life and death.

Through scornful birdsong, through dancing flames, this sonic, gong-derived charge continues through that key word resonance. Perhaps the decisive difference between this and previous Byzantium poems is that this gong's resonance brings with it all the nineteenth-century advances in acoustic science and aesthetics describing the action of sound. Hermann von Helmholtz's *The Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music* (1863) transformed understandings by scientific observation, but also musical acuity. An accomplished Beethoven pianist who collaborated with the piano manufacturer Steinway and Joseph Joachim the violin virtuoso, Helmholtz was acutely sensitive to pitch and resonance, railing against the "evils of tempered notation" and resisting new mid-century compromises in standard tuning, though they enabled Wagner's enharmonic chromaticism. In other words, he looked back aesthetically to look forward scientifically, concentrating on the stuff of sound, finding "in music the sensations of tone are the material of the art." This meant that "music stands in a much closer connection with pure sensation than any of the other arts. The latter rather deal with what the senses apprehend, that is with the images of natural objects".⁵⁶ Only musical tones operated directly upon the body and brain, their affect communicated through the resonant air to take place within the ear itself. In one of his major claims Helmholtz tried to show how, when examined closely, tones' simple physical properties produced direct physiological and then psychological effects on the self: "It is not enough," he stressed, "that the auditory nerve sense the tone; the soul must also reflect upon it; hence my previous distinction between the material and the mental [*geistige*] ear." As Hui remarks, "The coincidence of harmonic overtones, which was for Helmholtz the basis of harmonic consonance in music, was not only a physical, material, phenomenon, but was also reflected by an immaterial element of the sensory perception apparatus."⁵⁷ Like gravity seemed to Newton, this action operating at a distance can seem magical, otherworldly; that it could have such profound inner effects might indeed make it *geistige*, ghostly, immaterial, spiritual, as well as a mental, intellectual process. (Considering the deepest sensing powers of the soul, Yeats's spirit instructors also surprisingly concluded "during the shiftings the spirit can only hear us and use our hearing. Hearing is intellectual").⁵⁸ Helmholtz's interest in enumerating frequencies, oscillations, overtones, cross-harmonies, and dissonances examined both the basis of music and the apprehension of the perceiving self, bringing together the material and immaterial, the physical and metaphysical worlds.⁵⁹

All the while Helmholtz was hoping to draw together syncretically the sciences of mechanics, light, heat, electricity, magnetism (and sound) as manifestations of single force or energy. If his work didn't conclude, it anticipated Maxwell on the electromagnetic field, and Hertz's discovery of radio waves; no wonder the work of his pupils like Max Planck on thermodynamics would form the basis for quantum theory and its investigations of fundamental forces operating in matter. Here Helmholtz's emphasis on tone's "sensation," the nature, position, and functioning of the perceiving body and receiving instruments was vital. One illustration of what he meant can be found in what he termed "combination tones," where the particular resonances of two tones sounded together created for the perceiver a third tone, whose frequencies could be calculated as if objectively existing, though only audible in the ear canal. This kind of thing led to him to develop a sign theory of perception, in some ways akin to later theories of poetic and linguistic symbolism, and more practically to produce Helmholtz resonators, open-ended metal domes that plucked from the air particular overtones or harmonic resonances isolating and amplifying them through resonant chambers. When sounds produced waves of complex frequencies separable into musical harmonics that acted physically, physiologically, and psychologically upon and within the self, they were operating in harmony with the universe's principles. Helmholtz's influence was so widespread that in *The Talking Machine: A Technical Aesthetic Essay* (1924) Rudolph Lothar could say "Everything flows, Heraclitus says, and in the light of our modern worldview we may add: everything flows in waves".⁶⁰

