The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart: Tracking the Development of William Butler Yeats’s Poetry through Manuscript Materials

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English
In partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Bachelor’s Degree with Honors
Wellesley College
April 2014
“A conviction that the world was now but a bundle of fragments possessed me without ceasing”

W.B. Yeats, *Reveries Over Childhood and Youth*, 1916
Greatest thanks to my thesis advisor, Professor Kathleen Brogan. It was in Professor Brogan’s Critical Interpretation class my first year at Wellesley, and later in her Modern Poetry class that I first explored my passion for Yeats’s poetry in an academic setting. I feel privileged to have spent this year working closely with Professor Brogan on this project. Her support, guidance and brilliant insights have helped make this work possible. I have learned so much from Professor Brogan and will always be grateful for the role she has played in inspiring my love of poetry.

I would also like to extend many thanks to the members of my English Department Thesis Advisory Committee, Professors Alison Hickey and Dan Chiasson. I greatly appreciate your time, support, advice and encouragement throughout this process. Thank you to the ever-inspiring Professor Ifeanyi Menkiti for also being a part of my Thesis Committee.

Thanks to my family and friends for their love and support. Thank you to my sister, Colette, for her constant friendship and to my mother for instilling in me her relentless passion and drive. Thank you to my father for his many hours spent reading my writing over the years and for showing me how to truly love learning. I owe the diversity and depth of my education to him and we will always share the bond of knowing and loving the great poets and writers. Thank you to Grandpa Jack for choosing such a good poem to quote in a love letter and for shedding the first light on Yeats’s poetry.

And of course, thank you to William Butler Yeats for filling my days with the sublime beauty of his poetry and enriching my life forever.
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**A NOTE ON CONVENTIONS:**

In this study I refer to the manuscript materials as “fragments.” These fragments are pieces of drafts of poems that, when taken together, show the development of the final version of the poem. In the appendix you will find the fragments in their transcribed form, labeled with the number I have assigned to them. You may wish to refer to these materials to better visualize the changes I outline.

Quotations from these fragments that I have included in the body of this study appear exactly as they do in the manuscript materials. This includes original spellings from the draft work and incomplete words or phrases. Some phrases are crossed out indicating that they appear crossed out in the manuscript materials. The symbol [?] indicates ambiguity in the transcription of the manuscript material.
I first read Yeats at the age of fifteen. I was sorting through some of my late grandfather’s belongings when I found a letter written by my grandfather to my grandmother in which he artfully closed his correspondence with Yeats’s poem “When You Are Old.” My grandfather, Jack McCullagh, a stoic, Irish-American police officer, suddenly transformed into a tender and brooding master of romance. What I remember most from this first experience reading Yeats was the wistful feeling his poetry gave me. As I wavered on what the poem meant to me and how it made me feel, I was certain that it was one of the most beautiful things that I had ever heard once I read it aloud. I did not read Yeats again until my first year at Wellesley. The familiar, simple beauty of his poetry washed over me once again and I became irrevocably captivated by his verse.

As I continue to read and study Yeats, I become increasingly aware of my youth and naivety. I am daunted by the task of fully comprehending the messages, symbolisms, ideologies and shifting styles of such a profound poet as Yeats. My youth seems to be an even greater complication in the context of Yeats’s preoccupation with aging and prolific writing on emotions such as love, regret, aging and sense of self, which are best understood after a life long-lived. As a twenty-one-year-old who has much to experience before she can begin to understand what a man who wrote into his seventies understood, I have decided to focus my study on Yeats’s poetic process. A Yeatsian scholar “in the process” myself, I will attempt to trace Yeats’s poetic evolution across the breadth of his career. After my first encounter with Yeats’s poetry and my subsequent reading of his works, I knew that he was a poet to which I could dedicate a year of passionate study.
The means by which I could tackle the career of such a prolific poet as Yeats became apparent when I learned of the Cornell University Press Yeats Project. The project began with transcriptions of Yeats’s manuscripts in the early nineteen-sixties and was completed in 1994. The Cornell Yeats presents manuscripts of all extant versions of Yeats’s poems and plays. The works originate from the collections of Senator Michael B. Yeats, the National Library of Ireland, university libraries and elsewhere. The poems have been transcribed from their original versions and photographic facsimiles supplement the texts. In the appendix you will find copies of the transcribed manuscript materials for reference. The foundation of this work rests on the intrinsic potential of these manuscript materials to reveal Yeats’s creative process and vision as a writer. Through this analysis, I hope to characterize the three distinct phases of Yeats’s poetry that previous scholarship has designated: early, middle and late Yeats, and determine if there are any trends in the revisions to and final versions of Yeats’s poetry that parallel his development as a Modern poet.

In “Adam’s Curse” Yeats proclaims, “I said: ‘A line will take us hours maybe;/ Yet if it does not seem a moment’s thought,/ Our stitching and unstitching has been naught” (4-6). For Yeats, composing poetic themes into verse did not come without extensive revision. Of all poets, Vendler says, “There was never a more tireless seeker of the exact word” (3). In one of his 1926 letters Yeats states, “Whatever I do, poetry will remain a torture.” Perhaps the greatest testament to Yeats’s “torturous” poetic process is the extensive nature of his draft work. Through analysis of his manuscript materials, we can trace Yeats’s hand and mind through his poetic process and better understand the development of his style and form. This work will track changes in Yeats’s career to
determine how Yeats became a Modernist and what form of Modernism he created. Helen Vendler describes Yeats’s Modernism: “Like all the best Modernists, he disturbed forms without entirely abandoning them” (181). A study of Yeats’s early, middle and late works will allow us to see which elements of his poetry he left behind through the development of his career and which devices he preserved in his work. We will focus on how Yeats’s style evolves as he responds to his changing world.

Defining a Yeatsian form of Modernism in particular is a critical aspect of this study. It is important to note at the start of this work that Modernism resists one all-encompassing definition. Many types of Modernism have emerged in various art forms. In poetry in particular, different artists have helped define their own facets of Modernism that apply to their individual works. In addition, the very nature of something that is continuously named as “modern” even as time passes is difficult to define. In Modernism, Michael Levenson states, “Any distinguishing mark of Modernism, any sign or signature, such as discontinuity, collage, literary self-consciousness, irony, the use of myth, can be traced back to the furthest temporal horizon. To try to identify an elusive beginning or to propose clinching definitions is to play a game with changing rules” (1). He goes on to say, “Modernity remains haunted both by a search for novelty and by the recollection of precursors. This double sense creates an abiding instability, a sense of modernity as inescapable but undecidable. Perhaps we are not modern, or not yet modern, even as we feel that we have crossed a threshold in history. Such undecidability is both a condition of our scholarship and the episode itself. …We may take it as a fate of modernity that its origins must remain in question and that we can never be sure that it is a modernity. Even as we talk incessantly about living through ‘new times,’ the origins of
the newness are contested” (Levenson, 2). Therefore, rather than attributing the changes in Yeats’s poetry to the broad and shifting boundaries of Modernism as an entire literary movement, we will attempt to characterize a Yeatsian Modernism—a version of Modernism set apart by this one poet’s works. We will track the changes in Yeats’s work to clarify how Yeats became a Modernist and to develop a better understanding of what form of Modernism he created.

This thesis work will prove informative to those who study Modernism, as well as to today’s poets, or any person involved in writing or editing for that matter. In his essay "Yeats as an Example?,” Seamus Heaney writes, "He reminds you that revision and slog-work are what you may have to undergo if you seek the satisfaction of finish; he bothers you with the suggestion that if you have managed to do one kind of poem in your own way, you should cast off that way and face into another area of your experience until you have learned a new voice to say that area properly" (110). The proof of Heaney’s assertions about Yeats’s continuously refined craftsmanship resides within the manuscript materials that we will closely analyze within this work. These manuscripts can serve as a reminder of the rigor of the poetic process, as well as a tool with which to track the development of a highly influential poet. Through this analysis we will seek to characterize the phases of Yeats’s career as well as develop a definition of Modernism that is specifically adapted to Yeats’s poetic style.
CHAPTER ONE

Early Yeats

Yeats’s earliest published poems date back to the late eighteen-eighties. At this time Yeats was in his twenties and was a young poet steeped in Romanticism, Irish legend and the occult. The Cornell Yeats Project provides few manuscript materials of Yeats’s early poetry—there are very few drafts of each poem (in most cases only the final version of the poem is presented), limiting an analysis of the draft work for the beginning of Yeats’s career. This deficit in the early draft work seems to be directly connected to the age of these manuscript materials and the difficulty of obtaining and preserving older works. Thus, for this first chapter on early Yeats, we will predominantly look to the final versions of his poems available to us in contemporary anthologies to characterize this phase of Yeats’s career. In the subsequent chapters on middle and late Yeats, we will rely heavily on the manuscript materials for our analysis.

Early Yeats champions poetry as a spoken art. He often focuses on the sounds that combinations of words make and their cadence when read aloud. In his book The Last Minstrels: Yeats and the Revival of the Bardic Arts, Ronald Schuchard notes, “There is a conventional, almost calcified perception that Yeats adopted an affected bardic pose during the ‘Celtic twilight’ of the 1890s, reciting poems such as ‘The Lake Isle’ and ‘The Song of the Old Mother’ in a strange, chant-like delivery” (xx). This bardic tradition was largely influenced by Yeats’s predecessors, including Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. If one listens to the recording of Yeats’s own reading of “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” he
or she can clearly hear Yeats’s incantatory intentions as he emphasizes the poem’s rhythm and seems to allow his voice to reverberate and take on a musical tone as he recites the verse. As Yeats’s style developed over time, the song-like quality that his poetry once possessed faded out, leaving a verse that was closer to everyday speech. Schuchard continues, “Yeats began to redirect much of his energy into poetic drama and to write non-visionary poems with rhythms no longer suitable for chanting. Certainly, one often hears that the poems from *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910) to *Last Poems and Plays* (1940) were not written to be chanted” (xx). Nevertheless, Yeats’s bardic style poetry remains a distinguishing factor of his early works. It is important to note, however, that Yeats always paid particular attention to the way his poetry sounded when read aloud. As we will see in the manuscript materials for “The Wild Swans at Coole,” “The Second Coming” and “The Circus Animals’ Desertion,” for example, Yeats makes changes to the drafts of his mid- and late-career poems to improve the auditory quality of a line.

Yeats’s early poetry is often closely linked to his cultural identity as an Irish poet. According to Levenson, “What distinguished Yeats within a wider Symbolism was that alongside his interest in magic lay an equally ardent concern with Irish legend. He quickly recognized the stimulus of the stories that still existed in popular memory and that became a more immediate source of his early poetry than his experiments in magic” (126). Yeats uses Symbolism to convey emotional and spiritual truths. Levenson continues to describe Yeats’s early career: “The aspiration ‘beyond the senses’ was the unremitting regimen of Yeats’s early work. … The result was that selfhood was always on the point of disappearing in favor of the symbol or the legend, the rose or the rage of
Cuchulain” (129). The poetic self in Yeats’s poetry is not prominent in his early works. While Yeats uses the first-person singular in his early poetry, it is clouded by heavy allusion to Irish legend and folklore. We can see this at the very beginning of Yeats’s poem “The Madness of King Goll,” published in his 1889 volume Crossways. He opens in the voice of his character: “I sat on cushioned otter-skin:/ My word was law from Ith to Emain,/ And shook at Invar Amargin/ The hearts of the world-troubling seamen” (1-4). Within the first lines, Yeats introduces many places associated with Irish legend. For example, he refers to Ith, an ancient place-name in Munster Province, taken from the name of Ith, one of the Milesians who came to Ireland and settled ca. 1234 B.C. He also refers to Emain, the capital of ancient Ulster and whose name dates back to the limits of authentic Irish history (Conner, 54). The poem becomes a nationalistic landscape description peppered with details from Irish myth.

At this point in his poetry, Yeats forges his own poetic identity through the heroes in his poems. Here he represents King Goll, a king who goes mad in battle from some inward fire: “But slowly, as I shouting slew/ and trampled in the bubbling mire,/ In my most secret sprit grew/ A whirling and a wandering fire” (25-28). This madness draws him into the woods to “wander:” “I wander on, and wave my hands,/ And sing, and shake my heavy locks./ The grey wolf knows me; by one ear/I lead along the woodland deer;/ The hares run by me growing bold./ They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round me, the beech leaves old” (34-38). Yeats embeds the speaker in nature with the purpose of depicting his wildness and removal from society. This creates a symbolic mythic domain in which, in the early works, Yeats situates the poetic figure. King Goll wanders and sings and leads the animals throughout the wood. The outside world causes him to
go mad and so he retreats to nature. Yeats makes the verse sound seductive and enchanting with phrases such as “a whirling and a wandering fire,” “starlight gleamed,” “golden bees,” “autumnal solitudes” and “the beech leaves old.” This effect is rendered by the long vowels in these words that force the reader to slow his or her speech or reading and relish in the sounds of the words. These phrases create the feeling of being drawn into the wood, coaxed by the sensuous sounding words. The rhyme scheme is also apparent. The previously cited lines scan with perfect iambic pentameter, giving it a steady, song-like cadence. The heavy use of monosyllables contributes to this effect. As depicted in “The Madness of King Goll,” monosyllables are prevalent in Yeats’s poetry at this time. In his work, Between the Lines: Yeats’s Poetry in the Making, Jon Stallworthy notes that in Yeats’s middle and late poems, “many of his most striking effects are achieved by a resonant polysyllable following a succession of monosyllables” (245). Stallworthy points us to instances in Yeats’s poetry that follow this pattern: “And all the sensuality of the shade,” “A house Where all’s accustomed, ceremonious” and “Should the conflagration climb” (245). This pattern is often commonly and unsurprisingly seen in the last line of a stanza or at the end of a poem to render a strong closing chord that reverberates in the listener’s ear. This pattern represents an evolution of Yeats’s consecutive monosyllables found in his early works and gives his poems stylistic complexity and nuance.

In addition, part of the refrain of “The Madness of King Goll,” “the beech leaves old,” represents a familiar construction in Yeats’s early works. Levenson writes, “in ‘When You Are Old’…the inversion in the last line (“shadows deep”), like the inversion in ‘The Lake Isle of Innisfree’ (“pavements grey”), is a mark of the rhetoric that
Yeats was unwilling to surrender...Later readers often look back at such moments and puzzle over the slow emergence of a less encumbered voice” (129-130). These constructions represent an older Yeatsian form. In general this construction resembles a more common, older poetic style that Yeats was likely steeped in during his youth. As we will see in some of his later works, this form becomes more conversational, resembling everyday speech.

In “The Madness of King Goll,” the speaker is entrenched in Irish myth and legend. We are led from a civilization into the woods, where King Goll, here the poet figure, destroys his harp and consequently the poet’s sense of self. With this poem we find a still very unsure Yeats, who must place the poet figure in pure isolation in order to create an identity. Yeats’s poetic self is encrypted in the heroes and figures of his poems, and his works are encumbered by names and places from Irish legend. Levenson describes these trends in Yeats’s early works: “National identity depends on magic and incantation. In the face of these grand projections, the lyric ‘I’ recedes. The poems build toward a symbolic scene or a legendary tableau, and yet they acknowledge, though rarely explicitly, that the vision must be partial or flickering or still-to-come” (128).

“The Madness of King Goll” leads us into the woods, the setting for “The Song of Wandering Aengus.” Like King Goll, Aengus is drawn into the woods because of some internal fire: “I went out to the hazel wood,/ Because a fire was in my head” (“The Song of Wandering Aengus,” 1-2). This internal fire represents Yeats’s own fury in the mind and desire to come into his own poetry. In “The Song of Wandering Aengus,” Yeats still infuses his verse with magical character. Perhaps more so than in “The Madness of King Goll,” Yeats creates a sense of enchanted longing through repeated phrases, images and
Vendler states, “The most beautiful example in the early verse of a poem employing what I think of as ‘magical’ means is ‘The Song of Wandering Aengus,’ a poem deriving from the Irish aisling lyric, in which the speaker is vouchsafed a vision of a female embodying the national spirit” (105). This form is a poetical or dramatic description or representation of a vision. According to A Yeats Dictionary, Aengus is a chief figure of the Tuatha De Danaan, the fairy folk of Ireland. In Yeats’s work, Aengus is the god of youth, beauty, and poetry. He is also referred to as a master of love and as Hermes. In this poem he is a mortal, but elsewhere he is immortal. The girl in the poem is of the Tuatha de Danaan; she can take all shapes, but those who live in water most often take the shape of a fish. Figures turning from fish into human and then disappearing are common in Irish folklore (Conner, 4).

Certain words in “The Song of Wandering Aengus” contribute to its “magical” quality. These include: “wandering,” “fire,” “wand,” “moths,” “flickering,” “glimmering,” “brightening,” “silver apples” and “golden apples.” Yeats’s diction suggests a certain mystical power associated with words themselves. Vendler states, “It is not an accident, I think, that the first thing wand-ering Aengus does is to cut a wand, or that his head finds a thread. …Other magical links are made in the rhyme-words and elsewhere: just as the word head is contained in thread, so out is contained in trout, air in hair, time in times, though in through” (107). Yeats also makes use of many –“ing” repetitions: “wandering,” “flickering,” “glimmering,” and “brightening.” These magical links that build off one another push through the poem as it seems to write itself, using words from previous lines. The poem then culminates with Yeats’s final words of powerful determination, “I will find out where she has gone./ And kiss her lips and take
her hands; / And walk among long dappled grass, / And pluck till time and times are done /
The silver apples of the moon, / The golden apples of the sun” (19-24). These final lines connect back to the “silver trout” and “apple-blossom” as well as words such as “old,” “golden” and “dappled.” The poem is composed in alternately rhymed quatrains, printed in octaves. We find that the poem suggests a “reduplicative spell casting, full as it is of anaphora and the repetition of phrases, lines and sounds” as Vendler aptly describes. This style helps explain why the poem is printed as octaves rather than separate quatrains. The structure mirrors the style of the narrative.

This “reduplicative” and additive quality in Yeats’s verse clearly exhibits his deliberation in the poetic process. In the manuscript materials that we will later analyze, we find the rigor of Yeats’s writing process in the numerous drafts of single stanzas and final poems. Here, in the early poems, we can see Yeats’s careful and deliberate writing in the magical replication of words and the linking of words. What sets this early work apart from middle Yeats and especially later Yeats is the transparency of the intense labor of his verse. The late poems are composed of simple lines that are clearly crafted and thought out. Through the linked words and careful diction we can trace Yeats’s mind in the final version of the poem as we progress through the connecting words. In later Yeats we can see this rigor most clearly in the development of the draft work. The later works often hide the labors of his poetry and appear as natural and conversational—more like “a moment’s thought,” as described in “Adam’s Curse.”

Yeats as a poet is still “wandering” without end or direction as King Goll and Aengus. While “The Song of Wandering Aengus” is brilliant in its structure and language, it does not show the same natural sound that the mature Yeats’s works show.
As we shall see, this natural sound is created by pared-down lines resembling common speech—a quality of writing that Yeats aspired to and largely adhered to as his verse matured. Here, Yeats is still writing in an incantation-like verse, rife with occult symbols and Irish folklore. This poem involves a transformation—the fish transforms into a “glimmering girl.” This unnatural change in the mystical woods sets Aengus on a quest to consummate his desire. Like Aengus, Yeats’s seeks to consummate his poetic voice. He soon does this through a transformation in his poetry.

As we will continue to see as his poetry progresses, Yeats is a poet who changes his style and themes as his world changes and his poetic capacity enlarges. Levenson writes, “It was Yeats’s instinct, as well as his historical situation, to keep reacting to his own work and to the world. His significant act was to break up the unity and continuity of legend and to abandon the longer forms of narrative poetry. The first steps appear in the early ballads—such as “The Ballad of Father O’Hart” and “The Ballad of Moll Magee”—which reduce narrative to the most modest scale: an unheroic life condensed to a few rhythmic stanzas. Over the next several volumes, *The Rose* (1893) and *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), Yeats recasts poetry on the basic, not of grand legend, but of the everyday romance of popular life: the local tale, the fireside yarn, the fable” (127). Yeats undergoes a thematic and stylistic change in the early nineteen-hundreds in which he leaves behind his isolated and idealized mythical world for the realism of human poetry. He rhetorically strips away poeticisms, moving towards pared-down language and realistic subjects.

