

THE COUNTESS CATHLEEN AS A STUDY IN THEATRICAL GENRE¹

by Michael J. Sidnell

I.

The version of *The Countess Cathleen* that we heard at Clemson's Irish conference was first played at the Abbey Theatre in December 1911. It was staged by the students of the Abbey's new Acting School,² working under the direction of Nugent Monck. This version, which survives in what Yeats called "The Old Prompt Copy," is especially interesting in that it constitutes a distinct version of the play, unrepresented by the printed texts, and embodies the work of radical revision done in the months *before* this performance, not after it, and in the light of it, as has been supposed.³ In keeping with the 1911 revival, the Clemson Players gave us the new ending, not the old ending that Yeats retained for reading, which is more pagan than Miltonic.

In the audience for that 1911 performance, as was usual for him on an Abbey first night, was John Holloway. He was the architect who had supervised the first renovation of the building, an avid follower of all the arts, a voracious collector and indefatigable diarist.⁴ On this occasion he told his diary:

I must candidly confess that I could not get interested in *The Countess Cathleen* as revised & presented at the Abbey. The medieval treatment suggestive of tapestry robbed the play of its drama and gave only occasional prettiness instead. There was no "illusion" in it for me, and a stage performance without illusion to me passes for nought. My recollection of its first production some twelve years ago is of a beautiful poetic play beautifully enacted without distracting elements, save the occasion[all] noise of the students who had a crow to pluck with Yeats ... [On the present occasion the producers] discarded the usual electric lighting of the stage from back of balcony and used lime lights instead—the operators were stationed at the right hand corner of the back of the balcony. Hughes and I sat on the back seat. Just as the performance commenced Yeats came and sat near the operators. He had a sheet of colour directions in his hand and kept moving backwards and forwards every now and then to tell the man nearest him when to change the shade of colour on the lantern. All the excitement and restlessness on the part of the poet who whenever he stood up became silhouetted against the light from the lantern made for distraction & ones attention could never remain focused on what was going on

on the stage for any length of time at a stretch. Therefore I fear it was the restlessness of Yeats & not the mirical [*sic*] play that interested me. The limelight proved itself the only sensible thing in the house—it hissed on occasion—but alas! Yeats did not feel called upon to put it out and go back to the natural way of lighting the stage. ... [It] was played without a break—one scene merging with another rapidly. The stage had been extended some yards into the auditorium & the actors entered by the auditorium as well as by the wings as in the “morality plays.” The effect of curtains for the interior of cottage and castle scenes & of a medieval forest for outdoor scene were more distracting than helpful to the spoken words—the play vanished in the strange setting & the erratic lighting. This was not so when I saw *The Countess Cathleen* before—the play was then the thing....⁵

Holloway was in a small minority: most critics approved Yeats’s revisions, the acting and, above all, Nugent Monck’s direction, finding this first Abbey Theatre production a distinct advance on the one in the Ancient Concert Rooms that many of them still recalled—or thought they did.

This first Abbey production in December was actually Monck’s second staging of the play in 1911, the first having taken place in England, in February. He would also direct the revival at the Abbey in February 1912, the first London production in the same year and the Irish Players touring production to America, also in 1912; all of which involved changes in casting and scenography and, of course, textual revision. Monck was in fact, the canonical director of the play in its later recensions.

His February 1911 production—the first in England—took place in Norwich, and like a number of the subsequent performances in England and America, this one was given by an all-female cast of amateurs and on behalf of a charity.⁶ Before going into rehearsal, Monck had sought and received Yeats’s advice and had invited the author to attend—which he did, arriving after a six-hour journey from Manchester, in good time to help with the numbering of the seats. In the event, Yeats’s efforts were rewarded and, when he stood on his (numbered) seat at the end of the performance to praise the production, his enthusiasm was genuine. He liked the costumes so well that he tried to acquire them for the Abbey. More fundamentally, the emotional resonance that Monck achieved by his animation of the Peasants made Yeats realize (as he later reflected) that he had learnt his stagecraft too late.⁷ After seeing Monck’s production of *Job* in the following month, Yeats invited him to direct the Irish players at the Court Theatre later in the summer and after that (to the annoyance of the other Abbey directors and the outrage of the Fay brothers) brought Monck over to Dublin as the founding director of the Abbey’s new acting school. Yeats hoped that in this school a second, better-trained and more compliant Abbey company might be nurtured—one that could handle verse.