Even before his radio broadcast experience, Barry Shiels suggests, Yeats's work was affected by technologies of communication, especially invested in spaces of interference – and Margaret Mills Harper and Jill Galvan have noted how close conceptions of spiritual phenomena and mediumship approach the ideas and vocabulary of electromagnetic science and technology.⁶¹ That so much of this emerged, with such effect on modernism's understanding of material and immaterial worlds, from Helmholtz's investigations into musical tone and acoustic resonance might be further explored. It's not clear how much Yeats encountered Helmholtz directly, but Ezra Pound certainly did, and it was just as they were touring Byzantine mosaics in Sicily together in 1925 that Pound was expounding his own holistic theories of Great Bass, using Helmholtz's conception of waves of frequency as the basis for the idea that all tones derive from rhythmic vibration (deducing from this that the poet's province, rhythm, lay at the bottom of all sound).⁶² Although this represented Pound's own singular interpretation, it was founded on Helmholtz's now universally-accepted observations about musical tone—and in Pound's conception of its operation, was not so far from the mechanism of the semantron gong, which depended on many individual rhythmic beats to keep up a continuous sound.

Notably, like both Yeats and Pound, Helmholtz was sympathetic to non-Western musical ideas; his interest in different tunings from history led him to prize scales in Arabic and Persian music, and research the pure tunings associated with Pythagoras, the ancient Greeks using, he said, “knowledge derived from Egyptian priests.”⁶³ If for Pound this accorded with his troubadour researches, and renewed modern interest in instrumental tuning, Yeats’s interest in what “world-famous golden-thighed Pythagoras” was measuring when he “fingered on a fiddle-stick or strings” emerged in his contemporary poem “Among School Children” (CW1 220). For a sensibility like Yeats’s, tone’s access to such older, eastern Hermetic knowledge just might, if unwound by mummy cloth, create that vortex of East and West classically described by Byzantium and its music. In this way the scientific study of resonance illustrated by metal domes and the operation of the chambers of the inner ear might find resonant tones in bird metal and cathedral dome, maybe even surviving into “night-walker’s song” or the plain-chants of the Byzantine church.⁶⁴

Admittedly, in this reading the word and concept of “resonance” is asked to do a lot of work. Unterecker argues that “the poem is most remarkable perhaps for the sheer bulk of its repeated terms,” which mount and resolve in the last two stanzas especially. Though as a term “resonance” is not repeated, and it is stated “night resonance recedes,” as the blended tones of the rhyming **gong** and **song** dissipate, they don’t disappear. Indeed, the proliferation of such recurring terms (long words like “**Emperor**” and “**complexity**,” but also “**fury**,” “**blood**,” “**dance**,” “**agony**,” “**flame**,” and “**gong**” itself) seems to mark a demonstration of its continuing action. Some energy is causing self-propelled fuelless flames to burn of themselves (now with no need of any metal steel to light them) and bodies to dance themselves away:

Where blood-begotten spirits come
And all complexities of fury leave
Dying into a dance
An agony of trance
An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve (CW1 252)

As complexity seeks simplicity, multisyllabled compound adjectives tend to become the single-syllabled principles of **dance**, **trance**, **flame**—and again, in the turns of language, an energy, a pattern, a spiraling vortex is harnessed that extends way beyond physical materiality, beyond even the conspicuously material textile of a sleeve. It is hard to characterize precisely how the music behind this ultimate harmony might sound to human ear, and the poem does not directly try. Only the leaping of “spirit after spirit” in an attempt to attain it recalls that in Byzantine musical notation, neumas were called *somatas* (bodies) when the melody only moved one step up or down but *pneumatas* (spirits,

breaths) when leaping greater intervals.⁶⁵ In this way body and spirit are moved by the energies of music, just as in the poem.

What seems certain is that, whirled together with the repeated ethereal **spirit** and **images**, physical things somehow persist amid this violent ecstasy, causing the repeats of the words **mire**, **blood**, **smithies** in the poem's final stanza. As "Byzantium" closes it returns to where spirit meets stuff, all combining to pitch us into a place of peculiar resonance:

Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood
 Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,
 The golden smithies of the Emperor!
 Marbles of the dancing floor
 Break bitter furies of complexity,
 Those images that yet
 Fresh images beget,
 That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea (CW1 252)