In this study we will often have cause to note the paring down of Yeats’s writing. In this context I would like to designate the process of paring down language as
synonymous with the crystallization and intensification of images. In “The Song of Wandering Aengus,” sometimes the diction seems to exist in its simplest form: “I went out,” “she has gone.” Yet this poem is not indicative of the paring down that occurred in Yeats’s later works. Thus, in the context of this study and the development of Yeats’s poetry, “paring down” not only means to make simpler but also means to amplify the intensity of an image by consolidating the surrounding verse. In “A Discursion on Style,” written in 1936, near the end of his life, Yeats writes, “In later years through a knowledge of the stage, and through the exfoliation of my own style, I learned that occasional prosaic words gave the impression of an active man speaking. In dream poetry, in ‘Kubla Khan,’ in ‘The Stream Secret,’ every line, every word, can carry its unanalyzable, rich associations; but if we dramatize some possible singer or speaker we remember that he is moved by one thing at a time, certain words must be numb and dry. Here and there in correcting my early poems I have introduced such numbness and dryness, turned, for instance, “the curd, pale moon” into the ‘brilliant moon,” that all might seem, as it were, remembered with indifference, except some vivid image. When I began to rehearse a play I had the defects of my early poetry; I insisted upon obvious all-pervading rhythm. Later on I found myself saying that only in those lines or words where the beauty of the passage came to its climax, must rhythm be obvious.” This comment by Yeats on his own stylistic transformation gets at some of the most important trends in his poetry. According to Stallworthy, Yeats’s “early interest in the heroic mythology of Ireland, and his long association with the Abbey Theatre had given him an eye for the dramatic figure, gesture, and situation” (248). Under the general category of “paring down” verse, we acknowledge Yeats’s tendency toward speech-like verse,
intensified images and rhythm and punctuation that mirror or contrast content of the poetry. As we continue to analyze Yeats’s works over the span of his career, we find that numerous revisions to the drafts are made to reflect these key aspects of poetry, as described by Yeats himself, in the final versions of the poems.

The 1914 volume, Responsibilities, is often viewed as an announcement of this change in Yeats’s style. Prior to the publication of this volume, Ezra Pound began his work as Yeats’s editor. Responsibilities is a testament to their work together. Pound came to Europe in 1908 at the age of twenty-two to pursue his poetic career as well as his interest in medieval literature. Pound’s evolving style and championing of Modernism had a profound influence on Yeats’s work. Levenson writes, “Direct, vigorous speech is Pound’s goal throughout the early work: no mystification, no incantation, but clear images and quick rhythms, often enacted in words of one syllable. Pound develops an aggressive lyric ‘I’” (133). To Pound it was essential to “to bring poetry up to the level of prose” (462). This meant clearing away rhetoric and restoring common speech, control and discipline in writing. Most importantly, according to Levenson, “it meant the embrace of a new realism in poetry which held that the artist must register the data of the world no less precisely than the scientist. These convictions led Pound to repudiate Symbolism, and soon after seeking out and meeting Yeats, he assumed the role of aesthetic adversary” (133).

Yeats and Pound collaborated especially during the winters that they spent together at Stone Cottage beginning in 1913. Responsibilities, written in 1914 during the time of their intellectual exchange, “bears the clear signs of Pound’s critique, has been taken as the threshold to Yeats’s mature style—a style that he [Yeats] had been promising
for decades” (Levenson, 133). In a review for *Poetry* magazine Pound called Yeats “the best poet in England...assuredly an immortal.” He described “a manifestly new note in his later work,” that after having had so many “mists and fogs since the nineties...one is about ready for hard light, poetry that is becoming gaunter, seeking greater hardness of outline” (378-379). Yeats himself announced his break with his earlier style. In *Modernism*, Levenson quotes Yeats: “I hate the soft modern manner,” Yeats wrote as early as 1888, regretting the sedative tones of the first poems. He declared in 1895 that “all the old things were rewritten” and in early 1903 that his poetry “has got far more masculine. It has more salt in it” (130).

The variorum editions of “The Madness of King Goll” and “The Song of Wandering Aengus” indeed indicate that “all the old things were rewritten”—or at least revised over the years, most of the revisions, however, still occurring early in Yeats’s career. “The Madness of King Goll” was first printed in September of 1887. It was then revised in 1898. The 1887 version of the poem opened, “I was a wise young king of old/ Mine was a chair of skins and gold.” The 1898 version opens, “I sat on cushioned otter-skin.” This change, characteristic with other changes seen in the variorum editions of this poem, represents a simplification of the verse in which the image is intensified through a paring down of the line. Similar revisions include changing “And mine was every trophied wall/ Many a landsman, many a seaman” (1887 version) to “The hearts of the world-troubling seamen” (1898 version). While the 1898 version of the of the poem is still representative of early Yeats’s work in its attention to Irish legend and diction and rhythm, the revisions that Yeats makes just eleven years later contribute to a much more concise and powerful verse than the original version of the poem.
“A Coat,” the penultimate poem in the volume *Responsibilities*, perfectly depicts Yeats’s own announcement of his grittier, “saltier” style. The poem itself is an announcement of Yeats’s break from his old poetry. The poem also represents a new Yeats no longer writing for the Anglo-Irish aristocratic elite. While his poetry remains elite, it does so in a rhetoric of nakedness and coldness. In *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*, Yeats writes that he was “dissatisfied with…all that overcharged colour inherited from the Romantic Movement” and so had “deliberately reshaped” his style, seeking “an emotion which I described to myself as cold” (86). “A Coat” represents the coldness to which Yeats refers. The poem reads:

I made my song a coat  
Covered with embroideries  
Out of old mythologies  
From heel to throat;  
But the fools caught it,  
Wore it in the world’s eyes  
As though they’d wrought it.  
Song, let them take it,  
For there’s more enterprise  
In walking naked.

Vendler calls this poem, “a manifesto declaring the end of Yeats the Romantic” (348). The old and perhaps Romantic Yeats is weighed down, completely obscured, and silenced, “heel to throat,” by his coat. The coat is embroidered with the mythological symbols that characterized his early works. The emphasis on Yeats’s own role in the creation of his early verse as indicated by the first line, “I made my song a coat” perhaps conveys a sense of mourning for the old works. This nostalgia is fleeting as a semicolon abruptly ends the thought and Yeats’s resentment of his audience is revealed. The fools can either represent Yeats’s actual conception of the Irish scene that this poem reacts to
or versions of his poetic self that he is trying to redefine as his poetry matures. Levenson writes, “The striking change in the poetry, then, was not simply the choice of a saltier and more vigorous speech, which Yeats had pursued for so long. It was an effect of his negotiation with a resistant world. The emergence of a brisk voice, speaking in stiff rhythms and willing to affirm the first person, was fed by the intensity of these struggles…the lyric ‘I’ came into full being through opposition, and as Yeats’s career unfolded, the ‘I’ took its own earlier incarnations as an adversary” (130). He concedes to let “the fools,” either the resistant world to which his poetry reacts or a version of his former poetic self, take his older work and reassures himself with the “enterprise in walking naked.” This nakedness implies the coldness that Yeats announces in poetry.

As we will find in Yeats’s later works, he often does not entirely cast off or abandon stylistic elements in his poetry. While he may move beyond certain Romantic constructions or words for example, Yeats occasionally revives these elements in his later poetry. Thus, Yeats preserves certain elements of his poetry but learns to employ them in different ways to give his poetry the rough and human quality that he so desires.

Levenson adds to this observation: “It is important not to fit Yeats’s development into a narrative of freedom, in which the poet finally throws off artifice and achieves simplicity of speech. If he repeatedly proclaims his harder, saltier, more masculine manner, it is because another manner still attracts him. He continues his search for a more-than-personal context that will orient (and make meaningful) direct utterance. The Yeatsian atmosphere—of ‘wave and wind and windy fire,’ of ‘elemental powers’ that encompass every act, gesture, and emotion—never disappears from his poetry. But those powers began to lose their ethereal character and become part of the visible world” (130). As we
progress through Yeats’s career the “salt” and grit of his works become important factors in, to use Yeats’s own term, the “exfoliation” of his poetry. We find that Yeats preserves certain elements of his poetry in some instances and rejects them in others, making for a style that is continuously evolving and undeniably his. As Yeats’s career takes further shape, we move away from the confines of Irish legend and myth into a world that is more realistic and closer to the poet’s true identity and self. In this next chapter we will find ourselves deep in Yeats’s manuscript materials and in a position in which we can track the revisions of his work to see what aspects of his poetry Yeats preserves and develops. This second chapter marks the beginning of our in-depth manuscript work and gives us an opportunity to characterize Yeats’s mid-career style and themes.
CHAPTER TWO

Middle Yeats

*The Wild Swans at Coole*, first published by Cuala Press in 1917 as a compilation of twenty-nine poems and the play *At the Hawk’s Well* and then republished in 1919 by Macmillan (dropping the play and adding seventeen poems to the volume), represents middle Yeats. Through an analysis of select poems in this volume we can characterize Yeats’s style during this period and make comparisons to his earlier and later works. We will see what defines the work of this middle period and what goals Yeats sets for himself at this time.

*The Wild Swans at Coole* was written at a time of Yeats’s life characterized by romantic disappointment. For twenty years leading up to the publication of this volume, Yeats passionately courted the intelligent, beautiful, Irish patriot, Maud Gonne. Levenson writes, “Maud Gonne was not a distant princess in symbolist raiment. She was an active, ardent Irish nationalist, and just as important, a sovereign agent in her personal life, one who bewildered Yeats by revealing her secret marriage to the Belgian politician Lucien Millevoye and her secret maternity. As R. F. Foster remarks, Maud Gonne was a new woman of the fin de siècle, who belonged to a wider movement of change between the sexes. Her insistence upon loving on her own terms, like her willingness to take up radical political positions, placed her within a group of women who disregarded the canons of gendered respectability” (129).
Upon first meeting Maud Gonne, Yeats fell madly in love with her. While Maud admired Yeats, she did not return his love and was instead preoccupied by the Irish nationalist cause. Yeats’s love of Maud Gonne serves as an important aspect of many of his poems, as she was his muse. Similarly, the unrequited nature of this love is also reflected within his works. In October of 1916, after several previously unsuccessful attempts, Yeats proposed to Maud Gonne for the last time. At the time the volume was published, he received his final rejection from this woman who had filled his heart and mind for the past twenty years. Yeats then later proposed and was rejected by Maud Gonne’s daughter, Iseult Gonne. He then hastily proposed to and married Georgie Hyde-Lees. While this union was likely a happy one, Yeats’s unfulfilled love for Maud Gonne largely characterizes his romantic history. While I do not suggest that the poems in this volume must be read entirely within the context of Yeats’s biography, it is in good practice to be cognizant of these events and their potential connection to the feelings of loneliness and dread of aging tied to this volume.

The title poem of the volume, “The Wild Swans at Coole,” showcases Yeats’s poetic process. There are nineteen manuscript fragments of this poem within the manuscript materials, offering numerous drafts in which to track Yeats’s changes. Through a close analysis of these fragments within the context of the published version of the poem, we can begin to see trends in Yeats’s writing that characterize this middle period. In addition, other poems in this volume support the trends found in “The Wild Swans at Coole.” These poems include: “Lines Written in Dejection” and “Ego Dominus Tuus.” These poems have been selected on the basis of their content and the extensive nature of their manuscript materials as well.
“The Wild Swans at Coole” is a powerful poem preoccupied with aging and laden with intense emotions of longing, desertion and loneliness. Through a technical analysis of the draft work we can determine how these emotions are conveyed through the poetry. In the discussion of this poem I will refer to the “speaker.” I would like to draw attention to this designation to note that while the emergence of the self in this poem becomes more apparent than it does in the earlier poems, it is still not indicative of Yeats himself as the speaker. In the early poetry such as in “The Madness of King Goll” and “The Song of Wandering Aengus,” Yeats encrypts the poetic self in mythological characters and heroes. For the most part, it isn’t until the poems of Responsibilities that the self becomes more realistic and closer to Yeats’s own poetic self. In “The Wild Swans at Coole” the speaker can be closely identified with Yeats; however, the speaker is still removed from this identity. It isn’t until later works, such as “The Circus Animals’ Desertion,” as we will later see, that the Yeatsian “I” emerges in its full power.

In the first fragment of “The Wild Swans at Coole,” Yeats struggles to describe the natural setting. He initially focuses his attention on the trees and then wavers from his position, moving toward the leaves that “grow brown in Autumn” (Fragment 1). In the second fragment, he returns to focusing his image on the trees and then again shifts to emphasize the leaves rendered brown from the seasonal changes. Throughout the following fragments Yeats continues to interchange the “trees” with the “woods” and attributes to them: “brown leaves,” “autumn colors” and “autumn foliage.” He achieves the final version of the line with the construction: “The leaves are in their autumn beauty” (“The Wild Swans at Coole,” 1). This opening line undergoes six revisions before achieving its final form. Perhaps the most apparent overall revision of these lines is the
simplification of the verse. He moves from a detailed verb phrase “grow brown in Autumn” to simply “are.” From these edits we can also determine that Yeats placed the most emphasis on the trees surrounding the speaker and the season. He chooses to keep the phrase “autumn beauty,” which emphasizes the season itself and the changes that coincide with it.

Yeats focuses on autumn emphasizing the notable physical changes in the environment—the leaves change and the paths become dry. This undoubtedly reflects the changes that the speaker sees in himself as he looks upon the swans and anticipates their inevitable departure from the scene. The opening stanza establishes change as a key element in the poem—something with which the speaker struggles to reconcile. Through these revisions we see how the autumn setting is moved to the forefront of the poem. The speaker initially grasps this image through the details of “brown leaves,” elevates it to the concept of “foliage” and then finally arrives at a somewhat abstract phrase, “autumn beauty.” This phrase is simpler and more pared down than the previous versions of the lines. The final version encompasses each of the elements of his draft within the economy of a single word, “autumn.” The phrase “autumn beauty,” however, while simpler, is still highly lyrical. Its lyrical nature resides in the naming of a poetic ideal of “beauty” modified by the elegant name for fall: autumn. In a stanza in which verb phrases and descriptive nouns are simplified, the preservation of the highly poetic “autumn beauty” is reminiscent of early Yeats poems such as “The Madness of King Goll,” in which we found the poetic construction “the leaves a-flutter around me, the beech leaves old” (12-13). In the revised opening line of “The Wild Swans at Coole,” Yeats gives the line a “numbness and dryness,” as he later would describe in “A
Discursion on Style.” The simplicity of the line “The leaves are in” helps intensify and elevate the image of “autumn beauty,” to augment this striking term. In addition, the rhythm of the poem also reflects the importance of autumn beauty, since Yeats disturbs the iambic pentameter with these words. Yeats gives prominence to this abstract, Romantic element of his first line, stressing the importance of the natural scene as well as the importance of a changing season or time in life.

Yeats then further attempts to describe the natural scene in the lines that follow as he wavers between images of a lack of water in the lake and dryness of the land. This deficit of water or dryness can reflect the speaker’s own feelings of being dried up and aged. He begins with the line “The water in the lake is low” (Fragment 1) and then revises it to “There is little water in the lake” (Fragment 1) and “But the Cool water is low” (Fragment 10). In Fragments 4 and 10 he shifts the image from a deficit of water to the dryness of the land: “The grey lake lanes are hard under foot” (Fragment 4) and “And all the paths are dry under the foot” (Fragment 10). It isn’t until Fragment 16 that he changes the image to the form that persists in the final draft, “The woodland paths are dry.”

In this final version of the line, Yeats removes the speaker from the scene by omitting “The grey lake lanes are hard under foot” (Fragment 4). Through this omission, he not only removes himself from the first stanza but also removes any sense of movement. The first stanza then becomes entirely visual and detached from any action associated with the speaker. A Concordance to the Poems of W.B. Yeats reveals that the word “woodland” appears in nine different poems. The last volume that it appears in is The Wild Swans at Coole in the title poem as well as in the poem “Her Courage.” Every
other poem in which this word appears dates between 1889 and 1919. This information reveals that this word is characteristic of early Yeats. It is more closely aligned with his Romantic work and *The Celtic Twilight* material. In addition, much of the first stanza is focused on desiccation. By shifting the imagery of lack of water away from the lake to the land, he strengthens the idea of the land’s dryness. In this way he is able to establish the contrast of between the land and the lake in the lines that follow. This choice also serves to implicitly contrast the wearied speaker on land to the vibrant swans on the water, reflecting the dryness and emptiness Yeats associates with aging.

Yeats chooses to connect the image of the trees in their “autumn beauty” to the dry woodland paths in consecutive lines and then addresses the water in a separate line. The differentiation between the water and the dryness of the paths is not made until Fragment 16. It is here that the two images represent separate aspects of the natural scene. Instead of conveying the lack of water in the scene he uses the water to mirror the sky. The verb choice in this stanza is unusual. The simple verb “are” is used three times in the stanza. The only verb that is not “are” in the stanza is “mirrors.” The presence of the word “are” persists through each of the fragments since its initial appearance in Fragment 2. The recurrent use of “are” gives the verbs an intentionally prosaic sound. Here we see Yeats using plainer language than he does in some of his earlier works and moving towards a sparser more straightforward style. In addition, in making all of the verbs uniform except “mirrors,” he draws attention to this verb. In doing so, the water takes on a greater importance than the land in this stanza because it conveys the magic of the swans and is separate from the lovely but diminished and dry fall landscape. “The Wild Swans at Coole” is the only instance, in all of Yeats’s poetry, in which the verb
“mirrors” is used, as confirmed by *A Concordance to the Poems of W.B. Yeats*. Yeats features this verb in this line but does not use it ever again in his poetry.

The temporal detail of an “October sky” is also added to this line. First Yeats writes, “The water in the October twilight mirrors a still sky” and then he revises the first part of the line to “Under the October twilight the water mirrors a still sky.” Two important changes are happening here that recur in many of Yeats’s later poems. By attributing the sky to the month of October he makes the events in the poem more specific and realistic. Including dates in the titles and within the lines of his poems is something that becomes increasingly common in Yeats’s later poetry. We find this in “Easter 1916”, “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen” and “Coole Park 1929,” for example. The second important revision that Yeats makes in this line is editing the prepositional phrase. He moves the preposition to the beginning of the line, helping to initially define the limits of space within the scene, making the image more concrete. In doing this, he brings the subject, “water,” and the verb, “mirrors,” together lending to a more prosaic and stranger sound. He runs them across the line end, perhaps to emphasize the mirroring effect of the water as the verb phrase and image reflect into the next, enjamed line: “Under the October twilight the water/ mirror a still sky” (3-4). The surrounding prosaic words help to emphasize and intensify the highly poetic element of the line—“twilight.” This emphasis renders a timelessness to the “still sky” that is directly contrasted with the speaker’s own feelings of fleeting time conveyed throughout the poem.

The appearance and importance of prepositions within Yeats’s poetry becomes more apparent in the fifth line of the first stanza. He uses the double prepositional phrase,
“Upon the brimming water among the stones/ Are nine-and-fifty swans” (5-6). Initially, Yeats placed himself among the water and stones: “From shore to shore I go/ Among the grey rock I go/ from rock to rock among the grey lake lanes” (Fragment 4). In the final version, Yeats distances the speaker from the image of the swans in the water. He positions the water, stones and swans in the same space and distances the speaker. Yeats keeps the description of the land entirely dry and still in his revisions and reserves the water to emphasize the nearly magical appearance of the swans. The speaker is entirely removed from the first stanza, intensifying his appearance in the second stanza.