Unusually, this final verse borrows Romantic-style exclamations; there must be a lot to get excited about. The change in the draft from marble to smithies fittingly freights the word with the process of making—these are not rock formations, but inlaid stone pavements carefully made permanent by a set of "architects and artificers" out of Gibbon and certified by Holmes (who notes "the Forum" is called "sometimes, from its finished marble floor 'The Pavement'").⁶⁶ It also charges the image with Pythagorean resonance: it was the sound of a smith's hammering on an anvil with differently weighted instruments that (apocryphally) led Pythagoras to his observations of ratio in music, and thence to the glorious music of the spheres expounded in Plato's *Timaeus*, which Yeats reread in the 1920s. There and in Aristotle he found the Pythagorean insistence that by a combination of opposites the soul made up a harmony: "*harmonia*, they say, is a blending and putting together of opposites, and the body is constituted out of opposites."⁶⁷ This not only confirmed the instructors' view, but potentially also the contradictory violence of such an operation, something the last two stanzas of the poem seem explicitly to explore, just at the moment when bodies are pulled apart – perhaps by electro-acoustic energies.⁶⁸ All these ideas were useful when attempting to hammer thoughts into unity, though actually as Yeats well knew, acoustic response depends not on the size of the hammer, but its dynamic action on vibrating materials.

Hammering smiths were conduits to wider truths. Yeats had desired to spend a month in Antiquity and talk to "some philosophical worker in mosaic who could answer all my questions." Why? Because such a Byzantine smith, "the supernatural descending nearer to him than to Plotinus even," could harness a "delicate skill" that might create "a lovely flexible presence like that of a perfect

human body" (AVB 280). Noting that "Matter does in some sense underly action," Plotinus had pronounced "Matter is without body; body is of earlier date and merely includes Matter," body being therefore at "less distance from the divine."⁶⁹ The hammering smiths maybe seem to observe this distinction, at least in so far as the bodies they are involved in creating and destroying may be made of older stuff, animated by older forces: not simply static friezes, these soul-bodies move, dance, perhaps dissolve, animated by agonizing resonant tones.

Whatever the precise neo-Platonic distinctions between matter and body, Yeats's poem is not one to insist on distinctions. Nor did the science: when Helmholtz "defines a musical tone as a specific type of sound wave, product of a rapid and perfectly regular periodic motion of a sonorous body" a potent analogy is drawn with all sonorous bodies. After his emphasis on the reception of sound within the body, the *geistige* process of listening, it is brought home, making analogy almost an identity. Because Helmholtz answered Pythagoras by stressing operation and reception rather than origin: it was "physically indifferent whether observations are made on stretched strings, spirals of brass wire, or violin strings," still "the ear resolves all complex sounds into pendular oscillations, according to the law of sympathetic vibration."⁷⁰ So as his calculations (related to the Pythagorean ratios of Plato's *Timaeus*) proved, whether using lengths of metal strings, hollow spaces, or the wooden boards of the semantron, what mattered was the action of causing resonance through the motions of elastic bodies, which, creating physically measurable sound waves, transferred tones to air or to bodies of water, and thence animated human (and animal) bodies, through a comparable operation and with related energy.

So the phenomenon of organized sound, just like the gong or the smiths' decorated marble does in the poem, acts on bodies physically, even so far as to alter their materiality: to vary the nature of matter. As Edward Engelberg claimed, "The whole poem is an illustration of reverberating drums."⁷¹ Certainly both smithies and gong require hammering, and the end of the poem reels from their combined reverberation. The smithies noisily begin the breaking of materiality, "breaking the flood" and thrusting forth a series of forcible relations, proceeding to imply that, in the strange parallel syntax of the stanza, their bodily-imbued products, like the decorated "marbles of the dancing floor" at once break and animate gong, dolphins, and dancers. Indeed Finneran comments that "as a number of critics have noted, the power of the word 'break' is [...] overwhelmed by the power of the final images [and] the poem concludes with the cyclical flux itself."⁷² Whether a reading privileges strict grammar or the weight of the closing words, somehow a force from stationary bodies that are hammered transfers to animated elastic bodies through transfer of energy, inextricably interconnecting them. One obvious method is through

sonic waves, themselves an essential part of Byzantine understandings of the universe. Diogenes Laertius had noted: “We hear when the air between the sounding body and the hearer is struck in the form of a sphere and then forms waves and strikes upon the hearing, just as water in a reservoir forms many circles when a stone is thrown into it.”⁷³

The emphasis on physical striking and waves in this description stands up to later scrutiny, as well as flooding Yeats’s poem. The flood and its breaking repercussions operate in waves: through water and in waves of sound. This is at once a destructive and creative process, an overwhelming energy transfer extraordinarily capable of action at a distance but also intimately close to bodily perception and understanding.