The word “brimming” in this stanza is striking within the context of the desiccated scene. The Concordance to the Poetry of W.B. Yeats reveals that this word only occurs one other time in Yeats’s poetry. It appears in The Wild Swans at Coole volume in the poem “Broken Dreams.” This poem is known to be about Yeats’s long-time love, Maud Gonne, representing her as a swan. He writes, “In that mysterious, always brimming lake/ Where those that have obeyed the holy law/ Paddle and are perfect. Leave unchanged/ The hands that I have kissed,/ For old sake’s sake” (“Broken Dreams,” 32-36). Not only does this poem depict Maud Gonne in the image of a perfect swan, but it is also a poem about aging. I mention this poem because it raises the possibility for thematic trends in Yeats’s work. “Brimming” only appears twice in all of Yeats’s poetry in two poems about love, aging and swans. We find that Yeats develops thematic associations in his poetry as we see the similarities of these two poems. We thus find that Yeats associates swans with ideal love and immortality—“Unwearied still, lover by lover.”
In Fragment 5, Yeats seems to self-mislead the speaker into feeling like he is casually observing the natural scene, despite feelings of unrequited love and loneliness. He uses the adverb “indolently” to describe the image of the swans on the water. He then deletes this word in the final draft. This revision is indicative of Yeats paring down his writing to a more clear and concise form. It also shows his awareness of and adherence to a specific mood in the poem. While the initial stanza is still and calm, it is not indolent. He recognizes that this is not the correct way to characterize the scene and that stillness is more appropriate. We find, as the poem progresses, that the mood is more of heart-soreness than it is of indolence. The stillness of the opening stanza is broken once the poet’s mood is revealed in the stanzas that follow.

The first stanza ends with the image of the numbered swans. The number “nine-and-fifty” does not appear until the final draft of the poem. The only number used to count the swans before the appearance of “nine-and-fifty” in the final draft is “five & forty.” This calls into question the significance of the number Yeats chooses. Nicholas Grene suggests, “The ‘nine-and-fifty’ might have a magical significance derived from Faeryland ballads…Alternately Linda Fox ingeniously proposes that the number is linked ‘to Yeats’s view of the cyclicity of history. The minute hand of a clock, reaching the fifty-ninth mark, signals the beginning of an hour’s last minute’ ” (126). Within the context of this poem that is deeply rooted in the passage of time, the number connecting to the last minute of a passing hour seems appropriate. The appearance of “five-and-forty” in the manuscripts, however, misses this enticing association.

Alternatively, based on the draft work, I suggest that the revision is based on the way the words sound when read aloud—a factor Yeats considered important in his
writing. The double fricative, “five-and-forty” is perhaps too alliterative. “Nine-and-fifty” rounds out the sound and gives the line a more definitive finish. The structure of the numerical phrase seems to be of the greatest importance, more so than the number itself. The inverted numerical phrase plays a key role in what Yeats is doing rhythmically. Yeats begins the stanza with a ballad quatrain (abcb) form and then adds two full lines after the semicolon in line four. In each of the stanzas, excluding the first, the final two lines are a couplet. This form seems to model a truncated sonnet with one quatrain and a couplet. In the first stanza in particular, Yeats uses enjambment in lines three and five. The first two lines of the poem concerning the dryness of the land are end-stopped, while the lines about the water and the swans are enjambed. The enjambment lends a more fluid quality to the lines involving the water and the swans and helps facilitate the rhythm of this original stanza form. The inverted numerical phrase in the last line of the stanza slows down the enjambed lines and rounds off the final line of the stanza. Yeats creates a unique form that models a truncated sonnet, but does not submit itself entirely to a traditional form. Yet, he still uses meter and rhyme, revealing continuity between his own poetic past and the newer sounds and forms that he is developing at this time.

In Fragment 1 Yeats avoids the first-person pronoun, stringing together nouns and simple verbs. He then inserts “I” into Fragment 2. Throughout the poem he increasingly uses the first-person pronoun, bringing the poem closer to the poet. As previously mentioned, this “I” is dramatically different from the “I” found in the early poems analyzed in Chapter 1. This “I,” even though not fully connected to Yeats himself, has historic specificity. It is a realistic speaker contemplating on the realities of aging. In
Fragment 5, however, Yeats writes, “We are now at the nineteenth autumn.” The temporary appearance of “we” in the fragments is somewhat perplexing. Perhaps Yeats came to this spot with someone else in his past, but the poem is so focused on loneliness and a single poet’s perspective that a companioned speaker does not work. He omits “we” in the final draft and reverts back to the first-person pronoun. Yeats realizes through his drafts that the speaker must be alone in order for his wistful encounters with the swans to be more poignant.

Through the manuscript materials we are also able to see how much Yeats struggled to establish the temporal framework of this poem. The speaker of the poem recounts two instances in which he views the swans that are separated by a long period of time. Yeats goes through many revisions to create the beginning lines of the second stanza found in the final draft. Initially he writes, “Year by year I [?]” (Fragment 2). This form of the line contains the first person, but does not contain any quantifiable aspect of time. He then changes the line to “The seven years that I have” (Fragment 3), which associates the time past with a certain number of years. The next revision does not encompass the passage of time, but rather conveys the passing of the day: “A little before the daylights over I number the swans” (Fragment 4). He uses the active voice and the verb “number” to position the speaker as a force of agency within the line. Here “numbering” is a far less poetical action that the characters of the early poems who were “wandering” and “singing.” To number gives specificity and concreteness to the action. This represents Yeats’s tendency toward the realistic and away from the mythic as his poetry progressed. The actions of numbering and counting are inextricably connected to aging and the summing up of one’s years of life. *A Concordance to the Poetry of W.B.*
Yeats reveals that words and variations of words such as “count” and “number” do not appear in the early works. “Count” for example first appears in “Friends” belonging to the volume Responsibilities. The other instances of these words and their variations most commonly occur in Yeats’s later works such as “Easter 1916” for example: “Yet I number him in the song” (35). It can perhaps be inferred then that counting and numbering are not only indications of the specification and realism of Yeats’s maturing verse but it is also reflections of his own aging process as he continues to write as he gets older.

In the next fragment, Yeats introduces the third-person pronoun as previously discussed: “We are now at the nineteenth autumn/ Since I first made my count” (Fragment 5). Here he changes the number of years to “nineteen.” Using the word “nineteen” allows him to echo the sound of “nine” in “nine-and-fifty” in the first stanza. He also changes the verb and tense in the second line, “made my count.” This phrase distances the speaker compared to the more active form involving numbering the swans. The next revision that this line undergoes harkens back to a more Romantic style compared to the rest of the poem, a likely reason for its consequent revision. In Fragment 8 he writes, “Ah nineteen years from now/ And I am grown old” (Fragment 8). He eventually omits “Ah” in favor of a sparser line with more grounded language. In addition, rather than explicitly saying “And I am grown old,” he revises the line to encrypt his age within the diction. The penultimate revision to this is, “The nineteenth Autumn has gone/ Since that first time I counted” (Fragment 15). We can contrast these lines and the previous versions of the lines that Yeats revised to the final line: “The nineteenth autumn has come upon me/ Since I first made my count;” (7-8). There is an
important difference between the verbs “gone” (Fragment 15) and “come” (Final draft). The Oxford English Dictionary defines “gone” as an intransitive verb of motion for a movement viewed without regard to its point of departure or destination, away from the speaker. “Come” is defined as an intransitive verb of motion towards or to reach a speaker, often used in opposition to “go.” In choosing to use the phrase “come upon me” in the final draft, Yeats makes the speaker more prominent in the poem. The phrase “come upon me” also indicates the speaker’s lack of control over time. This version of the line is more consistent with the effect of aging on a person and feelings of helplessness in the face of passing time. In addition, using the phrase “made my count” also connects this poem even further to aging. Just as the speaker counts the swans, so does he count the years that are forced upon him.

Fragment 5 of the second stanza contains the line “I make no sound for if they hear me/ Suddenly they would mount/ Scattering & wheel above the waters/ in great broken wings/ And a slow clamour of wings.” In Fragment 15, Yeats changes the line to, “They heard when I had but half finished/ And all suddenly mounted/ And/ Scatter, & wheeling in great broken rings/ Upon their clamorous wings.” The final draft reads: “I saw, before I had well finished,/ All suddenly mount/ And scatter wheeling in great broken rings/ Upon their clamorous wings.” Initially Yeats emphasizes the silence of the speaker in the line: “I make no sound.” In the final draft, however, he implies this by only attributing sound to the swans. He also has no control over whether the swans mount or not; even if he is silent and does not announce his presence, they will still mount and leave him. While he moves towards more prosaic and sparse language, he maintains complexity through the subtlety of these relationships. In addition, as we saw in the
previous stanza, Yeats often uses prepositional phrases. He initially writes: “upon their clamorous wings.” “Upon” attributes the sound only to the swans, moving the action away from the speaker. These lines are sexual in nature. Yeats uses “mount,” “wheeling” and “clamorous” to create a passionate and sexual portrayal of the swans. The speaker does not possess this same passion or vigor—he is a silent onlooker. So many of the revisions to this stanza are working to minimize the power of the speaker, leaving him alone, heart sore and passionless.

The third stanza of the poem opens, “I look upon the brilliant creatures/ I am heavy & heart sore” (Fragment 6). The final draft of the poem reads, “I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,/ And now my heart is sore” (13-14). Yeats changes the tense of this opening to the stanza, putting it in the past tense. This temporal framework is then contrasted by “now” in the following line in which the speaker describes his current state. In addition, Yeats changes “the” to “those” in the context of the “brilliant creatures.” The use of deictic words, forms, or expressions is extremely characteristic of Yeats’s poetry. In fact, Nicholas Grene dedicates an entire chapter of his book, Yeats’s Poetic Codes to deixis in Yeats’s poetry. In his chapter “This and That, Here and There,” Grene states, “In ‘The Wild Swans at Coole’ Yeats brought together two different visions of the swans on the lake but kept the two sightings nineteen years apart, carefully distinct” (48). In the third stanza, “those” points to the creatures of the past, separating and contrasting the two instances of which Grene speaks.

In Fragment 7, Yeats asks questions in his draft to help penetrate the speaker’s emotions. He writes, “They are but images on water/ Why should my heart be young/ I turn away from the wat/ Why do I turn from the water./ As though my heart were
wring.” These explicit insights into the speaker’s emotions are more subtle and encrypted in the final draft. In addition, Yeats shifts between the verbs “look” and “gaze” in association with the “brilliant creatures.” “Look” is defined as to direct one’s sight or apply one’s power of vision, whereas “gaze” is defined as to look vacantly or to be in a trance (OED). In choosing the word “look,” Yeats makes the speaker of the poem more active. Yeats also mentions the speaker’s “heart” in this stanza and how it is sore. The heart becomes an important symbol of the poet’s self in Yeats’s later works, including “Easter 1916,” “Sailing to Byzantium” and “The Circus Animals’ Desertion.” This heart soreness that encompasses the mood of the poem perhaps figures back to the series of Romantic disappointments leading up to the time in which this poem was published. Yeats’s love for Maud Gonne and her rejection of him perhaps played a role in the importance of this feeling of heart soreness in the poem.

The poem continues: “All’s changed since I, hearing at twilight, the first time on this shore,/ The bell-beat of their wings above my head,/ Trod with a lighter tread” (15-18). Yeats revives the heavy alliteration of his early words in these lines through “bell-beat” and “trod” and “tread.” He also gives this line a regular meter, to reflect the beating of the swans’ wings. Through the appositive, Yeats reminisces on the past, “the first time on this shore,” and emphasizes his aged state. The word “twilight” here reflects the speaker’s feelings of being in-between youth and old age. He also uses the deictic phrase “this shore” to facilitate the contrast between the encounters with the swans over the nineteen years. In addition, Yeats continues to associate sound only with the swans.

In Fragment 7 a variation of what eventually becomes the final lines of the poem appears within drafts of the third stanza: “Upon what stream or pool / Shall they in beauty
swim, when I come here some day/ To find them flown away.” In Fragment 16, a version of the first stanza appears on the same manuscript page as a version of the last stanza. This indicates that Yeats had a simultaneous vision for the beginning and ending of his poem. The appearance of the final lines within Fragment 7 also reveals that this ending was quite striking to Yeats and important to culminating his poem. Its initial appearance in the third stanza seems unusual. The appearance of the final lines on the same manuscript page (in their nearly finalized form) indicates that Yeats thought that the lines were most appropriately contrasted to the initial stanza and belonged at the end of the poem.

As previously mentioned, *The Wild Swans at Coole* volume was first published in 1917 and then revised and republished in 1919. In the 1917 version, what becomes the final stanza in the 1919 version is the third stanza. This ordering was initially approved for publication in 1917, but altered in 1919. In his essay “Teaching the Versions of ‘The Wild Swans at Coole,’” Herbert Levine discusses the implications of this variation in placement of the final stanza. He writes, “In comparing the final stanzas, students can readily see that two very different moods produced the two poems. It is easy to identify the self-pitying contrast between poet and swans that concludes the 1917 version, itself an echo of the earlier contrast between the poet as he was when he first saw them (treading with a lighter tread) and the poet as he is now. It is far more difficult to determine what to make of the open future of the 1919 version. Does the poet accept fated loss, or does he fear a future without the swans?” (76). The placement of the final stanza (in the 1919 edition) in the manuscript materials as well as in the different published editions leads to different interpretations of the poem. The final approval of the
ordering in the 1919 edition, and as seen in the manuscript materials, creates a much more ambiguous ending. The reader is left to speculate the speaker’s emotions through the final interrogative line. We are uncertain if he accepts, fears or laments his loss of the swans. The 1919 version allows all of these options to be viable possibilities. Perhaps Yeats preferred this version because of its room for interpretation as it establishes a more complex relationship between the speaker and the scene.

The fourth stanza of “The Wild Swans at Coole” does not contain significant variation in the drafts. Rather than looking at what was omitted or added to the draft work in this case, we find that the word “still” persisted in each of the drafts of the fourth stanza. It is clear that this word and its multiple meanings were extremely important to Yeats. In this stanza, “still” takes on the meaning of persistence through time. Yeats describes the swans: “Unwearied still, lover by lover,/They paddle in the cold/Companionable streams or climb the air;/Their hearts have not grown old;/Passion or conquest, wander where they will,/Attend upon them still” (19-24). The swans are still unwearied, in love and passionate, unlike him. He has grown sore and wearied; he is dried up like the “woodland paths” of the first stanza.

Yeats emphasizes “their hearts have not grown old” as its own end-stopped line in order to establish that the speaker’s has. The heart becomes an important symbol of the vibrancy of the poetic self and the origins of passion and creativity in Yeats’s writing. Here, the speaker does not possess these attributes as he finds himself wearied by the passing of time. In Fragment 9, Yeats describes the swans. He initially says that “their hearts have not grown cold” and that “their bodies are not old” (Fragment 9). Yeats forgoes a description of the body in favor of the heart, highlighting this importance of the
heart as a symbol of poetic creativity in his writing. In addition, rather than equating an absence of warm blood with the end of life, he equates oldness with the absence of life. Yeats admits that it becomes more difficult to live life passionately and vigorously with old age.

In the fifth stanza, Yeats repeats the word “still” but in a different context. He opens the final stanza with “But now they drift on the still water” (25). Here “still” conveys a lack of motion. The dual meanings of the word “still” and their usage in stanzas four and five are important to Yeats because they persisted through several of the fragments. The first line of the last stanza also brings the reader to the present tense with the speaker. The line breaks after the comma to a two-word line punctuated with a comma and a semicolon: “Mysterious, beautiful;” (26). Here Yeats relies on the integrity of the words to capture the image of the swans. This stylistic choice is similar to the revision of “the curd, pale moon” to the “brilliant moon” that Yeats describes in “A Discursion on Style.” “Mysterious, beautiful” represent crystallized images of the swans that require no other surrounding word support. He then again launches into prepositional phrases: “Among what rushes will they build,/ By what lake’s edge or pool” (27-28). Here the birds are building. This line not only identifies swans with love and aging but it also identifies them with idealized poet figures or muses as they build and have craft. Yeats uses prepositions to consolidate and order space in his poem, providing tangible boundaries and limits to his images. The final couplet seems to then follow abruptly after the word “pool” and is unique in its interrogative form: “Delight men’s eyes when I awake some day/ To find they have flown away?” (29-30). This final couplet calls into question the meaning of the word “awake.” Does it imply that the speaker is in a dream-
like state, unaware of reality? This seems unlikely since he is so preoccupied with the reality of aging. Perhaps it literally means “wake up,” as in arise in some future day. Thus the word choice provokes questions about the speaker’s frame of mind, lending itself to the ambiguity that characterizes the end of the 1919 edition of the poem compared to the 1917 edition. The final interrogative couplet encapsulates the wistful nature of the speaker’s experience. He imagines the swans delighting other men’s eyes as they did his and also imagines them leaving him. A vague sense of happiness and self-mourning combine within these lines.

The drafts of this final stanza are not extensively revised and so they do not provide much insight into the choice of this particular word. In fact, the fragments are most extensive for the first and second stanza, relatively extensive for the third and very limited for the fourth and fifth. It becomes clear that as Yeats continued to write and adjust himself to his vision for this poem, his revisions became less extensive and his lines more finalized. The appearance of these final lines in the third stanza and then later on the same manuscript page as a nearly finalized version of the first stanza gives merit to the fact that he wrote more decisively or definitively as the fragments progressed.

The extensive nature of Yeats’s manuscripts provides great insight into the choices he makes and lets the Yeats reader speculate on why Yeats made certain changes. From a close reading of the manuscript materials of “The Wild Swans at Coole,” we find that Yeats adds complexity to his work through subtle representations of the speaker’s emotions. He also moves towards the more quantifiable in his writing by using dates and numbers. Spatial imagery is confined through the use of prepositional phrases as well and temporal frameworks are established through deictic phrases. These specific changes will
be interesting to track as we investigate the manuscript materials of Yeats’s early and late works. Through this investigation we will perhaps see some of these changes occurring more frequently within a certain period of Yeats’s writing. From a close analysis of “The Wild Swans at Coole,” however, we can better understand Yeats and his poetic goals at this middle time in his career. Here we find that middle Yeats, a fifty-one year old man at the time this poem was written, is consumed by thoughts of aging. We also find that Yeats the man, rather than simply the poet, felt a sense of romantic disappointment during this time that he expressed in his poetry. From a stylistic standpoint, perhaps the most evident change that occurs in Yeats’s work during this period is the paring down of his language and movement towards more prosaic language. In this more concise and concrete style we perhaps see the beginnings of a more modern version of Yeats’s self. At the same time, however, elements of high poetic language and Romantic imagery still linger in some of his lines. We thus find Yeats in a period of exciting transition in which he is taking steps to revise his style yet still hold on to some of his familiar forms and images.

In the manuscript materials of The Wild Swans at Coole volume we also find revisions to other poems such as “Lines Written in Dejection” and “Ego Dominus Tuus” that corroborate some of the trends found in “The Wild Swans at Coole” and help to characterize Yeats’s writing during this middle period. In “Lines Written in Dejection” Yeats makes a similar revision in the poem as he does in “The Wild Swans at Coole” to present age in his poetry. In “The Wild Swans at Coole” Yeats establishes a temporal framework by stating the number of years that have passed since his first encounter with the swans. In some of the early fragments he explicitly states that he has grown older;
however, in the final draft he only mentions the number of years that have passed. “Lines Written in Dejection” has two fragments. In the first fragment, Yeats expresses his age by stating, “And all the old white hares on [?]” (Fragment 1). In Fragment 2, he alters the line to “And now that I have come to fifty years” (Fragment 2). Here we see Yeats transitioning to a more concrete and quantifiable presentation of age in his poetry. Just as in “The Wild Swans at Coole,” he gives a number to the years that have passed and moves away from the qualitative description of age as the changing of the color of one’s hair.

“Ego Dominus Tuus” is a dialogue poem written in blank verse. Here blank verse serves as a neutral conversational ground. There is an important shift in this poem as compared to “The Wild Swans at Coole” in that there is no rhyme scheme. The use of blank verse stylistically separates this work from “The Wild Swans at Coole” and represents a transition for Yeats that occurs within the volume itself. Helen Vendler writes that in this poem, Yeats “inaugurates fusing, in his blank verse, dialogue with doctrine” (251). The poem is spoken by two speakers named after Latin deictic pronouns: Hic (“this one”) and Ille (“that one”). Vendler contends that, “Hic is the nineties poet of sorrowful introspection and emotional expression that Yeats used to be, while Ille is Yeats the modernist” (251). In his essay, “A Dialogue Between Realism and Idealism in Yeats's ‘Ego Dominus Tuus,’” Stuart Hirschberg writes, “Hic is presented as a pragmatic and conventional type of man, whereas Ille (who Ezra Pound thought represented Yeats and so should have been called Willie), is an idealist who feels that the present has lost touch with the tradition of the past. In essence, the poem is a debate as to whether literature should be an extension of the artist’s life (as Hic believes), or should
instead (as Ille holds) be an idealized vision completely separate from the artist's experience” (129). Finally, in “Yeats at the Crossroads: The Debate of Self and Anti-Self in ‘Ego Dominus Tuus,’” Herbert Levine states, “Both Hic and Ille are sides of Yeats, each wanting to denigrate the other in order to gain the upper hand in Yeats’s Poetic future. The standard reading of the poem has always been to identify Yeats with Ille, but unfortunately this is a reading from hindsight. Yeats’s career bears out Ille as the rightful spokesman for his poetic future because Yeats deliberately reshaped himself as that masked figure” (133).

As we can see, Hic and Ille are understood differently by different scholars. I find labeling Hic as the nineties Yeats or the Idealist and Ille as the modern Yeats or the Realist too reductive. The fact that there are different interpretations and understandings of the representations of these two characters reveals the complexity of the poem. Similar to Levine’s view, I would like to offer a more general reading of the characters in which Hic represents the present Yeats and Ille represents Yeats’s own conception of a new poetic identity that he seeks to develop. This reading, as we will find, is supported by the manuscript materials of the poem. We eventually find that Ille comes to represent a combination of Romanticism and Modernism that Yeats himself possesses throughout his entire career.

In this poem, originally called “The Anti-Self” or “The self and the anti-self,” Yeats confidently calls upon an image that is his own opposite, Ille. We find that Hic receives the first word in the poem and Ille the last, showing Yeats’s desire to shift towards his anti-self, perhaps his own idea of modernism. Hic and Ille differ in their value of what an artist should be. Hic favors tradition and technique and Ille favors
emotion and the self. This poem in particular reveals Yeats’s belief that passion is crucial to good poetry.

The title “Ego Dominus Tuus” translates to “I am our lord” or “I am your master.” This religious and traditional Latin title does not seem to fit the context of a poem that characterizes and champions a newer style. Yeats also gives the speakers of the poem Latin names. Often in Modern poetry, a poet uses a foreign language to break from traditional form and style and estrange the reader’s ear. For example, T.S. Eliot used many different languages in his poem “The Wasteland” and Ezra Pound used Chinese in some of his poems to this effect. “Ego Dominus Tuus” does not fit this model. Here, foreign language represents the tradition and the break from convention occurs in the abstraction of the names that are translated to “this” and “that.” These are unconventional character names and are used ironically in rejection of traditional form.

In the first fragment of this poem we see Yeats’s movement towards specification in his poetry. He uses direct names within his writing, grounding the verse. For example, he writes, “the open book that Michael Robartes left you” (Fragment 1). In addition, in Fragment 4 Yeats writes, “He that all the writers of the world.” He then revises the line to “The chief imagination of Christendom,/ Dante Alighieri” (18-19) in the final draft. Yeats also names Keats and other figures in his poem. The appearance of names in Yeats’s poems becomes increasingly common as Yeats’s poetry progresses and helps to specify his images, such as the names appearing in “Easter 1916.” The names in the middle and late poems are more relevant to current European history or so specific in their nature that they relate to Irish Nationalists. While names of heroic legendary figures were prominent in Yeats’s early works, the names appearing in the middle/last works help drive Yeats
toward realistic subject matter and rooting his poetry in the commonplace. “Ego Dominus Tuus” also contains instances in which Yeats moves towards simpler language in his poetry, as we saw in “The Wild Swans at Coole.” For example, in Fragment 1 he states, “I now call up my anti type” (Fragment 1). “Anti-type” is changed to “opposite” in final draft. As we can see, the language becomes simpler and more direct through revision. Other examples of colloquial speech in the poem include: “A lamp burns on beside the open book,” “Impulsive men that look for happiness/And sing when they have found it” and “A style is found by sedentary toil.”

We can also help to characterize the middle Yeats by noting his use of chiasmus in this volume and his conscious revisions to create chiastic lines at this time. In fragment one, the beginnings of a line read, “That I have least handled, look up & then up.” In the final draft the line reads, “that I have handled least, leased looked upon.” Here Yeats adopts a pseudo chiastic structure. He does this in other poems within The Wild Swans at Coole volume, particularly in “An Irish Airman Foresees his Death.” The final quatrain of the poem is an example of triple chiasmus: “I balanced all, brought all to mind,/The years to come seemed waste of breath,/A waste of breath the years behind,/In balance with this life, this death.” (13-16). Increased appearance of chiastic structure in Yeats’s writing is indicative of highly complex form and structure. The creation of these lines undoubtedly requires extensive foresight and command over language. To compose such an effective pairing of words that sounds so natural while evoking deep thoughts on life and death is truly remarkable. While chiasmus can establish contrasts or connections in poetry that can add meaning to the poem, at face value it is a mark of poetic finesse.

Upon first hearing chiastic lines one is initially impressed by their sound and then
impacted by what they say. Using chiasmus, to Yeats, must have been an important way in which he could show his command over his verse and demonstrate his toil over his lines. The use of chiasmus seems to be unique to middle Yeats as it is not common in the early poetry and is not featured in the later works.

According to Denis Donoghue in “Yeats, Trying to be Modern” the passage, “By the help of an image/ I call to my own opposite, summon all/ That I have handled least, least looked upon” calls for close attention to Yeats’s voice and its connection to the Modernist movement. In this essay, Donoghue identifies Hic with a figure “infatuated with moonlit visions” and Ille with Yeats. Donoghue writes, “This is a version of a motive well-established in Yeats, which he expounds in several essays and poems. It is a theory common to poets who would speak not directly in their own voices, but obliquely as if they were determine to put a safe distance between themselves and their feelings. We find it in Eliot and Pound, who invent figures different from themselves and speak through them: Prufrock, Gerontin, Marina, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley.” Here Donoghue picks out a similar distancing of the poetic self in this poem as we found in “The Wild Swans at Coole.” While the speaker represents a form of Yeats’s voice and thoughts Yeats ensures that he is distance from the poetic narrative in both poems. Donoghue goes on to say, “Yeats does not say, in ‘Ego Dominus Tuus’ or elsewhere, how an image helps him to summon up his opposite, unless he means—as perhaps he does—that an image at the furthest remove from oneself is likely to bring forth one’s greatest imaginative effort.”

Hic subscribes to the traditional form and style of poetry, largely an introspective art. Hic states, “Yet surely there are men who have made their art/ Out of no tragic war,
lovers of life,/ impulsive men that look for happiness/ And sing when they have found it” (38-41). Hic contends that art can come from simple introspection or standard subjects uninspired by struggle or passion. Ille disagrees with this notion and believes that art comes from a passionately lived life—it comes from toil, struggle and action. Ille argues that an artist creates images by seeking the anti-self and shedding the self—embracing a new identity and shifting away from tradition. Hic simply believes that feeling and art are connected—men sing of happiness when they have found it. Ille rejects the simplicity of this argument in favor of his more complicated relationship between the artist and the anti-self, “No, not sing,/ For those that love the world serve it in action, grow rich, popular and full of influence,/ And should they paint or write, still it is action:/ The struggle of the fly in marmalade” (42-46). Hic also states, “A style is found by sedentary toil/ And by the imitation of great masters.” While the Modern Yeats would undoubtedly agree that style comes from great toil, this toil is not “sedentary,” but active. Yeats himself, however, does not reject the idea of the “imitation of great masters” as he preserves elements of Romanticism in his poetry throughout his career. Ille replies to Hic’s contention, “Because I seek an image, not a book./ those men that in their writings are most wise/ Own nothing but their blind, stupefied hearts./ I call to the mysterious one who yet/ Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the stream/ And look most like me, being indeed my double,/ And prove of all imaginable things/ The most unlike, being my anti-self” (67-74). Yeats seeks a new artistic form. He rejects the concept of a book of imitations of poets past, and favors an “image,” still hazy and unformed, but distinct from the old tradition. This “mysterious one” who “yet shall walk the wet sands” does not exist yet, but is in process. The verb “walk” carries greater purpose and direction than the
verb of Yeats’s early poems, “wander.” Yeats recognizes that this modern form exists within him, his anti-self. In this poem he calls upon it, announcing its arrival. Perhaps casting off some of his Romantic tendencies is something that Yeats sought to do as evidenced through Ille’s dialogue, but never truly accomplished. If Hic represents the present Yeats, however, he recognizes that his poetry still contains artifacts of the “great masters.”

I contend that Hic represents the present Yeats and Ille represents Yeats’s own conception of a new poetic identity that he seeks to develop. This reading is supported by one of the most significant revisions Yeats makes to “Ego Dominus Tuus,” in which he changes the characters assigned to each stanza. In Fragment 3 of the poem, he reverses the speaker of what becomes the fifth dialogue exchange. In Fragment 3, Ille speaks this phrase. In the final draft, however, Hic speaks this part. In the consecutive fragments, we find that each of the exchanges that Yeats ascribes to Ille in the initial drafts he later gives to Hic in the final draft and vice versa. From this significant and consistent revision, we are able to see where Yeats sees himself in the context of his own transformation. When he changes the voice of the past and tradition to Hic, which translates to “this,” we find that this is the version of Yeats that exists as he writes the poem. The nearness associated with this deictic word confirms this association. Yeats gives the modern version of himself the name, Ille, “that,” implying a certain distance from this version of himself. Just as he indicates within the dialogue of the poem itself, this version of his poetic self is still to come. Yeats still finds himself in his old form and is working towards the entire realization of his modern self.
Through a careful analysis of the manuscript work of select poems in *The Wild Swans at Coole*, we can begin to track and characterize the making of the Modern Yeats. Through the trends developing in his revisions and the meaning that these changes hold in the analysis of his final works, we can begin to define Yeats at this time in his life, trace back to where he once was and project to where he ends up. *The Wild Swans at Coole*, written in the middle of Yeats’s career, provides a crucial context in which to view the transformation of Yeats’s poetry.
CHAPTER THREE
Late Yeats

Two years after the appearance of *The Wild Swans at Coole* Yeats published his next volume, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, in 1921. Similar to *The Wild Swans at Coole*, the content of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* reflects personal changes in Yeats’s life. Yeats was married to George Hyde-Lees on October 20, 1917. In the introduction to the Cornell Yeats manuscript materials of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, the editors comment on the varied nature of the manuscript materials for this volume in particular. They note that the poems written before his marriage such as “Easter 1916” make their appearance in publishable shape and show few revisions, while drafts of the poems written from late 1917 to 1919 are preserved in relative fullness and contain early versions. Many copies of these manuscripts were torn in two, intended for the wastebasket. George rescued these works from their intended fate and is largely responsible for the prolific nature of the manuscript work that we have on Yeats’s later poems. An analysis of the draft work on poems written after 1917 is particularly rewarding thanks to George’s scrupulous practices of saving Yeats’s early drafts and annotations.

*Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, appearing near the middle of Yeats’s career, represents an eclectic sampling of his poetry. The poems are public, personal and philosophic in nature. Some of the more public poems include those associated with the Easter Rebellion of 1916, the Black and Tans force of the Irish War for Independence and the outbreak of World War I. Poems like “Under Saturn,” an apologetic address to
George Yeats, represent those poems that are personal in nature. The philosophical poems such as “The Second Coming” are connected to Yeats’s occult interests and also fit into the historical context of the upheaval of the modern world during the time in which he composed his poems. We will closely analyze the numerous revisions to “The Second Coming” to continue to characterize middle Yeats and to provide a foundation for understanding his later works.

“The Second Coming” was written in 1919 at the height of the Irish Revolution and during the aftermath of the First World War. This poem first reflects Yeats’s modernism in its form and meter. Yeats fights against tradition by composing what Helen Vendler calls an extended Petrarchan sonnet (170). The first stanza of the poem is eight lines, like a Petrarchan octave, and is closed off by an end-stopped line. The second fourteen-line stanza continues as a traditional Petrarchan sonnet of sorts in which the octave and sestet are enjambed. Two successive octaves appear before the sestet, and the second octave and sestet, most closely related to the traditional form, are conjoined by the running line. Through this expansion of the sonnet form and the disruption of the Petrarchan tradition, Yeats breaks with the old way and creates a form more fitting to the uncertainty of the time in which he was writing. In Mother Love, Rita Dove wrote, “The sonnet is a heile Welt, an intact world where everything is in sync, from the stars down to the tiniest mite on a blade of grass. And if the ‘true’ sonnet reflects the music of the spheres, it then follows that any variation from the strictly Petrarchan or Shakespearean forms represents a world gone awry.” The expanded form in “The Second Coming” foretells some monstrous birth—an unknown. A non-traditional, halting and disturbed sonnet form better suits the subject matter at hand than would a traditional Petrarchan
sonnet. The poem as a whole hints at recognizable features of a Petrarchan sonnet but
does not assemble them in the traditional way. We can read it as a sonnet starting from
the beginning with the sestet ending with the image of the lion body with the head of a
man or we can read it as a poem with an initial octave and an inverted sonnet following
the octave. Any permutation of the octave or sestet disturbs our vision of the Petrarchan
sonnet. The sonnet itself becomes a “rough beast” with recognizable parts like octaves,
fourteen line stanzas and sestets, but these parts are assembled to create a frightening
hybrid sonnet much like the hybrid creature, “a shape with lion body and the head of a
man.”

Most of the draft work for “The Second Coming” corresponds to what becomes
the first octave of the poem. Yeats fumbles in sea of abstractions for the apocalyptic
opening that the final version of the poem possesses. The first written lines of the draft
work do not have an identified speaker. Yeats also does not begin with the gyre imagery
but rather starts with what becomes the notion of how “things fall apart.” The manuscript
materials begin with, “All things break up—no stroke upon the clock” (Fragment 1).
Yeats first creates a sense of anarchy through the clock imagery. There is no sense of
time and therefore no sense of order. The clock imagery also reflects the obsession with
time that we encountered in “The Wild Swans at Coole.” Here, however, there is no
solitary speaker grappling with the fleeting nature of life, but rather time no longer exists.
Yeats continues the clock imagery in the second fragment with the phrase, “Things fall
apart—at every stroke of the clock.” He pares down the phrase “Things fall apart” and
tries to specify the clock imagery. Now there is a sense of time, but it is harsh and
oppressive. It is told by the apocalyptic ticking of a clock moving toward destruction.
Yeats then immediately rejects this clock/time imagery focusing on establishing contrasts in the first stanza. He continues in the first fragment, “But ceremonious innocence has died,/ But the Yet when/ While mob fawns upon the murderer[?]s] And While the judge nods before his empty dock,/ And there is no Burke to cry aloud no Pit/ And there is none to pluck him by the gown” (Fragment 1). He establishes contrasts through words like “but,” “yet” and “while.” He also continues the pattern of repeating the word “and” in a list that we find in his earlier poetry in “The Madness of King Goll” and “The Wild Swans at Coole.” The effect of accumulating “and” here is similar to that of Yeats’s earlier works where the accumulation had an incantatory effect. This construction using contrasting words, a series of “ands” and historical references does not survive the draft work. Instead Yeats preserves the list construction but places rhetorically simple yet profound images of anarchy one after another to render an apocalyptic effect, as we will see in the analysis of the final version of the first stanza to follow.

The third fragment first introduces the gyre and falcon imagery. Yeats further describes his gyre imagery that he alludes to in the poem in “A Note on 'The Second Coming.'” He explains his theory through the characters of Michael Robartes and Owen Aherne. Robartes gives Aherne “several mathematical diagrams”, “squares and spheres, cones made up of revolving gyres intersecting each other at various angles, figures sometimes of great complexity.” The explanation for these “is founded upon a single fundamental thought. The mind, whether expressed in history or in the individual life, has a precise movement, which can be quickened or slackened but cannot be fundamentally altered, and this movement can be expressed by a mathematical form;” this form is the
gyre. The gyre begins at its origin and expands in a spiral across the dimension of time creating a vortex or funnel. Once it reaches its maximum point of expansion it narrows until it creates a new expanding gyre. The gyre is commonly viewed as a double vortex, where two vortices intersect and the apex of one is at the center of the other's base. Below is a recreated schematic of one of Yeats’s own drawings on his conception of gyres to help visualize his complex theory:

As the gyre widens and grows it loses centripetal force. This is revealed in the final version of the poem with the phrase “the center cannot hold.” In the third fragment Yeats writes, “Ever more wide sweeps the gyre/ Ever further the flies out ward/ from the falconer hand” (Fragment 3). The gyre imagery is connected to the falcon. The falcon becomes a physical manifestation of the chaos and disorder associated with the gyres. In what can be imagined as a revolution of sorts, the falcon breaks free from its master and “flies out ward” away from the controlling center of the world. Yeats then changes the
line within the same fragment to, “The gyres grow wider & more wide” (Fragment 3). The omitted phrase is revised to “intellectual gyre is” to read, “The intellectual gyre is wide.” Yeats struggles to capture the magnitude and expansiveness of the gyre as seen through his revision to the initial line, adding, “grow wider & more wide.” He also has difficulty capturing the character of the gyre. He makes the distinction of an intellectual gyre but later rejects this refinement. Making the gyre specifically intellectual is too constricting for this apocalyptic poem. If he kept the intellectual distinction, the reading of his poem would be limited the intellectual circuit and perhaps confined to a commentary on the poets, writers, and intellectuals of Yeats’s time. By removing “intellectual” from the description of the gyres, Yeats is able write about the current status of the world in which he lives, body and mind. He can associate the gyres with the wasted and destroyed land that resulted from the aftermath of the First World War that will then be built back up and destroyed again in a cyclic turn of events. By choosing to remain general with his gyre imagery Yeats’s poem can be applied to any event of destruction and rebirth that may befall mankind.

Yeats further revises the line to, “Broader & broader is the/ Ever more wide/ Day by day/ The gyres sweep wider by year [?s]” (Fragment 4). These constructions, relying on comparative phrases, do not satisfy Yeats. He finally turns to the gerund form in the final version of his line, “Turning & turning in the wide gyre widening gyre” (Fragment 5). He favors the gerund in both “turning” and “widening.” The gerund encapsulates the cyclical and continuous nature of the gyre. The “-ing” form is highly prevalent in Yeats’s poetry. The form produces a different effect, however, as Yeats’s poetry evolves. In his early poems, “-ing” renders an ethereal effect and mirrors the Romantic language of the
poetry. As was mentioned in our analysis of “The Song of Wandering Aengus” the words “wandering,” “flickering,” “glimmering,” and “brightening” give the verse an almost magical quality and musical sound. As Yeats progresses in his poetry he gets closer to the effect that the gerund form has in “The Second Coming.” In “The Wild Swans at Coole” the gerund verbs, “brimming” and “wheeling,” reflect the speaker’s lack of control over his environment and time. Rather than reflecting the cyclical nature of time, the gerund lends itself to a fleeting and uncontrollable sense of time. In “The Second Coming” the gerund has an even more purposeful usage. It mimics the cyclical and continuous nature of history through the paralleled image of the gyres. The word “turning” emphasizes the cyclical nature of time and is related to the turning of the vortex-like gyre. The word “widening” emphasizes the expansive nature of the gyre. In both cases the “-ing” pushes the boundaries of the gyres out and then in again as history and mankind are built up and then destroyed again and again. The consecutive usage of “turning” and “widening” expands and contracts the image of the gyre in two dimensions, giving a more powerful and illustrative portrayal of Yeats’s philosophical theory.