In some way this creative process also seems analogous to the poetic process: hence “Those images that yet / Fresh images beget” (CW1 252). Normally this might suggest a static visual process of perception and re-creation. In context, however, it seems energized by dynamic reproductive forces, the flux and cycles Finneran observes, and Diogenes and Helmholtz’s waves of sound. So can any “images” subsequently produced in the process be helpfully defined by sound? Maybe, if musical tones reduce matter to essentials, simplifying frequencies, harmonizing ratios, in the process generating “images” with some kind of real, perceivable but intangible existence—and potentially, then, a real but perceptual presence like the combination tones or aural images Helmholtz identified not present in the material world but indelibly produced by wave interference in the ear.⁷⁴

At least two kinds of waves then penetrate the last line. The parallel suggests the movement of the dolphin and the sound of the gong are operating on the sea and its own waves through similar principles, which, after Helmholtz, seemed true enough—sound and flesh harnessing the same forces as they crash through substance, resonating, disrupting, creating new dissonance and harmony, literally in the process making and breaking waves, whose interference and measurable resonances continually change complexity to simplicity (and sometimes back again). Complex sounds made up of multiple frequencies can be simplified in real bodies and their cavities or the empty vessels of Helmholtz resonators, demonstrating the way noise can become tone, sound can become music.

No doubt it helped conceptualize this dance of forces that Yeats’s ballet *Fighting the Waves* enacted a very similar process on stage, choreographed by Ninette de Valois, of Cuchulain among the chorus of waves—the gradual succumbing of one individual resonance in the many, all conducted to violent music by George Antheil. The goal after all was one great dance, as a broadcast acknowledged: “In one poem I have pictured the ghosts swimming, mounted upon dolphins, through the sensual seas, that they may dance upon its

pavements.⁷⁵ Yet the order of the stanzas noisily makes sure that it is the prelude to this final dance that comes last for the reader, the ghosts still mired and swimming, still viscerally, painfully but sensually and sense-fully embodied.

So rather than emphasizing the sheer contrast between material and spiritual existence (as ascetic sages might have done) the final line iterates the joyously painful resonances operating in this moment of transcendence. Vendler's half-rhyming epithets, dolphin-**tor**n and gong-**tormented**, arrive sonically, syntactically and semantically linked together (on the heels of the drafts' "dolphin-tortured tide"). As agony and ecstasy come together, these arduous and extended compound adjectives express the painfully ecstatic process of transmutation when crossing from life into death. Spiritual becoming has then required a difficult physical crossing, and an overwhelming sonic resonance from the gong's reiterated hammer blows, inescapably overloading all sense. Arrestingly, their paralleled, hyphenated torsion thus combine physical tearing with the action of sound. Together these are what animate the mosaic images of dolphins cutting through the waves: through sound, static art has come to moving physical life. Such is the cost, but also the energy release, of a literal ecstasy, the fission or rending of body and soul. That all these forces operate upon a body of water, the sea, emblematically troubled and animated by moving bodies and by sound, seems again intrinsically to connect matter with body and soul—all potentially are mediums through which waves operate. That final thing in the poem, sea, has suggested vast unconscious depths in Yeats's phantasmagoria: here, although the drafts no longer describe it as "the sensual seas," it is nevertheless overwhelmingly troubled by sense, perception, physicality, and sound. Hardly a peaceable image to end the poem.

So, even in closing, "Byzantium" does not simply dismiss matter as, reaching the afterlife, the body comes to change its form: rather it embraces other understandings of matter, in line with principles expounded as far apart as Pythagoras, Plotinus, and Helmholtz—even more recently by the new materialism. Yeats draws on multiple sources for his poem, including sources from history, philosophy, art, but also music and science; he is simply unlike some in ascribing fitting sonic and motive effects to this astonishingly active and noisy afterlife climax.