In the third fragment Yeats makes another revision that we have seen in his poetry before. He writes, “The hawk can no more hear the falconer” (Fragment 3). He then changes the omitted phrase to “falcon cannot hear.” Yeats chooses to use a word that is contained within a following word—falcon in falconer. This is a common tool used in “The Song of Wandering Aengus” to propel the verse forward and give it a magical effect. I suggest that in this context the repetition of a word within a word or the repetition of the same word in consecutive lines, which we will see in the final draft with the word “loosed,”—“Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world./ The blood-dimmed tide is
loosed” (5-6), renders a spiraling effect to the verse. Yeats grasps on to a certain word and then quickly reaches for it again in the same line or next line as if the verse itself is “turning and widening” and the poet is losing control amidst the anarchy.

An important revision to the early drafts of “The Second Coming” is the omission of historical allusions in the final drafts. In fragment three we find Yeats mentioning Marie Antoinette and Burke as well as alluding to the French Revolution of 1789, the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Irish Revolution of 1919. Yeats writes, “For this/ Marie Antoinette has/ Most [?brutally] [?died], & no/ Burke has spoken [?to the] has [cried] with his voice” (Fragment 3). He also writes, “The Germans to Russia take their place” (Fragment 3). In the introduction to the manuscript materials of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, the editors point to scholars who have identified Yeats’s allusions in the early draft work: “Patrick J. Keane has addressed Yeats’s reading of Burke on the French Revolution, and the connection of that reading to the poem, and he and Jon Stallworthy have connected the poem also to the Russian Revolution. Yeats’s handwriting, always difficult, is especially unintelligible in the early fragments of ‘The Second Coming,’ and Keane and Stallworthy detect references to Marx, which are hard to confirm; nevertheless, it is clear that there are references to Germany and Russia. The poem has further roots in the Irish revolution. The system of justice substituted Irish courts for British ones; the British courts stood empty. The judge who nods before his empty dock is the British judge who lacks authority in his own court” (xxiii). These historical references do not reflect the visionary quality of the final draft and so were likely omitted to give the poem a sense of timelessness and transcendence. Just as the qualification of an “intellectual gyre” would limit the reading of the poem, specific historical references
would confine the poem to a certain time period. This directly goes against what seems to be Yeats’s ultimate goal for this poem—to create a verse that can apply to any catastrophic moment in history followed by a powerful rebirth.

In its final version, the first stanza creates a general apocalyptic environment. In the introduction to the manuscript materials for *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, the editors note, “The human murderer and mob have become a non-specific ‘blood-dim tide.’ And the murdered queen and the judge sitting in his empty court have been conflated into the ‘ceremony of innocence’ now drowned by the flood of blood and anarchy, three specific revolutions then provide the roots that feed the poet’s thoughts on the movement of human history” (xxiii). This non-specificity echoes the general nature of the line “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;” (3). Yeats purposefully does not commit to a specific image or moment in time. We do not know specifically what these “things” are or the center of “what” cannot hold. Anarchy is rendered through a loss of senses—“The falcon cannot hear the falconer” (2). Yeats also uses three consecutive passive voice constructions to create a lack of control, “Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world;/ The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere/ The ceremony of innocence is drowned;” (4-6). It is as if some unnamed creature or movement has set this course of events into action and humanity is entirely subject to its whim. The end of the stanza reflects a deficiency in the human spirit. Yeats’s tone seems to change, becoming more bitter and disenchanted. Yeats writes, “The best lack all conviction, while the worst/ Are full of passionate intensity” (7-8). He tells of a change in the human race, which contributes to the anarchy and upheaval.
The first octave contains many end-stopped lines. Despite the anarchy that is conveyed through the language of the first stanza, on the most fundamental level, Yeats has control over the lines. The line “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;” is particularly controlled. It follows “Turning and turning in the widening gyre the falcon cannot hear the falconer;” where the triple gerund form and repetition of “falcon” gives the line an uncontrolled, running effect. Yeats contrasts this opening with the caesura of the semicolon in the following line. This draws attention to the line as the meter juxtaposes the imagery. Yeats writes, “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;” however, at the center of the line he has a semicolon holding everything together. Yeats subtlety exhibits the power of the poet over his verse and defiantly opposes the anarchy of the opening lines with ordered meter—including a powerful caesura and numerous end-stopped lines.

In “The Genesis of ‘The Second Coming:’ A Textual Analysis of the Manuscript-Draft,” Simona Vannini notes, “The original nucleus of ‘The Second Coming’ was conceived in the form of a prose draft. Very often Yeats’s manuscripts document his attempt to elaborate the versification and the content of the poems simultaneously. However, in ‘The Second Coming’ the author’s initial concern is semantic rather than prosodic. This is proved implicitly by the drafts of the poem. The manuscripts reveal the importance the poet attributed to the political content, which he was developing in his early drafts. Yeats’s urgent drive to express his conjectures, even though in prose, reveals the degree of pressure exercised on his creative imagination by the historical events of the time” (104). While the prose-like quality of the early drafts may be attributed to the fact that we have access to many of the early fragments thanks to George
Yeats’s work, we can still see that Yeats gains increasing control over the lines as the
drafts progress. In addition, the manuscripts also help us to see what aspects of the
poetry were most important to Yeats as he created. As Stallworthy notes, “An important
and consistent feature of Yeats’s revision is his tendency to cut the material with which
he begins: seldom to add to it. He works inwards towards a centre, rather than outwards
and away from it” (251-252).

The second stanza, or pseudo Petrarchan sonnet that follows the opening octave,
does not have many manuscript revisions. In each of the fragments for this part of the
poem, Yeats seeks to describe this “Second Coming” in way that is similar to the final
draft of the poem. According to Vendler, “He pursues a personal myth—his myth of
supernaturally driven historical change producing an incarnate signal of the new (Helen
in the classical era, Christ in the Christian one)” (171). Yeats initially calls it a “second
birth.” He writes, “Surely the second/ [?birth] comes near” (Fragment 3). It isn’t until
Fragment six that Yeats uses the phrase “second coming.” In this phrase, which becomes
the title of the poem, Yeats again favors the gerund form—choosing “coming” over
“birth.” “Coming” in “The Second Coming” can be read as either a noun or an adjective.
According the Oxford English Dictionary, the noun form can mean “drawing near,
approaching; arrival, advent.” It can also be a “derivation, descent; origin; lineage, the
coming time, the future.” The adjective form is defined as “that comes; approaching in
space or time.” Both definitions of the word capture the meaning of “birth,” but
“coming” has an added dimension of something that is in process and that will continue
to assert itself through the cycles of history. “Coming” stresses motion, imminence and
continuity, whereas “birth” alone has more creaturely implications.
In the final version, the second stanza opens, “Surely some revelation is at hand;/ Surely the Second Coming is at hand./ The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out/ When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi/ Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert/ A shape with lion body and the head of a man,/ A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,/ Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it/ Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds” (9-17). Suddenly, late in the poem, a speaker emerges. Yeats is no longer an impersonal prophet, but instead writes as an individual experiencing this historical change. The speaker is a desperate and agitated witness to a change that is beyond his control. His struggle becomes more human as his power seems to diminish in these lines. He is passionate about this great change as he repeats the word “surely” and launches into the exclamatory phrase, “The Second Coming!” This exclamation is reminiscent of a Romantic Keatsian or Shelly-like moment of intense emotion or passion. This is one example of Yeats preserving romantic elements in his later, more Modern poetry. In addition the phrase “Hardly are those words out” is also Romantic in its biblical authority to create through verbal decree.

“The second coming” is mysterious and non-specific. As Helen Vendler notes, “he is not seeing the glorious Second Coming of Christ but a reprise, in grotesque form, of the birth of a new energy at Bethlehem. Some unspecified agency” (172). The figure of “the second coming” takes shape from an abstract element—the spiritus mundi. In the draft work, Yeats writes, “And a stark—vast image out of spiritus mundi/ Troubles my sight—A waste of sand/ A waste of desert sand/ A shape with lion body & with woman's/ And the head of a man breast & head/ Moves with a slow slouching step” (Fragment 6). The image emerges from “spiritus mundi” or the collective unconscious. It is undefined,
bestial, and is placed in a desiccated and wasted desert environment with harsh, rough sand that reflects the amorphous quality of the “beast.” Yeats’s original line referring to a lion body with the head and breasts of a woman alludes to the image of the sphinx. He changes this image in the final draft to a lion body with the head of a man. This differentiates the image from the classical sphinx character, making the image less specific and tied to a recognizable figure.

In addition, this portrayal of a sphinx-like beast is an example of what becomes Yeats’s fascination with the East. The sphinx points to Egyptian culture. In other poems Yeats gestures to foreign and particularly Eastern elements. Some of these poems include “Sailing to Byzantium” from *The Tower* (1928), “In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markievicz” from *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933) and “Lapis Lazuli,” from *New Poems* (1938). Including Eastern elements in his later works represents Yeats’s movement toward broadening the scope of his poetry. In his early works, Yeats confined himself to Irish history and legend. He wrote on the Irish people and what he knew. As his poetry progresses, however, he expands his boundaries first out to Europe, as we can see in the beginning drafts of the “Second Coming” and then to the world.

The final lines of “The Second Coming” indicate a change in the speaker. The speaker announces, “The darkness drops again; but now I know/ that twenty centuries of stony sleep/ were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,/ And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,/ Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?” (18-22). Yeats again uses caesura to emphasize the speaker’s revelation of the second coming. The beast is “rough” and the image and the description leading up to it is highly physical. Yeats emphasizes
the shape of the beast, its blank gaze, and its slow thighs. He ends the poem with the image as the beast “slouches towards Bethlehem to be born,” again emphasizing its physicality. The construction of the final lines is also passive in nature. As the “hour come round at last” the beast “slouches towards Bethlehem to be born.” The only action the beast takes is to slouch, a verb itself that is passive and unmotivated. It is as if this “beast,” slow and lethargic in its movements, does not want to be born but rather must be born. Out of the necessity of the cyclical and continuous nature of time, the beast must rear its head and set the course of time anew.

“The Second Coming” is a poem that conveys an apocalyptic sense of chaos through ordered and controlled verse. Yeats breaks with the traditional Petrarchan sonnet, but does so in a methodical way by adding an initial octave and enjambing the following octet and sestet. He conveys anarchy within lines that are end stopped or contain mid-line breaks to exert his own control over the imagery. The entire poem reflects the time in which Yeats wrote. This poem, written in 1919, mirrors the defeated European landscape in the aftermath of the First World War and also perhaps reflects a change in Yeats’s own poetry at this time, a “second coming” of his poetic style and focus. The imagery is physical, gritty, monstrous and sublime. The power of the poem lies in the uncertainty of what the “second coming” or “rough beast” exactly represents. Yeats keeps the poem non-specific entirely to render this effect. We can only see the trajectory of history through the imagery of the gyres and know that apocalyptic moments such as those that open this poem give rise to some rough and ill-defined beast to reset the course of history.
In the poems to be collected in what his editors titled *Last Poems*, Yeats engages with his impending death and surveys his life’s works. Yeats died on January 28, 1939; *Last Poems* was edited between 1938 and 1939 and published after Yeats’s death. The manuscript materials for *Last Poems* give us insight into the final creative phase of Yeats’s life. These manuscripts are also unique in that they depict the posthumous editing of Yeats’s widow, George Yeats and his Macmillan editor, Thomas Mark. In the introduction to the manuscript materials for *Last Poems*, the Cornell editors note, “The concerns of this volume are thus significantly different from those of other volumes in the Cornell series which treat Yeats’s poems. Rather than focusing almost exclusively on questions of compositional genesis, and on revealing the creative process by which canonical texts reached an authorially sanctioned final form, this volume deals with texts which, in the main, were never published during Yeats’s lifetime, some of which existed only in copiously revised typescripts at the time of his death, and for none of which he corrected proofs generated specifically for their publication in book form” (xxviii). It is thus important to note that while for the most part we are tracing Yeats’s hand and mind through the analysis of these late manuscripts, we may also be unknowingly exposed to others’ revisions that occurred after Yeats’s death. The Cornell Yeats series along with critics such as Richard Finnerman in *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats* have put their efforts together to present the poems as closely as possible to Yeats’s original poetic vision.

A manuscript of Yeats’s table of contents for this volume has been a crucial resource in the preservation of Yeats’s original intensions for his work. This document is speculated to have been one of the last things that Yeats wrote before he went into a
coma on January 27, 1939 and then passed away the next day. This “List of Contents” shows the order in which Yeats wished the poems to be printed. We will pay special attention to the final two poems that Yeats placed in this volume: “The Circus Animals’ Desertion” and “Politics.” These poems present an alternative view to the end of life that defines the tone of this volume and help depict Yeats’s poetic legacy. Rather than death being something terrifying or final, Yeats sees it as an opportunity. Collectively the poems presented in this volume, particularly the penultimate and last poem of the volume, strongly voice Yeats’s desire to heroically face death. Yeats makes his death a starting point for the next generations of poets. It is a personal moment for him to make new poetic and philosophical discoveries. Through this volume, Yeats voices that death is to be embraced not because it is something that must be accepted, but because it is something that can be used to spark reinvention of the self. At the end of his life, Yeats did not rest on his prolific poetic career and reputation and did not simply accept his impending demise. Yeats used this time of suffering and the knowledge that his time was running out to push himself as a poet and mold his poetic legacy.

The beginning of “The Circus Animals’ Desertion” depicts the writer’s block that Yeats experienced at the end of his life. The Cornell introduction asserts that, “‘The Circus Animals’ Desertion’—a poem about creative incapacity and the loss of poetic inspiration—typifies the kinds of imaginative swerve and the irresolution he experienced in trying to complete the volume. The poem, which was alternately titled ‘Despair’ and ‘On the lack of a theme’ in one late draft, emerged out of a sudden and debilitating sense of creative bankruptcy, which followed his completion of *New Poems* in the autumn of 1937” (xxx). This poetic incapability provides the initial framework for the poem;
however, we can see the poem change direction in the drafts. Yeats initially finds his poetic reinvigoration at the end of his life daunting. In the fragments, however, we can watch him relocate his poetic confidence and finesse as the poem transforms into a tour de force on the power of creativity and an honest account of his life’s works.

The earliest drafts of “The Circus Animals’ Desertion” show Yeats’s struggle not only with his poetry, but also with his old age. He first writes, “theme & saught for it in vain/ And saught for it daily for some five weeks or so” (Fragment 1). He continues, next addressing age, “I am too old—old men [?]/ Something resembling happiness they know/ If not [?it] happiness it self a show…As much of happiness as a man can know/ Their minds are full and they no longer strain/ Like drowning men and clutch every straw/ Their minds are too full now for pain and strain…And all poetic themes are plants that grow/ Out of the necessity of a mind/ That were they lacking were but burning sand” (Fragment 1). It is first important to note Yeats’s style at this early mark in the composition of the poem. He jots down his thoughts in phrases like “theme & saught for it in vain,” apparently unsure of his word choice and the form and rhythm that he will give to the poem. Perhaps this glimpse of tentative phrasing is due to having access to the earliest versions of drafts thanks to George Yeats’s careful preservation. Yeats’s haphazard writing can also be a product of the writer’s block that he is describing. This opening line in this first fragment has the tone of a journal entry or stream of consciousness.

A rhyme scheme emerges in this early version of the poem that seems forced and perhaps too obvious—uncharacteristic of Yeats’s writing, especially in his later works. His rhyming of consecutive lines like, “Something resembling happiness they know/ If
not [?it] happiness it self a show…As much of happiness as a man can know” (Fragment 1) seems highly experimental. He seems to be throwing out obvious word pairs in search of some version of a line that will do justice to the poetic resurgence he seeks. Yeats’s commentary on old age indicates his own motivations to reinvigorate and intensify his poetry at the end of his career and life. He at first recognizes and nearly submits to his own old age and infirmity with the line “I am too old;” however, he quickly separates himself from the experience that others may have in old age. He drafts an entire stanza concerning the happiness and contentment that others feel in old age, when they no longer experience “pain and strain.” In contrast, we can assume that Yeats is still experiencing “pain and strain” as he ends his poetic career and tries to establish his legacy. He ends the first fragment with what sounds like a trite adage: “And all poetic themes are plants that grow/ Out of the necessity of mind/ That were they lacking were but burning sand” (Fragment 1). Yeats rejects the blatant rhymes and awkward finish of this first fragment as the majority of the fragment does not survive in the ensuing drafts.

In the second draft Yeats preserves the initial opening to the poem; however, in this opening, he personalizes the poem in a way that he did not in the first draft. He first does this by inserting “I” in the lines, “I have sought a theme & sought for it in vain/ I have it daily for five weeks or so.” He then still introduces his age as a concern, but instead of comparing himself to others he only mentions his own poetic ineffectuality. He writes, “Perhaps I shall not find it an old man/ Perhaps I am last too old being an aged man/ And I must be content” (Fragment 2). He questions if he must be content with the works that he has already produced and speculates that he, “being an aged man” cannot renew his verse. In the final version of the poem, the lines become,
“Maybe at last being but a broken man/ I must be satisfied with my heart, although”
(“The Circus Animals’ Desertion, 3-4). “Aged man” becomes “broken man” and rather
than being satisfied with “facts” Yeats states that he must be satisfied with his “heart.”
Perhaps “broken” is meant to better reflect Yeats’s creative deficit at the beginning of the
poem. He is thus not stopped from composing new verse because of his age but rather
because of some creative blockage. This gives more hope and promise for a resurrection
of his creativity as something that is broken can be fixed, but something that is aged
cannot be made young again. In this poem in particular, as well as in earlier poems like
“The Wild Swans at Coole,” the heart is an important symbol for Yeats. In his poetry the
heart represents the place of a poet’s creativity. By changing “facts” to “heart,” Yeats
emphasizes that he must be satisfied with his creative state. “Heart” suggests more hope
than does “facts,” focusing the beginning of the poem on the temporary loss of creativity
rather than on age or impending death.

Yeats continues his personalization of the poem in the second fragment when he
writes, “last winter there about before me ran/ My A travelling circus all the my beasts on
show” (Fragment 2). Yeats takes ownership of the beasts, his previous works, with the
word “my.” This travelling circus ran before him, indicating that at the end of his life the
summation of his works are displayed before him for his review. The word “beasts”
gives Yeats’s works a living quality. The works are distanced from the human or poet as
they are beasts, but they are still rough, raw, and very much alive. This word also
incorporates the enormity of Yeats’s poetic career and the power of his poetry as the
word beast, much like the way it is used in the “Second Coming,” paints a picture of
something that is strong and uncontrollable. At this point in the revisions we see that
Yeats has adopted an ottava rima form with a more natural rhyme scheme than that of his first draft—rhyming “although” with “show” rather than with “know” with “show,” for example. The emergence of a subtle rhyme scheme and ottava rima form reflects Yeats’s increasing control as the drafts progress. As Stallworthy states, “If Yeats learns his rhetoric from such poets as Spenser and Donne, he learnt from them also that rhetoric should not be obtrusive: like a good foundation it should support the house but lie beneath the ground” (244). In addition, Stallworthy notes that, “In later years Yeats came increasingly to experiment with half-rhymes, which, because they fall less heavily on the ear than full rhymes, contribute largely to the free colloquial movement of his verse” (245). He continues, “It is a significant fact that, far from working from the informal to the formal as one might imagine, Yeats tended to free his rhythms as he advanced through successive drafts of a poem. In this as in all aspects of technique, he exemplifies the truth of the old adage: *ars est celare artem*” (246)—it is art to conceal art. This increased control and subtly of rhyme combined with the emphasis on his creativity and the personalization of his “beasts on show” begins to revise the subject of the poem from a loss of creative power to the power of creativity.

In addition, between fragments two and six, the tense of the poem changes. The editors of the manuscript materials note, “the debilitation signaled by his choice of the present perfect tense in describing his creative blockage—“I have saught a theme”—is symptomatically weakened in favor of a more confident past tense—“I saught a theme” – as the emergence of the poem itself begins to refute its own ostensible subject” (xxxii). This tense change also reflects a paring down of the opening line that makes the poems start stronger and more confident.
The first four fragments of the manuscript materials for “The Circus Animals’ Desertion” represent the first two sections of the final version of the poem and undergo very few changes as the drafts progress. Yeats makes minor revisions to these stanzas to reflect the importance of how the verse sounds, for example. He changes “five weeks” in fragment one and two to “sicks weeks or so” (Fragment 6). This playful spelling is revised to the normal spelling, “six” in the final draft; however, this revision was more rhetorically significant to Yeats than the biographically accurate “five weeks” and reflects the toil and perhaps “sickness” that ensues from an even longer creative drought.

The revisions to the first two sections of the poem otherwise include infusing the work with elements of personalization and ownership. Yeats references “Usheen” and then settles with the synonymous “Oisin,” referencing his early work “The Wanderings of Oisin.” He also references his “faery bride,” which is a potential allusion to Yeats’s long-time love Maude Gonne. He also names his play “The Countess Cathleen.” He gives his ownership to the works in lines such as “‘The Countess Cathleen’ was the name I gave it.” As the drafts of the stanzas of the second section progress, the poem evolves into a self-scrutinizing reflection of Yeats’s life works. He points to the “old themes” of his works and, naming some of his plays, admits to his own prioritization of poetic images over life itself: “It was the dream itself enchanted me:/ Character isolated by a deed/ Players and painted stage took all my love/ And not those thin things that they were emblems of’ (28-32). The self-reflection of this second section of the poem is harshly interrupted in the original version of the final section in the manuscript materials.

The last section of “The Circus Animals’ Desertion,” as exhibited by the drastically differing drafts and dramatic revisions, proved to be the most challenging, yet
telling stanza of the poem for Yeats. The octave that Yeats initially drafted proved insufficient as he entirely revised it from its original form. The stanza in its most nascent form read, “Why brood upon old triumphs, Prepare to die/ Renounce immortality
to die/ The burnished chariot is wheeled away from sight/ O hour of triumph come & make me gay/ For in though even at the approach of the unimaged night/ In this black velvet of unimaged night/ [man] man has the refuge/ [?] I have still my gaety/ A dab of black enhances every white/ Tension is but the vigour of the mind/ Cannon the god & father of mankind” (Fragment 5). This stanza seems to reflect the complacency of giving up in old age that the original opening of the poem had before it was revised. This stanza seems to undo the entire second section of the poem with “Why brood upon old triumphs.” The first line is also arresting with its dramatic command, “Prepare to die.” In this first draft of the last stanza, death is something that is imminent and final—quite the opposite of what we will find Yeats depicting in the final version of the poem. The stanza expresses Yeats’s desire to be “gay” as the “unimaged night” of death approaches. The final couplet is anti-climactic and empty. After an entire poem recounting the power of creativity, this finish seems like an easily rendered rhetorical gesture that gives the poem a too easily closed, rounded out finish.

This first version of the stanza, as indicated by the dated manuscript materials, was written in November of 1937. This version of the stanza remained the final version in the typescripts until fragment fourteen. In fragment fourteen we find an entirely revised version of the stanza dated September 23, 1938. On this draft Yeats annotates “correct” near the revised version of the stanza. Thus, as we can see from the manuscripts, the stanza is not revised to the version that survives in the final published
poem until Yeats revisits the poem nearly a year later. It becomes apparent that this final stanza required time and careful thinking for Yeats to draft. The temporal distance between the two drastically different versions also indicates that this stanza was important enough to Yeats to return to after some time in order to achieve his desired finish. It becomes clear through the draft work that this stanza is a result of a change that Yeats underwent as the time passed at the end of his life. Nearly a year after he composed the first draft of the stanza and a nearly a year before his death, this final version of the stanza seems to embody Yeats’s true poetic legacy and look at death as an opportunity rather than an end.

The first change to the stanza that Yeats makes in September of 1939 reads, “The faery woman, Cathleen, fool & Blind Man/ Their cousins & their brothers, because complete/ Grew in pure mind but out of what began?/ Intellect but how began/ From/ Out of the inanimate sweepings of the street,/ Bits of old newspaper, that broken can?/ From rag & bone, or from that raving slut or from/ Called Heart & Company. My ladders gone/ And I lie down where all the ladders start/ In the foul rag & bone shop of the heart” (Fragment 14). He condenses the first four lines to “Those masterful images,” paring down the stanza and crystallizing the image. This is another example of how Yeats’s use of deictic words as a replacement for previously mentioned images or words condenses his writing and makes his poetic language cleaner and more concise.

In this new version of the stanza, Yeats entirely rejects his previous, unsatisfactory closure and seeks a finish more appropriate to his overall narrative of creative power and self-scrutiny begun in the first two sections of the poem. The revised stanza favors imagery that is rougher and more human. The first drafts of this new stanza
are perhaps trying to be funny or sarcastic, as the “rag and bone shop” is called “heart & company.” This phrase was quickly rejected in favor of “Old kettles, old bottles and a broken can.” The final version of the poem reads, “Those masterful images because complete/ Grew in pure mind but out of what began?/ A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street/ Old kettles, old bottles and a broken can,/ Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut/ Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder’s gone/ I must lie down where all the ladders start/ In the foul rag & bone shop of the heart” (Fragment 17). The replacement of “rag and bone shop” and “Old kettles, old bottles and a broken can” is an example of Yeats’s rejection of high rhetoric. He chooses realistic, rough images over intangible ones. This change is characteristic of his later works. Through this stanza we find that poetry can be found in mundane, provisional things and in aspects of everyday life, even in the trash.

Yeats’s final lines encompass both his poetic past and future. “Now that my ladder’s gone/ I must lie down where all the ladders start/ In the foul rag & bone shop of the heart” (Fragment 17). This ending is tailored to the poem’s message as a whole—the power of creativity and the summation of one’s life works. Yeats shows that creativity can be found in unconventional places and that it can be revived and reinvented. In the final stanza we find that Yeats’s masterful images that he enumerates throughout the poem come from the fragments and scraps of the commonplace. They must be forged and continuously molded to achieve their final form. This process of the creation of Yeats’s masterful images also reflects the changes that his verse undergoes as evidenced by the manuscript materials. His writings are composed of “fragments,” as I have called them from the start of this work, which are tirelessly worked into final versions. The
place in which Yeats’s images and verse are created and refined is “the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.” The symbolism of the heart as the equivalent of the source of poetic creativity in Yeats’s works is most apparent in this final, canonical line. “The foul rag and bone shop of the heart” becomes the place in which creativity is used to work rough images and lines, shaping fragments into “masterpieces.”

At the end of his life Yeats knows that we will not write for much longer—“Now that my ladder’s gone” (Fragment 17). This end does not seem final, however, as he follows the line with, “I must lie down where all the ladders start/ In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart” (Fragment 17). Yeats reveals that he will become the fragment for the next generation of poets to create from. The “rag and bone” enterprise involves collecting discarded items for further use. Yeats suggests that he is a fragment of the Modern world that can be collected and used by the creative consciousness of future generations. In this way, death is not final for Yeats—this is his poetic legacy.

This revised final version of the stanza offers a culmination of the poet’s work that is both triumphant and humble. Yeats achieves poetic rejuvenation through this finish not only through his superior writing style but also through the recognition that he will give new life and inspiration to the minds of poets to come. He recognizes that this poetic rebirth is put together with the fragments of experience, everyday life, and struggle, just as valuable raw materials are recycled out of the discarded objects of the “rag and bone” business.

I would like to end this chapter on late Yeats with the last poem that Yeats wrote: “Politics.” In Last Poems Yeats makes repeated false announcements of his final poem.
He begins the volume with the poem “Under Ben Bulben,” in which he announces his own epitaph—“Cast a cold eye/ On life, on death./ Horseman, pass by!” (92-94). Similarly, in poems like “Man and the Echo” and “The Circus Animals’ Desertion,” Yeats reflects on his life’s works, seemingly setting himself up for his final poem—a tour de force on poetic creativity and his poetic legacy. In a true Yeatsian fashion, however, he quickly counteracts this expectation with his final poem “Politics.” Yeats complicates the entire movement of Last Poems as a volume, which largely explores an overall understanding of the poetic creativity of “the heart,” with this light and unassuming last poem:

‘In our time the destiny of man presents its meanings in political terms.’

–Thomas Mann

How can I, that girl standing there,
My attention fix
On Roman or on Russian
Or on Spanish politics.
Yet here’s a travelled man that knows
What he talks about,
And there’s a politician
That has both read and thought,
And maybe what they say is true
Of war and war’s alarms,
But O that I were young again
And held her in my arms.

In this poem Yeats rejects Mann’s epigraph. Yeats selects a quotation that opens with the phrase “In our time.” Perhaps Yeats chooses this quotation to emphasize his own sense of modernity as he writes his last poem. We know from the “List of Contents” manuscript that Yeats strategically placed this poem as the last poem in the volume. Perhaps he saw around him that the “destiny of man” was presenting its meaning in terms that he did not agree with. In “Politics” Yeats rejects Mann’s “political terms.” He
instead redefines the “destiny of man” in romantic terms. This poem is a vulnerable expression of desire in which Yeats removes his mask and speaks in an honest, human voice.

Despite Yeats’s old age and increasing infirmity he takes on the voice of an old man who wishes he were young and in love in this last poem. The major question that plagues this speaker is not what his legacy will be or what his works have amounted to, but rather how he will gain the attention of a girl. The appositive “that girl standing there” distances the speaker from the object of his desire. Despite the fear and strategizing involved in gaining the attention of the girl, Yeats’s lines are controlled and confident through his punctuation. Yeats revisits his use of polysyndeton in the lines, “On Roman or on Russian/ Or on Spanish politics” (“Politics,” 3-4). This is reminiscent of Yeats’s earlier style in “The Song of Wandering Aengus” for example.

Yeats recognizes the fragility of the modern world and the imminence of violence and war in the lines, “And maybe what they say is true/ Of war and war’s alarms,” (9-10). He does not linger on this thought, however. He immediately returns the poem to his personal situation. He ends the poem with, “But O that I were young again/ And held her in my arms” (11-12). This Romantic construction also gestures back to Yeats’s early style. This poem is a poignant example of how Yeats’s most “Modern” work, his last poem, still bears elements of his Romantic style, a part of his early writing that he never fully broke with. The references in this poem to Yeats’s old stylistic constructions contribute to the poem’s regenerative property. The editors of the manuscript materials note, “‘Politics’ potentially takes a reader back to The Wanderings of Oisin, the opening
of the poem of his canon, echoing Oisin’s own wishing-back to his youth, and thereby giving a reincarnative structure to Yeats’s whole oeuvre” (xxxvi).

Part of what makes this poem one of Yeats’s most “Modern” works, as I previously mentioned, is the sense of poetic self that emerges through the lines. In “Politics” a self-reflexive “I” powerfully emerges. Just as in “The Circus Animals’ Desertion,” this sense of self is built from the commonplace. Here it is formulated from the simple and youthful act of catching a girl’s attention. Yeats contemplates his own personal history in this poem rather than his previous contemplations of Irish history and legend or his broad contemplations of the modern world. This personal Yeatsian “I” is apparent in the later poems, but figures with the greatest prominence in this final poem, as it is occupied with Yeats’s own human feelings of love and desire.

The meaning of “Politics” itself as well as its placement as the final poem in the volume has perplexed scholars and has been analyzed through many different lenses. In “Yeats’s Last Poems Again,” Curtis Bradford argues that Yeats ends with this poem to produce a mocking effect (275). He believes that he is laughing at himself for such foolish desire or undercutting the achievement of self-realization accomplished in “The Circus Animals’ Desertion” and some of his other later poems. Still some believe that in this poem Yeats articulates, without irony or mockery, his undying desire for love and deep emotion. From the first time that I read this poem until my experience with it now, several years later, one year entirely dedicated to studying Yeats, I have chosen to align myself with the latter interpretation. I take great joy in believing that such a complex and thoughtful poet and man as Yeats, at the very end of his life, writing as an aged and ill man, would find it so important to capture the feeling of being young and in love as to
craft his final poem with this subject. I think that there is something beautiful in relishing and remembering youth in old age and championing love above all. I think that the most vivid example of Yeats’s transformation into a Modern poet is in the stark contrast between the powerful, self-scrutinizing works that filled Yeats’s late poetry (which themselves met all the requirements for a last poem) and this simple and unexpected final poem. This poem is raw and undeniably human. It presents Yeats as a young man in love and not as a prolific poet searching for a way to finalize his career.

It can perhaps be argued that this interpretation, in context of Yeats’s history as a complex and serious poet, does not fit with Yeats’s entire poetic canon. To this I would respond that the fact that this poem does not “fit” with the rest of Yeats’s canon and especially with his final poems is precisely what makes it so Modern and also so “Yeats.” Through a careful analysis of Yeats’s manuscript materials over the strongly differing stages of his career, we found that Yeats was not a poet who remained stagnant in his style or focus. He constantly pushed himself forward, sometimes shedding old traits and sometimes holding on to them. “The Circus Animals’ Desertion” also gives us proof that Yeats, even close to his death, sought ways to give his poetry new life. “Politics” represents a different kind of poem for Yeats, a reincarnation of his most Modern self. It is different from the other poems in the volume and it is also different in its featuring of the most Yeatsian “I” and his own personal history. This poem is Yeats’s final push forward. It is Yeats’s final fragment to be laid down in “the foul rag and bone shop of the heart” for future Modernists to help shape the world in which they live.
CONCLUSIONS

Through an analysis of particular poems in Yeats's manuscript materials, we have characterized the early, middle and late stages of Yeats's career, focusing on new stylistic or thematic elements that emerged in his work. We have also recognized early, Romantic constructions that were preserved in Yeats’s verse throughout its development. We can collate these trends in Yeats’s work to help understand the version of Modernism that he created. The changes sometimes occur within the loosely defined categories of early, middle and late Yeats; however, they often stretch across these invisible divides of the stages of Yeats’s works.

Certain elements of Yeats’s poetry persist throughout his career. Yeats is an inheritor of Romanticism and a pioneer of Modernism. In this way, we find that Yeats’s early poetry is characterized by full-blown Romantic diction and form. Yeats never fully casts off this aspect of his education or early experiences with poetry. Even in his latest works, he reaches for artifacts of Romantic diction and constructions to use in his poetry. In addition, Yeats consistently pays particular attention to how the verse sounds when read aloud. The early to middle poetry has instances of heavy alliteration, which fade out in the later works in favor of more prosaic constructions and loser half-rhymes, when there is rhyme at all. In the middle works, Yeats experiments with chiasmus in his work, but abandons it in his later years. He also creates regenerative verse throughout his career in which the repetition of words in consecutive words helps push the verse forward and build up to a climax. In addition, the use of the gerund form of verbs becomes an important quality of Yeats’s poetry that changes and evolves over time. In the early works, the gerund form renders a magical/ethereal effect. In the middle poetry, it
becomes something that is controlling and consuming. In Yeats’s late poetry, the gerund is used to convey Yeats’s thoughts on the cyclical nature of history.

One of the most important and consistent features of Yeats’s style is his paring down of language as his poetry develops. This paring down has the effect of crystallizing and intensifying poetic images. Yeats will surround polysyllabic words, metrical phrases, or Romantically adorned constructions with simple prosaic words to focus the attention of the line to the highlighted phrase. Yeats learned a great deal from his work with the theatre. He developed a style of verse resembling the dialogue of everyday speech, making some of his later poems more conversational. Yeats also structures verse with punctuation or meter that either supports or opposes the content of the line. This gives his work complexity and depth as its subtle undertones are deep and rich with meaning. In addition, the emergence of deictic substitutions in the middle and late works also helps to crystallize images by condensing unnecessary or previously mentioned accessory words. This also gives way to clean and concise verse with an economy of language. Overall, the early works have a song-like incantatory style, which evolves to more pared down, prosaic, naked and cold speech in the middle works. In Yeats’s later works, the language is similarly pared down, but it is also infused with the rawness, honesty, and self-scrutiny of the human voice.

Yeats’s work also undergoes thematic changes over his career. In Yeats’s middle and late poetry his preoccupation with aging emerges through his use of time, age, numbers, counting and dates in his poetry. Across each stage of Yeats’s poetry, the heart is an important symbol of poetic creativity. In the early poetry, Yeats sets his poems in the fairytale woods of myth and legend, secluded and distanced from society. He then
moves his poetry to real, recognizable places in Ireland, such as Coole Park, writing about places he visited. His poetry then expands to encompass images of the European scene and the East. The early works focus on idealism and Irish myth and legend. The subjects of his poems then shift to more realistic subjects and eventually, in the later poems, focus on the commonplace and the highly personal in nature. Finally, the poetic self develops in Yeats’s poetry across his career. In the early poems, Yeats encrypts the poetic self in the characters and heroes of myth and legend. In the middle poems we find an affirmation of the self, but Yeats still distances himself from the speaker. The speaker in “The Wild Swans at Coole” for example, does not appear until the second stanza. In “The Second Coming,” the speaker is not introduced until halfway through the poem. In the final poems, Yeats emerges as the speaker of the poem within the first lines, such as in “The Circus Animals’ Desertion.” The “I” of the later poems is personal and self-reflexive. It belongs to a speaker who is aged and experienced. The late “I” is self-reflexive because it is one that can only belong to a poet who has already achieved greatness and recognition in his career. At this point his career, Yeats was not only an accomplished poet, but he was also the recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature and was appointed to the first Irish Senate. In the later poetry the poetic self is simultaneously public and private. The late “I” yields Yeats’s most honest and personal poetry.

The movement of these trends in style and content represent the emerging Modernism that Yeats developed during his poetic career. The manuscript materials allow us to see that these changes came into being intentionally and thoughtfully. The numerous fragments and drafts of Yeats’s poems show us that one of Yeats’s greatest tools as a poet was his “pruning knife, judiciously used on any dead wood and inessential
detail: they show that of all the tools in the poet’s workshop the most important is a razor-sharp self-critical faculty” (Stallworthy, 253). This very aspect of self-scrutiny is essential to an understanding of how Yeats developed alongside his changing world and how he created his own version of Modernism. With this we remember the original goals of this study: to provide a conception of Yeatsian modernism that may prove interesting to scholars of Modern poetry and to remind us of Seamus Heaney’s assertions “that revision and slog-work are what you may have to undergo if you seek the satisfaction of finish.” A writer, poet, or editor can look to the prolific nature of these manuscripts and the important revisions that were made across the fragments to understand the work required to achieve a masterful poem. While Yeats was undeniably granted a natural poetic gift, his career was not achieved without toil and self-scrutiny. Yeats continuously held himself to a higher standard, resisting complacency in his old age. As with his career, he consistently worked and revised the fragments of his poetry to create a final product with which he was satisfied. To truly know Yeats as a poet, we must understand the time in which he wrote, we must see for ourselves the toil of his writing process, witness the crystallization and exfoliation of his verse and experience the breadth of his career. Only then can we begin to understand that William Butler Yeats developed his own version of Modernism by reacting to his changing world, carefully crafting his poetry, and entirely reinventing when the conventional did not suffice.
WORKS CITED


APPENDIX TO THE MANUSCRIPT MATERIALS:

“The Wild Swans at Coole”

Fragment 1

THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE

1. The trees
2. Among the grey lanes
3. The leaves grow brown in Autumn
4. The water in the lake is low
5. The leaves turn brown
6. And go out toward sun set
7. To number the swans
8. There is little water in the lake has
9. The autumn rains have not begun
[NLI 30,416, 2']

1  By night & day  

2  The wild swans [?]ly

3  F

4  [At]

5  The water in the lake is low

6  The trees brown leaves [?]

7  I go out toward evening

8  To number the wild swans

9  Year by year I [?]

10  I have had long seen in the west

11  I have seen them [?float] on the water

12  Now [?fly up]

13  The [? ? ?] [?evening]

14  The [?swans] [? ] [?fly west]

15  Among the dark woods

16  And every-year I [?to]

17  And they are gone again
Fragment 3

[NLI 30,416, 3']

c
2 [ ? ] & sky
3 The [?seven] years that I have [ ? ]

5 Alas if [?they] are changed
7 [?For] far off to the [?west]

Fragment 4

[NLI 13,583, 3']

1 The grey lake lanes are hard under foot
2 From shore to shore I go
3 In [ ? ? ] I go
4 Among the grey rocks I go.
5 From rock to rock among the grey lake lanes
6 And number the swans
7 And [?Between] the wood & lake, where the lake lanes
8 And number the swans
9 From shore to shore I go
10 A little before sun down—numbering the swans
11 A little before the daylight s over I number the swans
The swans at Coole

1. The woods are in their autumn colours
   But the lake waters are low
   The hard the
2. And all paths dry underfootfall still
   [?]
3. The path ways hard under the footfall
4. [?]
5. And I when in the pale twilight I
6. In the half-dark I will go

Indolently

7. Indolently among the shadow of the grey stones
8. And number the swans
   Among the shadow of grey stones — and number the
   Indolently among the stones & number the swans
   Floating among the stones.