As philosophical commentary, then, "Byzantium" reveals itself as anything but measured and detached. It reads more like an aesthetic commitment and spiritual prophecy, just as it comments on numerous earlier poems from which it has sailed, and it is intrinsically embedded in the volume of which it is part. It tells us that Yeats's obsession with human bodies in death and life plumbs deep and diverse wells. So when later in the volume Plotinus himself finds that "salt blood blocks his eyes" as he swims toward the afterlife and its harmonious choir of love, it's obvious that a strikingly visceral form of his

musical neo-Platonism has entered the contemporary series *Words for Music Perhaps* (CW1 292). This seemed especially so when bodies themselves reacted to sound or came to be torn and rent, as happens throughout the Crazy Jane poems of that sequence, including “Crazy Jane Talks With the Bishop.” When Byzantium’s dome had disdained

All mere complexities
The fury and the mire of human veins (CW1 252)

it might be expected that Yeats’s poems should leave the mire. Yet they return to it, recycling both **mire** and **complexities** at the close of “Byzantium,” while this miry theme culminates later in the volume when Crazy Jane finds Love’s end in “the place of excrement.” To the Bishop’s rude dissection of her aging body Jane responds with an even ruder celebration of its parts in withering scatology, supplying her own nascent theology:

For nothing can be sole or whole
That has not been rent. (CW1 263)

From this poem’s ballad-style opening comes three strictly strophic and thus actually singable stanzas, seemingly so different from the densely wrought “Byzantium.” Yet whether or not we think of Crazy Jane as possessing a divine madness or a cutting sanity, she is nominally determined: “Crazy” did originally refer to something full of cracks and flaws, only later being used to describe a fragmentation of consciousness.⁷⁶ This represents a powerful elision when Jane’s word-play culminates in the final emphatic pun of **rent**. That “Crazy Jane” herself has been traded, hired, even bought and sold, is something potentially true of both the woman and the ballad, and that she is rent, torn, shattered, crazy, and broken yet definably sane, is something travelers from Byzantium should remember: of course the primary meaning of **rent** is torn, ripping through matter and body like the dolphin-torn sea, disdaining dualism and identifying body and soul. The dissolution of self “Byzantium” posits has actually already started to happen: there’s no need to wait until the afterlife, as however clumsily and painfully the material, bodily self has already begun to be cast off. In this it respects Plotinus’s older sense of matter residing in the body, assenting to the conviction in “Byzantium” that bodies are animated by sound, and can create reciprocal animation in their receiving cavities, perhaps literally through their souls. So although the breathless summons of “Byzantium” seems of a quite different order, there is a comparable consummation in both poems sense of self-overcoming.

What Yeats envisaged as older knowledge could be summed up in a late letter: “Man can embody truth but he cannot know it” (CL *InteLex* 7362).⁷⁷

Bachelard's philosophical blurring of inside and outside finds that self-awareness can, of all the senses, come through sound: "Sight says too many things at one time. Being does not see itself. Perhaps it listens to itself."⁷⁸ We can't exactly listen to what happens to the body at the end of things in "Byzantium," but if the poem keeps us from hearing or participating in the final dance, both the poet's persona and the action of the verse get excited enough to imagine we might try; and the poem follows similar principles to Bachelard's ontology in unexpectedly privileging the action of sound, and finding knowledge coursing through the action of the body. Even if we imagine that "Byzantium" only conceives the sonic complexities of materialism as a necessary but vital step to purity and harmony beyond, there is no question the poem closes intimately involved in bodily matter. Such animated conceptions of matter might not be entirely new, indeed in Yeats's terms were rather very old, and yet, nevertheless, were perhaps articulable in this way, if not exactly out loud, then in such terms and such adjectives, at no other time.