9. We are now at the nineteenth autumn
10. Since I first made my count.
11. I make no sound for if they heard me
12. Suddenly they would mount
13. Scattering &
14. And wheel above the waters in great broken wings
15. And a slow clamour of wings.

16. But now they drift on the still water
17. Mysterious, beautiful
18. Among what rushes will their eggs
19. Where is the stream or pool
I look upon the brilliant creatures
I am heavy & heart sore
Yet nine Autumns from this Autumn this [?the last]
I [?_] walking upon
upon
I hearing on this shore
The bell beat of their wings above my head
Trod with a lighter tread

To

[? ]
A looked up those bre[e]e creates creatures
Gaily when I was young
Always, when I was young.
If they swung by or clamoured over head
I d have a
have
I trod with a lighter tread.

At yet when I was young
If they swung by, or clamoured over head
I had a lighter tread
[NLI 13,587 (1), 2]

1 All will have flown to
2 All
3 Upon what stream or pool
4 Shall they in beauty swim, when I come here some day
5 To find them flown away

6 They are but images on water
7 Why should my heart be young
8 I turn away from the water
9 Why do I turn from the water,
10 As though my heart were wrung
11 At how those
12 To gaze upon
13 To look
14 Looking upon those brilliant creatures
15 always
16 I did turn, when I was young
17 As they came swinging by or clamoured over head
18 I did not turn with this slow tread.
19 When they when swung by or
20 When they came swinging by or clamoured over head
21 I had a lighter tread.

20 And lover by unwearied lover
21 Unwearied still — lover by lover
Ah nineteen years for now
And I am grown old
They drift there lover by lover
Their hearts have not grown cold
Passion & conquest, whither wander where they will
Attend upon them still.

I turn away — lover by lover
The paddle in the [-?]- cold
Companionable stream, or climb the air
Their hearts have not grown old
Many companions float around them
Their hearts have not grown cold
Their wings can carry them to where please
Their bodies are not old
Passion & conquest dip in what stream they will
Attend upon them still

Companion by companion
And Beautiful & bold bold
The beautiful & the bold
Have crossed the skies & climbed the river
Their hearts have not grown cold
Passion & conquest wander where they will
Attend upon them still
These colours
1  The woods are in their autumn [solace]
2   But the Cool water is low
3  And all the paths are dry under
4  And all paths dry under the foot
5  In the soft twilight I go

The woods are in their autumn colours
6  The lake narrow & bright-
7   But the Cool water is low
8  The pathways hard the
9  And all pathways dry under footfall
10  When in the twilight
11  Night after night I go
12  Where I at twilight go
13  Indolently among the trees & the stones,
14  And number the wild swans
   among the shadow of the
15  Indolently here and there among grey stones
16  And number the wild swans.
[NLI 13,587 (1), 4*]

1 Ther but an image on a lake
2 Why should my heart be rung
3 When I first saw them I was young
4 The white white [unweary] creatures
5 Delighted me when young
6 When I first gazed upon them

7 Why is when I gaze upon them
8 That my heart is wrung
9 I found it pleasing to love them
10 When I

11 Ah now when I do gaze on them
12 My heart, my heart is wrung
13 And yet the white & loving creatures
14 Delighted me when young
15 And were they to clamour over head
It is now in the 19th Autumn
Since I first made my tot count stet
Since I
And now [?were are] in the 19th se
Since the first I counted
Should they should I go nearer to the
And when I go too near the water
Suddenly they mount
And beating
Scattering, wheeling in great broken rings
On their slow clamouring wings.

But now they drift on the still water
I have counted fifty-nine
Mysterious, beautiful
rushed laid their eggs
Among what waters low [-2-] nests
And by what stream or pool
they have fled when I awake &
Where will they flee when I awake some [- ? ]
And find they have flown away
The lovely white unwearied creatures
Always
Delight when yet young
When they float or clamour over head
Sure in a lighter tread.

[?Alas] [ ? ? ]
Many conquests have they.
They have not grown old
Their hearts have not grown cold

[By passion & by conquest
By ['?loving ness] & For wander where they will
They are attended still

Passion & conquest wander where they will
Attend upon them still
The woods are in their autumn foliage
The trees are in their autumn foliage
The water in the lake is low
The pathways of the wood are
All pathways hard under the foot
In the pale twilight I
From stone to stone I go
Among the great grey stones I number the swans.
Floating among the stones.

I am
We are now at the nineteenth autumn
From the time of my
Since I first made my count
I make no sound for if they heard me
All suddenly
Suddenly they would mount
Scatter, and wheel in those great broken rings
With slow clamour of their wings

But now they drift on the still water
Mysterious, beautiful
Among what rushes were their eggs
Upon what shore or pool

[?Swim,] when
Shall five & forty dream creatures play
When they have flown away
they
Shall disport when I [?–?] awake some day
To find they have fled away
The nineteenth Autumn has gone
Since that first time I counted
They heard when I had but half finished
And all suddenly mounted
And
Scattered, & wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings
1 The trees are in their autumn foliage
2 The woodland paths are dry
3 Under
4 The water in the October twilight
5 Mirrors [?] a still sky
6 stones
5 Upon the brimming water among the stones
6 Are nine and fifty swans
7 Under the October twilight the water
8 Among what reeds
9 Among what rushes do they build
10 By what lakes edge or pool
11 Delight men’s eyes when I awake some day
12 To find they have flown away
13 Nine teen autumns ago
14 When
1 In numbering the brilliant creatures
2 I have numbered all the brilliant creatures
3 And I am but heart sore
4 I have counted five & forty now
5 And I am now heart sore
6 I turn from all those brilliant creatures
7 Heavy & heart sore
8 And yet Yet nine Autumns from this evening upon
9 I, hearing on this shore
10 The bell beat of their wings above my head
11 Trod with a lighter tread
12 I have looked upon those brilliant creatures
13 And now my heart is sore
14 Alls changed since I hearing at twilight
15 The first time on this shore
16 The bell beat of their wings above my head
17 Trod with a lighter tread
Fragment 18

[13,587 (1), 9']

1. Unwearied still — lover by lover
2. The paddle in the cold
3. Companionable streams or climb the air
4. Their hearts have not grown old
5. Passion & conquest wander where they will
6. Attend upon them still

Fragment 19

The Wild Swans at Coole

I
The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine and fifty swans

II
The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings
[Quinn (1), 1', continued]

III
13 I have looked upon those brilliant creatures
14 And now my heart is sore,
15 All's changed since I, hearing at twilight
16 The first time on this shore,
17 The bell-beat of their wings above my head
18 Trod with a lighter tread.

IV
19 Unwearied now, lover by lover,
20 They paddle in the cold,
21 Companionable streams or climb the air;
22 Their hearts have not grown old;
23 Passion or conquest wander where they will
24 Attend upon them still.

[Quinn (1), 2']

V.
25 But now they drift on the still water
26 Mysterious, beautiful;
27 Among what rushes will they build
28 By what lake's edge or pool
29 Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
30 To find they have flown away.

Sept 1917
“Lines Written in Dejection”

Fragment 1

no longer can the moon

The round green eyes, & long waving bodies
Of the dark [lad] lepards of the month [passing] now

no longer the moon

long [eye] [lepa] wavering

Can send [no] [then] [the] [green] [lepar] [in] the bodies

The green eyed lady of the moon

[Now] [ol] [in] the grass

And all the old white hares on [ ]

That
Lines written in Dejection.

1. When have I last looked on
2. The round green eyes & the long wavering bodies
3. Of the dark leopards of the moon! ;
4. All the wild witches, the most noble ladies
5. For all their broom sticks & their tears
6. Their angry tears are gone.
7. The holy centaurs of the hills are banished
8. And I have nothing but harsh sun;
   And
9. For my heroic mother the moon has vanished
   For
10. And now that I have come to fifty years
    I have nothing but
11. I live alone with the timid sun,
    I must endure

Sept 29, 1916
"Ego Dominus Tuus"

Fragment 1

[NLI 13,587 (20), 1]

Hic

1 On the grey sand beside the shallow sea
2 Under your old wind beaten Tower where still
   As lamp
3 The your lamp burns on beside the open book
4 That Michael Robartes left, as in your boyhood
5 That Michael Robartes left you walk in the moon past
6 And though you are past the best of life still make trace
7 Enthralld by the unconquerable delusion
   Magical shapes
8 You [?] circle and stand
9 The magic circle circle upon circle

Illse

up

I call images.

Hic

By the help of images

10 I now call up my anti type, summon all
11 That I have least [?] on or least thought or
12 That I have least handled, look up & then up
13 Because I am most weary of myself.

Hic
I rather seek to find [?] by my self.
I that would seek & find by my self.
I'd rather seek & find by my self.

Ille.

That is our modern aim, by [?]
That is our modern hope & by its light
gentle

Or gentleness & our sincerity has [?] [?been] found
and day. lost

Our sensitive minds, yet by day we have gone.
The a speedy [?fuss]

Our sensitive minds, & lost the old ease
challance

The non-chalance re-shaping it to [?]
The gay nonchalance reshaping palm —

For whether we hold
Whether we choose, chisel in hand or pen
When we write, or paint
For the [?] chosen

Whether we have chose, pen, pallet or brush
but half create

We are but critics: or but a [?] create
Timid [?]

Knowing
Who [?] is not [?timid] entangled & who abash
Knowing our time to have turned its face away
[NLI 13,587 (20), 3']

1. [?] but half create
2. Being timorous entangled & abashed
3. Because our time has turnd its face away.

4. This is our modern hope & by that hope
5. We have found the gentle sensitive mind
6. And lost the nonchalant hand
7. And lost the nonchalance of the hand [\& fingers]
8. Whether we choose chisel, or pen or brush
9. We are but critics; or but half create
10. Being
11. Being but timid, entangled & abashed & empty
12. Because our time has turned its face away.
13. Lacking the countenance of our friends

Ile.

And yet
He that of all the writers of the world
Has most moved
combined (or comixed)
Has moved most mixed imagin & intellect
so utterly found himself
Danie, & utterly
[we his]
That we can see face-by by that of Christ
And from [ ? ? ? ]
That I can see his face more inwardly
That you & I can see his face today
That you & I can [?have] in the minds eye
[The—]
That you & I can see his hollow cheek
More inwardly than any face in the world
But that of Christ's

Hic.
Yet did he find himself?

And was the face hunger
was

And [?] the hunger that made his cheek so [?gaunt]
Hunger for what he had, or for some good
That seemed the most of all possible good
and is the image you have seen
Beyond his reach, & is the image

Beside [?] the Calvary

By [?]

Beside the Calvary, the apple all men
That Calvary — and know.
I have a different thought, I [?] that the [?] work

His genius

I [?share] have a different, & that's that
I have a different notion notion,[?being] [?]

A terrible image from his opposite.
He made out of his opposite, his anti-self, slight

He & all others that find beauty & still as it were a spectral image, a vast stony face

Like that the wandering [?] discover

Half buried in sand

Half buried in the [?burning] sand.

Hair

Staring upon the beduins horse roof

From some gray mountain-side.

From some [?] cliff.

{[?] cliff}

From doomed & windowed cliff, or half upturned camel

Among the coarse grass & the camel dung, coarse

Lovely & [lovestruck], dreaming of the dead [?]

Yet [?] bottom, as the sky seems.

Or & [?]

Considered by — we [ ? ? ] long & [?] alone of living men he saw found

He [?] saw, alone.
He saw, alone of living men, he saw
The Heavens mercy in an innocent head
   The learned heavens eye
All holy-learning in an innocent head,
The
All heavens succour in a springy foot,
He only from the plucking of the apple
   He only
   Derided & deriding, driven out
To climb that stair & eat that bitter bread
   Have found
   Derived the whole unpersuadable justice.

And
   Alone measured the whole unpersuadable justice
He saw,
He only from the gathering of the apple
He only found the unpersuadable justice.

Ille.

And he, he only from the apples plucking
He only, derided driven out

Ille

Yet say there are some that make [?their] art
   Out of no tragic war   Loving life
   From daily happiness — impatient men
   Impatient men that look for happiness
   And sing when they have found it.
no not sing
For those that love the world serve it in action:
Grow rich, popular & full of influence
The struggle of the fly in marmalade
And should they paint or write — still is action
The rhetorician [who should] deceive his neighbour while
The sentimentalist [him] self; but art
Is but a vision of reality —
What can the artist & magician know
Who have seen awaked from the common dream
But dissipation & despair

And there-up on Yet Yet some,
Seem but to sing out of their daily [pleasure] [2]
Seem but to turn-turn the
But trust the world as it were a pleasure found
After that poem after
And later makes the verse, model or paint
To praise the meel — had Keats a tragic mind
Ille

Yet some
1. But trust the world as it were a pleasure found
2. And there upon turn poet, model or paint
3. To praise the meal — had Keats a tragic mind.

Hic

made
5. Because he gave the struggle to make
6. And told about
7. Murmured about the shudder of the leaves
8. And broken sunlight in [the worlds] pain
9. We have not called it so

He made a happy art. Who knows his mind
10. I see a school boy with his nose & face
    while his hands
11. Pressed to a sweet shop window while
12. He made an art
13. Pressed to a sweet shop window — had not Keats
14. Ill born, ill bred & ignorant — shut out
15. Being ill bred, ill born & ignorant
16. Shut out from the luxury of the world,
17. Of most deliberate luxury
1. Hic. He made a happy art. Who knows his mind?
2. I see a school boy when I think of him
   window
3. With face & nose pressed to a sweet shop win
   [ ? ]
4. Ailing and ignorant, ill bred it maybe
5. The his longing was as simple as that toys
6. He sunk senses & heart
7. Did he not pass into the grave
8. He has [?gone] senses & heart unsatisfied
9. In the grave — ailing & ignorant
10. The ill bred son of a livery stable keeper
11. Shut out from all the luxury of the world
12. He made luxurious song.
13. For surely —
14. I think that he went down into his grave
15. Senses & heart utterly unsatisfied
16. And made being poor, ailing, & ignorant
17. Shut out from all the luxury of the world
18. Luxurious song.
Ille

1. But wherefor leave the lamp
2. Burning alone beside an open book
3. To make strange characters upon the sand.
4. A style is found by sedentary toil,
5. The The imitation of the masters of our speech

Hic

- I have not [?] [?sought] it
  I would find

- Not style — for whose writings are most wise
- Own nothing but their blind stupefied hearts
- I call to my own image, my own image
- And yet my anti-self — the golden image
- I call to that mysterious one who yet
- of the sea
- Shall walk the wet sand by the shore edge
- look
- And seem most like me — being indeed my double
  prove
- And yet And [2] of all imaginable things
- The most unlike being my anti self
1. And here by these strange characters he will stand
2. And bring up the lost script whispering low
3. As though he feared the plovers over head
4. And show me all I seek whisper it low
5. As though he feared plover that run & fall
6. As though he feared those birds that cry aloud
7. Make their brief cries in the unbroken dark
8. Waiting the dawn might carry it afar
9. Might carry it afar.
10. Might carry it afar. here & carry it
11. Waiting the dawn, might carry it afar.
[NLI 30,358, 64v]

The Self & the AntiSelf.

Hic

1. On the grey sand beside the shallow sea
2. Under your old wind beaten tower where still
3. A lamp burns on beside the open book
4. That Michael Robartes left you walk in the moon
5. And though you have passed the best of life still trace
6. Enthralled by that unconquerable delusion
7. Magical shapes

Ille.

an

By the help of image

I call to my own opposite

8. I would call up my anti-type summon all
9. That I have handled least, least looked upon.
10. Because I am most weary of myself

Hic

11. And I would find my self & not an image

Ille

12. That is our modern hope & by its light mild
13. We have lit upon the gentle sensitive mind

stet
and
the gentle, sensitive mind.
We have found mildness & sincerity,
And lost the old nonchalance of the hand
Whether we have chosen chisel, pen or brush
or
We are but critics, & but half create
Timid, entangled, empty and abashed
Lacking the countenance of our friends

Hic
And yet
The chief imagination of Christendom
He that of all the writers of the world
Has most imagination & intellect
[?Aligerai]
Dante, so utterly found himself
he has made of his
That you & I can see that hollow cheek face
inward
More inwardly than any face in the world
More plain to the mind's eye than any face
But that of Christ.

Ilic.
And did he [?]find himself
And or it hollow
Or was the hunger that had made him gaunt
A hunger for the apple on the tree
Hunger for what he had or for some good
That seemed the most of all possible good
most out of stony image spectral in
Beyond his reach, & is that image walking
Beside the The man tha Lapo & that Guedo knew?
The affable man that [?]Catentanto knew?
I think he has he fashioned from his opposite
I have a different notion being convinced from
That he fashioned out of his opposite
He & all others that found beauty & strength
A spectral image, as it were a stony face
An image,
An image
A shape, that might have been a stony face

Staring upon some beduins horse hair roof
From
For doored & windowed cliff or half upturned
Among the coarse grass & the camel dung —
stone;

He set his chisel to the hardest stone rock
Being
Mocked by Guedo for his lecherous life.
Being mocked
Deriding & derided, driven out
To climb that stair & eat that bitter bread
found could discover.

He saw that unpersuadable law, he found
He found the unpersuadable justice, he found
Beatrice & her purity in a vision.
The most exalted lady loved by a man.

Hic

Yet surely there are men who have made their
Out of no tragic war; lovers of life
Impulsive men that look for happiness
And sing when they have found it.

Ille

No not sing
For those that love the world serve it in action
Grow rich, popular & full of influence
And should they paint or write still it is action
The struggle of the fly in marmalade.
     would
The rhetorician who deceives his neighbour
The sentimentalist himself; while art
Is but a vision of reality,
What portion in the world can the artist have,
Who has awakened from the common dream
But dissipation & despair.

Hic

Yet some
But taste the world as it were a pleasant food
Had Keats a tragic mind?

Ille
Remembering A     And yet
Remember the deliberate happiness
No one denies to Keats love of the world

[A melancholy that is so full of peace
And
Or melancholy that is ripening into peace
loved the world

Acknowledge that the art of Keats is happy.
Remember his deliberate happiness

Hic Ille

His art is happy but who knows his mind
I see a school boy when I think of him
With face & nose pressed to a sweet shop window

[?]
For certainly he sank into his grave
His senses & his heart unsatisfied
And made being poor ailing & ignorant
Shut out from all the luxury of the world
The ill bred son of a livery stable keeper
Luxurious song.

Hic
Why should you leave the lamp
-But wherefore leave the lamp

Burning alone beside an open book
To And
And
To trace these characters upon the sand;
A style is found by sedentary toil
And by the great masters
The imitation of the masters of our speech
By writing & rewriting.

Ille
Because I seek an image not a book
For Those men that are in their writings are most wise
I would find
Those who in their
And those who in their
An image whose writings are most wise

Own nothing but their blind stupefied hearts.
I call to the mysterious one who yet
Shall walk the wet sand by the edge of the sea
And look most like me being indeed my double
And [prove] of all imaginable things
The most unlike, being my anti-self
And stand by these strange characters & show discover
All that I have desired whispering low
All that I seek & whisper it as though
The He dreaded that those bi-
cry aloud
He were afraid the birds, who suddenly
Their momentary cries before it is dawn
Make their brief cries in the unbroken dark.
Would hear & carry it to unworthy men-
Would carry it away to blasphemous men

Dec 5, 1915
The Anti-Self
Ego Dominus Tuus
The self and the anti-self.

Hic.
1 On the grey sands beside the shallow sea
2 Under your old wind beaten Tower, where still
3 A lamp burns on beside the open book
4 That Michael Robartes left, you walk in the moon
5 And though you have passed the best of life still trace
6 Enthralled by the unconquerable delusion
7 Magical shapes.

Ille.
By the help of an image
8 I call to my own opposite, summon all
9 That I have handled least, least looked upon;
   Hic.
10 And I would find my self and not an image.
   Ille.
11 That is our modern hope and by its light
12 We have lit upon the gentle, sensitive mind
13 And lost the old nonchallance of the hand;
14 Whether we have chosen, chisel, pen or brush
15 We are but critics, or but half create,
16 Timid, entangled, empty and abashed
17 Lacking the countenance of our friends.
Hic

38 Yet surely there are men who have made their art
39 Out of no tragic war, lovers of life
40 Impulsive men that look for happiness
41 And sing when they have found it.

Ille

No not sing

42 For those that love the world serve it in action
43 Grow rich, popular & full of influence,
44 And should they paint or write still it is action:
45 The struggle of the fly in marmalade.
46 The rhetorician would deceive his neighbors
47 The sentimentalist himself; while art
48 Is but a vision of reality.
49 What portion in the world can the artist have
50 Who has awakened from the common dream
51 But dissipation and despair?

Hic

And yet

52 No one denies to Keats love of the world
53 Remember his deliberate happiness.

Ille

54 His art is happy but who knows his mind.
55 I see a school boy when I think of him
56 With face and nose pressed to a sweet shop window
[Quinn (39), 4, continued]

71 Shall walk the wet sand by the edge of the sea
72 And look most like me, being indeed my double,
73 And prove of all imaginable things
74 The most unlike, being my anti self,
75 And standing by these characters disclose and
76 All that I seek & whisper it as though
77 He were afraid the birds, who cry aloud
78 Those momentary cries before it is born dawn,
79 Would carry it away to blasphemous men.

Dec. 1915
"The Second Coming"

Fragment 1

1. Thin.
2. All things break up — no stroke upon the clock
3. But ceremonious innocence has died,
   Yet the Yet when/
4. While the mob fawns upon the murderer[?s]
   And
5. While the judge nods—nods before his empty dock,
6. And there is Burke to cry aloud—no Pit.
7. And there is none to pluck him by the gown
Fragment 2

Things fall apart — at every stroke of the clock

Of innocence most foully put to death

Old wisdom or young innocence has died

The gracious & the innocent have

Or while the mobs fawn upon the murderer

And the judge nods before his empty dock
Ever more wide sweeps the gyre
Ever further the flies out ward
from the falconer hand. scarcely
is armed tyranny fallen when
When an the mob bred [*anarchy]*
take[s] it place. For this
Marie Antoinette has
Most [*brutally*] [*died*], & *no*
Burke has spoken[*to-the*] has [*cried*]
With his voice no pit
Arraigns revolution Surely the second
[*birth*] comes near —
intelectual gyre is [*theirs*] [*tor*]
The gyres grow wider & more wide
falcon cannot hear
The hawk can no more hear the falconer
The Germans to Russia take their place
have
The German s are but [*now* / had] to Russia come
Though every day now some innocent has died
Recalls the mob fawn
The [*common*] mob to fawn upon the murderer
[*And*] [*th*]
Broader & broader is the
Furth
Ever-more-wide
day by day
The gyres sweep wider by year[?s]
[?Every.] year day
can no more hear the falconer
The hawk, [?flown] farther from the falconer

Things have begun to break & /
All things are broken up & fall apart
After they have gone the [?mastes]
After
And [?either] [?is] [?gone], the [?mastes]
Soar
The [?b]

When [?this] [?first] by [?land] had been [?soil]
The tyrant has the anarch in his pay
And murderer to follow murderer
1. Turning & turning in the wide gyre
2. The falcon can hear the falconer
3. [To wide] the gyres —
4. Things fall apart — the center has lost power
5. Things fall apart — the centre cannot hold
6. Mere loose
7. Wild anarchy is loose through out the world
8. Dim tide
9. The blood stained flood is loose & everywhere
10. The ceremony of innocence is drowned.
11. Uncertain
12. The good are waver ing & uncertain
13. While lack
14. The best lose all conviction while the worst
15. Are full of passionate intensity.
16. Surely the great falcon must come
17. Surely the hour of the second birth is here
18. We have the desert — surely the spiritus mundi leaps
19. St. shall leap
20. Surely the spiritus mundi leap
21. ‘The second Birth.’ Scarce have those
22. Words been spoken
Surely some revelation is at hand

We have the desert — surely the [?spirits]
must leap.

The cradle at Beth-el be rock a-new
The Second Coming is at
Surely the hour of the second birth has struck
are
Scarce have these words
Coming have spoken
The Second Birth. Scarce had the words been spoken
And new hierarchy’s was rent as it were cloth
now knife
Before the dark was cut as with a knife
vast
And a stark image out of spiritus mundi
Troubles my sight — A waste of sand
— A waste of desert sand

A shape with lion body & with woman’s
And the head of a man breast & head
Moves with a slow slouching step.
And an eye gaze and
And eyes, blank & pitiless as the sun

Slouches

thighs

Moves its slow feet, while over it there
An angry crowd of desert
Run.

Fall Shadows of the desert birds they.
Indignant desert birds
30 The darkness drops again — but now I know
  all things
31 weary of the [?Egyptian] sleep at last
32 Sleep stony
33 jealous at last, it has thrown off that sleep
34 jealous at last, & [?waked of its] sleep—
That
  of the stony
35 For twenty centuries its stony sleep
36 Were vexed and all but broken by the Second
  Were vexed
  Was
37 Was vex to night mare by a rocking cradle
  [?shadow]
38 And now at last, by jealousy stung awake
39 It slouches toward Bethelem to be born
40 It has set out for Bethelem to be born
  that
41 And now at last — knowing its time come round
42 It has set out for Bethelem to be born.
  wild thing — its hour come round at last
  it is
  come round
43 And what at last — knowing its [?time—?]turn
  rough beast
44 Is slouching toward bethelem to be born
45 Slouches toward Bethelem to be born
The Second Coming

in

1 Turning and turning in that widening gyre
   cannot
2 The Falcon cannot hear the falconer;
3 Things fall apart; the center cannot hold
4 Mere Anarchy is loosed upon the world,
5 The blood dimmed tide is loosed, & every where
6 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
7 The best lack all conviction while the worst
8 Are full of passionate intensity.
9 Surely some revelation is at hand;
10 Surely the second coming is at hand.
11 The second coming! Hardly are those words out
12 And a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
13 Troubles my sight — a waste of desert sand;
14 A shape with lion's body and the
15 When
16 A shape with lion's body and the head of a man,
17 A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun
18 Moves its slow thighs, while all about it
19 Wind shadows of the indignant desert birds.
20 The darkness drops again but now I know
21 That twenty centuries of stony sleep
22 Were vexed to night mare by a rocking cradle
23 And what rough beast, its hour come round at last
24 Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born.
The Second Coming

Turning and turning in that widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold,
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood dimmed tide is loosed, & everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
And a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: a waste of desert sand
A shape with lion’s body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun
Moves its slow thighs while all about it
Wind shadows of the indignant desert birds.

The darkness drops again but now I know
That thirty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to night mare by a rocking cradle
And
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last
Slouches towards Bethelem to be born.
Slouches
THE SECOND COMING

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold,
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When
\[
\text{And a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi}
\]
\[
\text{through}
\]
\[
\text{Troubles my sight: a \^ wastes of desert sand}
\]
\[
\text{A shape with lion's body and the head of a man,}
\]
\[
\text{A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,}
\]
\[
\text{Is moving}
\]
\[
\text{Moves its slow thighs, while all about it}
\]
\[
\text{Wind \^ shadows of the indignant desert birds.}
\]

The darkness drops again but now I know
That thirty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?
“The Circus Animals Desertion”

Fragment 1

THE CIRCUS ANIMALS’ DESERTION

theme & sought for it in vain
or so
And sought for it daily for some five weeks now,
I think Perhaps

1 I am too old — old men [?]
Something resembling happiness they know
If not [?it] happiness it self a show
Of happiness because do not [?they] [ ?]
can

As much of happiness as a man know

Their minds are full and they no longer strain
Like drowning men and clutch every straw
Their minds are too full now for pain and strain
They have no [?conquest] but the [ ??] [ ??] [ ??]

5 For their full minds have put off pain & strain
And all poetic themes are plants that grow
Out of the necessity of a mind
That were they lacking were but burning sand
have
1 I sought a theme & sought for it in vain
2 I have it daily for five weeks or so
   Perhaps I shall not find it--an old man
   being an aged
3 Perhaps I am last too old a man
   satisfied
4 And I must be content with facts, although
   [?dream] [?] before me
5 last winter A there about me ran
4 A
6 My travelling circus all the beasts on show
   Garaffes & men on stilts or in a chariot
   Women & lions & the Lord knows what
   Garaffes men up stilts or
7 Garaffes, & men on stilts, a high chariot
8 Lions & women & Lord knows what
9 They have [?] their minds, & so
   [?left] pai & str
A poem that seems no matter where it goes allegorical

Is but an alego like those aneant shows

Of wrecked life, but I saw Usheen ride And I starved for the bosom of his bride.

And starved for the bosom of his faery bride.
Fragment 4

Through those isles that are in all men's dreams
A [?journey]-dance [?ungovernable] blows
[?Peace] ending wretchedly.
[?Of]
[?insensible] joy, [?insensible] blows
[?insensible] peace, three allegoric themes, one of those themes
The middle ages put into their shows
Or so I thought that set on the ride
Yet

Yet images were more than life it seems
First that sea rider Usheen led by the nose
Though three allegorical enchanted islands, allegorical dreams
Of the emptiness of joy, battle & repose
One of those
A summing up of life — one of those themes
The middle ages put in songs & shows
Or so I thought set him on to a ride
Starved for the bosom the bosom of his faery bride.
1 Why brood upon old triumphs, Prepare to die
2 Renounce immortality, learn to die
3 The burnished chariot is wheeled away from sight
4 O hour of triumph, come & make me gay
5 Foils though, even at the approach of the unimaged night
6 In this black velvet of unimaged night
   [?] man has the refuge
7 I have still my gaiety
8 A dab of black enhances every white
9 Tension is but the vigour of the mind
10 Cannon the god & father of mankind
Tragic Toys. The Circus Animals. Desertion.

I
I sought a theme & sought for it in vain
I have sought it daily for sick's weeks or so
a broken
May be at last being but an aged man
contended with this show
I must be satisfied with life although set set decline.

Winter & summer till this drear began old age began
My circus animals were all on show,
Those stil'ted boys, that burnished chariot,

L}

Lion & women & the Lord knows what.

II
grand, out glittered
Those images were more than life it seems:
For all things counted more than life. What can I but enumerate
Those tragic were
And every toy was more than life it seems
First that sea rider Utheem led by the nose
the

three
Through enchanted islands, alle gorical dreams
Vain exaltation, battle & repose

A running up of life one of those themes or so it seems
That might a dorn old songs or courtly shows
But what care I that
Or so I thought that set him up on to ride,
I starved for the bosom of his faery bride.

III
And then a counter truth filled out its play
The Countess Cathleen was the name I gave it
She pity crazed had given her soul away
But masterful heaven intervened to save it
I thought my dear must her own soul destroy
So did fine cism & hate ensnave it
And this brought forth a dream & soon enough
The dream it self had all my thought & love
IV

And then while fool & blindman stole the bread
Cuchulain fought the vulnerable sea
Great mysteries there & yet when all is said
It was the dream itself enchanted me:
Character isolated by a deed
To engross the present and dominate memory.
The players & the painted stage took all my love
And not those things that they were emblems of.

IV

Why brood upon old triumph? Prepare to die
For all those burnished chariots are in flight.
O hour of triumph come & make me gay;
    For ever    For on the edges
Even at the approach of the unimagined night
Man has the refuge of his gaiety:
A dab of black enhances every white
vigour
Tension is but the vigor of the mind,
Cannon the god & father of mankind.

London
November 1937
1. But lonely to the lone: the tents blown away
2. Women & stilts & chariots all in flight
3. Man makes a refuge of his gaety
   at
   And at even in the aroach of
4. And Mocks the aproaches of unimaged night
5. O hour of triumph come and make me gay

6. Upon the frontier of unimag'd night.
The Circus Animal's Desertion

I sought a theme and sought for it in vain.
I have sought it daily for six weeks or so.
Maybe at last being but a broken man
I must be satisfied with life, although
Winter and summer till old age began
My circus animals were all on show,
Those stilted boys, that burnished chariot,
Lion and woman and the Lord knows what

What can I but enumerate old themes,
First that sea-rider Oisin led by the nose
Through three enchanted islands, allegorical dreams.
Vain exaltation, battle, and repose, vain
A summing up of life, or so it seems,
That might adorn old songs or courtly shows:
But what cared I that set him on to ride;
I starved for the bosom of his fairy bride.

And then a counter truth filled out its play.
"The Countess Cathleen" was the name I gave it.
She, pity-crazed, had given her soul away.
But masterful heaven intervened to save it.
I thought my dear most her own soul destroy
So did fanaticism and hate enslave it.
And this brought forth a dream and soon enough
The dream itself had all my thought and love.

And then when Fool and Blind Man stole the bread
Cuchulain fought the ungodly sea.
Great mysteries there, and yet when all is said
It was the dream itself enchanted me.
Character isolated by a deed
To engross the present and dominate memory.
The players and the painted stage took all my love
And not those things that they were emblems of.
Why brood upon old triumph, prepare to die
For all those burnished chariots are in flight.
O hour of triumph come and make me gay.
Even at the approach of the un-imaged night
Man has the refuge of his safety.
A dab of black enhances every white.
Tension is but the vigour of the mind.
Cannon the god and father of mankind.

O hour of triumph come and make me gay.
If burnished chariots are put to flight
Why brood upon old triumph; prepare to die.
I am...but the {{}[man]} of my heart

THE CIRCUS ANIMAL'S DESERTION

I

I sought a theme and sought for it in vain,
I sought it daily for six weeks or so.
Maybe at last being but a broken man
I must be satisfied with life, although
Winter and summer till old age began
My circus animals were all on show,
Those stilted boys, that burnished chariot,
I, lon and woman and the Lord knows what.

What

What can I but enumerate old themes, old

Usheen

First that sea-rider, led by the nose

through three enchanted islands, allegorical dreams,
Vain gaiety, vain battle, vain response repose,
A summing-up of life, or so it seems,
That might adorn old songs or courtly shows;
But what cared I that set him on to ride,
I, starved for the bosom of his fairy bride.

And then a counter-truth filled out its play,
"The Countess Cathleen" was the name I gave it,
She, pity-crazed, had given her soul away
But masterful Heaven intervened to save it.
I thought my dear must her own soul destroy
So did fanaticism and hate enslave it,
And this brought forth a dream and soon enough
The dream itself had all my thought and love.

And when the Fool and Blind Man stole the bread
Cuchullain fought the ungovernable sea;
Great mysteries there, and yet when all is said
It was the dream itself enchanted me:
Fragment 12 (next page)
Character isolated by a deed
To engross the present and dominate memory.
The players and the painted stage took all my love
And not those things that they were emblems of.

O hour of triumph come and make me gay!
If burnished chariots are put to flight
Why brood upon old triumph, prepare to die;
Even at the approach of the un-imaged night
Man has the refuge of his gaiety;
A dab of black enhances every white,
Tension is but the vigour of the mind,
Cannon the god and father of mankind.

&
Animals, chariots still poetic theme
Despair. On the lack of a theme

THE CIRCUS ANIMAL’S DESERTION

I sought a theme and sought for it in vain,
I sought it daily for six weeks or so.
Maybe at last being but a broken man
I must be satisfied with life, although my heart
Winter and summer till old age began
My circus animals were all on show,
Those stilted boys, that burnished chariot,
Lion and woman and the Lord knows what.

What can I but enumerate old themes,
First that sea-rider, led by the nose
Through three enchanted islands, allegorical dreams,
Vain gaiety, vain battle, vain repose,
Assuming up of life, or so it seems,
That might adorn old songs or courtly shows;
But what cared I that set him on to ride,
I starved for the bosom of his fairy bride.

And then a counter-truth filled out its play,
“The Countess Cathleen” was the name I gave it,
She, pity-crazed, had given her soul away
But masterful Heaven intervened to save it.
I thought my dear must her own soul destroy
So did fanaticism and hate enslave it,
And this brought forth a dream and soon enough
The dream itself had all my thought and love.

And when the Fool and Blind Man stole the bread
Cuchullain fought the un governable sea;
Great mysteries there, and yet when all is said
It was the dream itself enchanted me:
Character isolated by a deed
To engross the present and dominate memory.
The players and the painted stage took all my love
And not those things that they were emblems of.

O hour of triumph come and make me gay!
If burnished chariots are put to flight
Why brood upon old triumph, prepare to die;
Even at the approach of the un-imaged night
Man has the refuge of his gaiety;
A dab of black enhances every white,
Tension is but the vigour of the mind,
Cannon the god and father of mankind.

Those procesional forms
Those masterful images
Grew in pure mind but out of what began?

From the inanimate sweepings of the street.
Bits of old newspaper, that broken can?
From rag & bone, or from that raving slut or from the
Called Heart & company. My ladders gone
And I lie down where all the ladders start
In the foul rag & bone shop of the heart.

Sept 23
[NLI 30.253]

a. From orange peel, dirt, sweepings of the street,
b. Bits of old newspaper, that broken can
   Old iron, old bones, old rags
c. Or from old Rag-Rag & bone, that raving slut
d. Called Heart & Company. My ladders gone
e. And I lie down where all the ladders start
   In the foul rag & bone shop of the heart.

Where have had images

[?did]

Where [?ha] those forms, that grew because complete

In the pure intellect alone began [?how] began
Those masterful images, because complete
but
Grew in pure mind, out of what began?
^ from what
Grew in pure intellect but where began?
Old orange peel, dirt, Dirt, orange peel, the
In this & that, the sweeping of the street,
^ Old bits
Bits of old newspaper, a broken can.
Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
Who keeps the till. Now that my ladders gone
I must lie down where all the ladders start
In the foul rag & bone shop of the heart

Those masterful images because complete
Grew in pure mind but out of what began?
A mound of refuse [?etc] a
Dirt, orange peel, the sweepings of the street, street,
kettles, old ^
Old whisky bottles & a broken can, ^ the
Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder’s gone
I must lie down where all the ladders start
In the foul rag & bone shop of the heart.
And when the Fool and Blind Man stole the bread
Cuchullain fought the ungovernable sea;
Heart mysteries there, and yet when all is said
It was the dream itself enchanted me;
Character isolated by a deed
To engross the present and dominate memory.
Players and painted stage took all my love
And not those things that they were emblems of.

III
Those masterful images because complete
Grew in pure mind but out of what began?
A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,
Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,
Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
Who keeps the ill. Now that my ladder’s gone
I must lie down where all the ladders start
In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.
List of Contents for *Last Poems*

1. Under Ben Bulben
2. Three songs to one Burden
3. The Black Tower
4. Cuchulain Comforted
5. Three Marching Songs
6. In Tara's Songs
7. The Statues (would like another copy if George takes [??them/??these] to Dublin)
8. News for the Delphic Oracle
9. The Long Legged Fly
10. A Bronze Head
11. A Stick of Incense
12. Hound Voice
13. John Kinsella's Lament Etc
14. High Talk
15. The Apparitions
16. A Nativity
17. Man & Echo
18. The Circus Animals Desertion
19. Poletics
20. Cuchulain's Death
21. Purgatory
Cast a cold Eye
On Life, on Death.
Horseman, pass by.

W.B. YEATS

June 13th 1865
January 28th 1939