ENDNOTES

- 1 George Bornstein, *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: CUP 2001), 1.
- 2 Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," in *Image Music Text*, ed. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), 179–90.
- 3 Steven Connor, *Beckett and Material Modernism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), 12.
- 4 See Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Duke UP, 2007), 151; Thomas Nail, *Being and Motion* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2018). How new is the new materialism is a question raised in Sarah Ellenzweig and John H. Zammito, eds., *The New Politics of Materialism* (London: Routledge, 2017). One answer has been recently attempted through the concept of "performative new materialism." See Christopher N. Gamble, Joshua S. Hanan, and Thomas Nail, "What is New Materialism?" *Angelaki*, 24, no. 6: 111–34.
- 5 Marsilio Ficino, quoted in D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: Warburg Institute, 1958), 44.
- 6 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (1911), trans. W. Scott Palmer and Nancy Margaret Paul (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 74.
- 7 See Jussi Parikka, *What Is Media Archaeology?* (London: Polity Press, 2012).
- 8 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), (1.2) 45. Nietzsche expressed very similar concerns in *The Twilight of the Idols* (3.1), a copy of which Yeats was given by John Quinn, plunging him

- deep into “that strong enchanter” as he recalled in a letter to Augusta Gregory, December 26, 1902: “I have read him so much that I have made my eyes bad again” (CL3 284).
- 9 Gaston Bachelard, “The Dialectics of Outside and Inside,” *The Poetics of Space* (1958), trans Maria Jolas, ed. Mark Z. Danielewski (New York: Penguin, 2014), 231.
 - 10 See Adrian Paterson, “Yeats and Crazy Jane: Words for Music Perhaps,” in *The Marriage Between Literature and Music*, ed. Nick Ceramella (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2022), 99-127.]
 - 11 Helen Vendler, “‘Ingenuous Lovely Things’: Yeats’s Adjectives,” in *Parnell and His Times*, ed. Joep Leersen (Cambridge: CUP 2021), 199–200.
 - 12 W. B. Yeats and Thomas Sturge Moore, in *Their Correspondence 1901-1937*, ed. Ursula Bridge (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 164.
 - 13 A. G. Stock, *W.B. Yeats: His Poetry and Thought* (Cambridge; CUP, 1961), 201.
 - 14 W. B. Yeats, *The Tower: Manuscript Materials*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2007), 27.
 - 15 F. A. C. Wilson, *Yeats and Tradition* (London: Gollancz, 1958), 231.
 - 16 See William Empson, “Mr Wilson on the Byzantium Poems,” *Review of English Literature* 1 (July 1960): 51–56.
 - 17 Connor, *Beckett and Material Modernism*, 14.
 - 18 Helen Vendler, *Yeats’s Vision and the Later Plays* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1963), 218.
 - 19 Georgio Melchiori, *The Whole Mystery of Art: Pattern into Poetry in the work of W.B. Yeats* (London: Routledge, 1960), 203.
 - 20 Robert S. Nelson, “To Say and to See: Ekphrasis and Vision in Byzantium” in ed. Robert S. Nelson, *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 153. For “extramission” he instances Augustine’s view that the “rays” (*radios*) of the eyes “shine through them and touch whatever we see” (*qui per eos emicant et quidquid cernimus tangunt*). Augustine, *De Trinitate*, trans. Stephen McKenna, *On the Trinity: Books 8–15*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 27.
 - 21 W. B. Yeats, *Yeats’s Vision Papers Vol. 3*, eds. Robert Anthony Martinich and Margaret Mills Harper (London: Macmillan, 1992), 17.
 - 22 Roland Betancourt, *Sight, Touch and Imagination in Byzantium* (Cambridge: CUP 2018).
 - 23 B. A. Marshall, *Byzantium and Other Poems* (London: Whitaker, Trencher, 1831).
 - 24 William Chapman Kinglake, “Byzantium: A Poem,” in *Prolusionies Academicæ Praemiss Annui Dignitæ* (Cambridge: John Smith 1830), 53.
 - 25 J. Venables, “Byzantium,” in *Prolusionies Academicæ Praemiss Annui Dignitæ* (Cambridge: John Smith 1830), 7.
 - 26 See Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Knopf, 1988), 72.
 - 27 Edward Richard Poole, *Byzantium: A Dramatic Poem* (London: John Letts 1823), v.
 - 28 Poole, *Byzantium*, 54.
 - 29 Kinglake, “Byantium,” 51.
 - 30 Venables, “Byzantium,” 2.
 - 31 Quoted Halsby, *Venice*, 66.
 - 32 Ruskin quoted in Julian Halsby, *Venice: The Artist’s Vision: A Guide to British and American Painters* (London: Unicorn Press, 1990), 28, 34.
 - 33 William Morris, “Some Hints on Pattern Designing: A Lecture Delivered by William Morris at the Working Men’s College, London on December 10, 1881” (London: Longmans 1899), 15. For Morris (Yeats’s “chief of men”), “nothing more beautiful than the best Byzantine works has ever been produced by man.” William Morris, *Gothic Architecture: A Lecture for the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society* (Hammersmith UK: Kelmscott Press, 1893, 26–27.

- 34 “The painter, the mosaic worker, the worker in gold and silver, the illuminator of sacred books, were almost impersonal [...] They could copy out of old Gospel books those pictures that seemed as sacred as any text, and yet weave all into a vast design, the work of many that seemed the work of one, that made building, picture, pattern, metal-work of rail and lamp, seem but a single image” (AVB 280).
- 35 W. B. Yeats, *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems. The Manuscript Materials*, ed. David R. Clark (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 3.
- 36 Poole, *Byzantium*, 42.
- 37 Averil Cameron, *Byzantine Matters* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 56. See also Michael Squire, *Image and Text in Graco-Roman Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), 2009.
- 38 Paul de Man, “Rousseau and English Romanticism,” trans. Patience Moll, in *The Paul de Man Notebooks*, ed. Martin McQuillan (Edinburgh: EUP, 2014), Ch. 9 online.
- 39 Vendler, *Yeats's Vision*, 116.
- 40 Adrian Paterson, “‘Stitching and Unstitching’: Yeats material and immaterial,” *Review of Irish Studies in Europe* 2, no. 1 (2018): 149-181.
- 41 See Egon Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1949, 1961), 15–20. It’s not impossible Yeats came across a flavor of the discussion in the readily available text H. J. W. Tillyard, *Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (London: Faith Press, 1923).
- 42 Florence Farr (under the pseudonym S.S.D.D.) had, while studying with the Golden Dawn, researched and published a book connecting Egyptian myth to contemporary practice. See Florence Farr, *Egyptian Magic* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1896).
- 43 Elizabeth Wayland Barker, *The Mummies of Urumlich* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 30.
- 44 Ruth Schumann Antelme and Stephane Rossini, *Becoming Osiris: The Ancient Egyptian Death Experience* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions 1997).
- 45 E.A. Wallis Budge, ed. and trans. *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (1899), (London, Penguin, 2008), ciii. For more see Adrian Paterson “‘True of Voice’: Florence Farr, and George J. Lee’s *The Voice*” *SHAW: The Journal of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 40, no. 2 (November 2020). From Sri Lanka Florence Farr wrote to Yeats, “I am rounding off my life trying to become ‘true of voice’ as the old Egyptians used to call it.” Quoted Josephine Johnson, “Florence Farr: Letters to Yeats 1912-17,” *Yeats and Women: Yeats Annual*, 9 ed. Deirdre Toomey (London: Macmillan, 1992), 238.
- 46 Yeats, *Words for Music Perhaps Manuscript Materials*, 11.
- 47 There’s a faint echo here of Ezra Pound’s unlikely tribute to the psalter in BLAST’s “Come my cantilations,” which remembers in the psalter’s latter days it accompanied Farr’s recital of scornful fragments of Nietzsche and George Bernard Shaw, and was not only a lulling presence. See Ronald Schuchard, *The Last Minstrels: Yeats and the Revival of the Bardic Arts* (Oxford: OUP, 2008): “Let come the gay of manner, the insolent and the exulting. / We speak of burnished lakes, / And of dry air, as clear as metal.” Ezra Pound, *Personae*, (London: Faber, 1990), 76.
- 48 Poole, *Byzantium*, 47.
- 49 Kinglake, 60.
- 50 Poole, *Byzantium*, 43.
- 51 W. G. Holmes, *The Age of Justinian and Theodora: A History of the Sixth Century* (London: Bell, 1907), 1: 110.
- 52 T. R. Henn, *The Lonely Tower: Studies in the Poetry of W.B. Yeats* (London Methuen, 1965), 230.
- 53 Yeats, *Words for Music Perhaps Manuscript Materials*, 5.

- 54 Holmes, 107. Though it has not survived for study, Egon Wellesz confirms the cultural significance of “secular music, to which Christian authors and Byzantine historiographers frequently refer,” *Byzantine Music*, 1.
- 55 Quoted in Mark Galleotti, *A Short History of Russia* (London: Penguin, 2021), 11.
- 56 Hermann von Helmholtz, *The Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music*, 4th edition, trans. Alexander J. Ellis (London: Longman, 1885) 35, 33.
- 57 Alexandra Hui, *The Psychophysical Ear: Musical Experiments, Experimental Sounds* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 91, 84.
- 58 Yeats, *Vision Papers* 3, 18.
- 59 Following Hui’s investigations into “psychophysics,” determining the materialism inherent in Helmholtz’s wider philosophy is still up for grabs: “Hermann von Helmholtz’s peculiar wavering between empiricism and transcendentalism in his philosophy of science in general, and in his theory of perception in particular, is a much debated and well-documented topic in the history and philosophy of science.” Liesbet De Kock, “Historicizing Hermann von Helmholtz’s Psychology of Differentiation,” *Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy* 6, no. 3. doi:10.15173/jhap.v6i3.3432 (2018).
- 60 Quoted in Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* trans. Geoffrye Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 71.
- 61 Barry Shiels, *Yeats and World Literature: The Subject of Poetry* (Ashgate, 2015) 40-45. See also Margaret Mills Harper, *The Wisdom of Two* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) and Jill Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium: Feminine Channeling, the Occult, and Communication Technologies 1859–1919* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).
- 62 Ezra Pound, *George Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony* (Paris: Three Mountains, 1924).
- 63 The music of Byzantium was associated with Egypt throughout the nineteenth century. See Wellesz, *Byzantine Music*, 3, who ascribes this in part to the pioneering study of Byzantine and Greek music in G. A. Villoteau’s *Description de l’Egypte* (Paris, 1799).
- 64 Wellesz has found consistently found Eastern elements, as in Semitic or Asian (over the ancient Greek) combined with Western elements in Byzantine ecclesiastical music. See *Byzantine Music*, 25ff.
- 65 See Wellesz, *Byzantine Music*, 26.
- 66 Holmes, 69.
- 67 Aristotle, *De Anima (On the Soul)*, 407b27, in *Greek Musical Writings II: Harmonic and Acoustic Theory*, trans and ed. Andrew Barker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 39.
- 68 John Burnet’s *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: A.&C. Black, 1908) claims that Aristotle’s theory cannot have been the view of early Pythagorean texts because “as shown in Plato’s *Phaedo* (86C-92B), it is quite inconsistent with the idea that the soul exists independently of the body.” Yeats, who owned a copy of Burnet’s book, but was now plunged into the original texts, may be using the poem to try to reconcile such (apparent) contradictions.
- 69 Plotinus, *The Enneads* trans. Stephen MacKenna, ed. John Dillon (London: Penguin, 1991), 102.
- 70 Helmholtz, *Sensations of Tone*, 346.
- 71 Edward Engelberg, *The Vast Design: Patterns in W.B. Yeats’s Aesthetic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 146.
- 72 Richard J. Finneran, “Introduction” in Finneran, ed. *William Butler Yeats: The Byzantium Poems* (Columbus, OH: Merrill, 1970), 8.
- 73 Quoted Betancourt, *Sight, Touch, and Imagination*, 53.
- 74 Using the term “images” more broadly than for visual material had precedent. *A Vision* (1937) would reword the promise of the Yeatses’ spiritual instructors, “I give you philosophy

to give you new images you ought not to use it as philosophy and it is not only given for you" (see *AVB* 312–3n23) as "we came to give you metaphors for poetry" (*AVB* 13).

- 75 Yeats, "Modern Ireland" *MS Massachusetts Review*, 1964, quoted in Finneran, *The Byzantium Poems*, 14.
- 76 See Jonathan Luftig, "Rent: Crazy Jane and the Image of Love," *MLN* 124, no.5 (2009), 1116–45.
- 77 W. B. Yeats to Elizabeth Pelham, January 4, 1939.
- 78 Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 230.