At the time of his Norwich production, Monck was already well known for his staging of early drama—especially for his productions of the Chester mystery plays, which Yeats had heard about⁸—and his brilliant handling of crowd scenes. Monck had first learned his stagecraft working under William Poel in the Elizabethan Stage Society and, when it was disbanded in 1905, had formed his own group to carry on the work. His two first productions with this new group were plays by Browning and Dante Gabriel Rossetti⁹

and his aim, as he later told a Dublin interviewer, was to “work as the Pre-Raphaelites did in painting and evolve a new outlet for dramatic sense which would not be hampered by stock traditions, scenery, curtains, footlights, paint, and the other things that make for technique.”¹⁰ Monck put special emphasis on the pre-Elizabethan religious drama that Poel, with his puritanical aversion to religion on the stage, so intensely disliked. When Monck and Yeats first met in 1911, the director’s medieval orientation was most congenial to the poet, who was deep into Chaucer at the time. Moreover, their encounter came at just the moment when Yeats had to give up his hopes of getting Gordon Craig to work at the Abbey, since Craig was fully occupied with the founding of his own school and with the preparations for his Moscow *Hamlet*. But Craig had been generous with advice and had provided plans and permission to build and use his famous screens at the Abbey. A major part of Monck’s mission, as defined by Yeats, was to realize at the Abbey the scenic reforms that Craig advocated, including the use of the screens for poetic work and new techniques of lighting they demanded. Like Yeats, Monck revered Craig and his extensive theatre practice had much in common with Craig’s theory, especially with respect to lighting and scenic simplification. And, moreover, Monck had the additional qualification of considerable expertise in the staging of plays in verse.

One of the advantages of Monck was that he was decidedly more amenable than Craig, for whom Yeats’s vast admiration was always qualified by an acute awareness of Craig’s difficult temperament and the potential for artistic rivalry. But though Monck fully shared Yeats’s high esteem for the master, Monck also had his own ideas and well-tryed stage practices. In turning to him, Yeats was, in effect, turning away from the pictorialism and velleities of symbolist presentation to a quasi-medieval, highly corporeal theatricality. The technical innovations that Joseph Holloway disparaged were entirely in keeping with the stage-practice that Monck had developed over the years. Yeats himself had long felt the need of an apron stage to improve the scenic picture but with Monck he got the new stage dynamic of a six foot extension with side steps that enabled players to enter through the stalls.

For the December 1911 production of *The Countess Cathleen*, Yeats willingly submitted to Monck’s amiable but most demanding rehearsal regimen and was, indeed, so intimately involved in every element of this production that it would have been very difficult for him to revert to mere spectator.¹¹ That performative silhouette in the balcony calling the lights—that Holloway so deplored—was doubtless Yeatsian self-expression but not out of keeping with the actors’ invasion of the stalls and a production not at all Maeterlinckian, distantiated and pictorial like the one lodged in Holloway’s memory.

As an earlier diary shows, Holloway’s recollection of his earlier response was accurate. Of that first production of May 1899, he had written, at the time, that

It was weirdly, fantastically, pathetically, or picturesquely effective by turns; and, as I followed its progress, Poe’s words, “All that we see or seem is but a dream within a dream,” floated in on my mind, and a spiritual, half-mystic, visionary sensation crept over my senses as I watched enraptured, as if I were in fairy-land....¹²

The quasi-symbolist aesthetic of Holloway’s earlier response was re-invoked in 1913, in a

review by Compton Rhodes of John Drinkwater's production at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Rhodes praised the play highly and welcomed the performance, which he took to be "something akin to a spiritual adventure," but was sure that the play demanded an utterly different style of production, which he clearly enunciated:

Symbolist Drama demands simple, harmonious, and shadowy settings, and faint and chastened lights. Behind a veil of gauze, the players move with an undulating grace of figures in a dream, and rhythmic silences alternate with the throb and chant of voices ... the substitution of the illusion of vision for the illusion of life.¹³

Rhodes wanted something dreamier or more "Symbolist" than Drinkwater's production. Yeats would have agreed only partly with Rhodes but he was scathing about this 1913 production. What he wanted, as he now knew, was neither pervasive symbolist distanciation nor unremitting corporeal animation but a combination, or alternation, of the dream effect with human vigour. "Where you cannot get subjective passion you must have movement, animation, vitality," he admonished Drinkwater. Ideally, *The Countess Cathleen* should have both these qualities and absolutely needed one of them. Drinkwater, having failed to achieve even the easier part—which was the vitality—had ended up with a production that was merely "arty," said Yeats.¹⁴ Clearly, Drinkwater had fallen far short of Yeats's objectives for the play, which Monck's energetic scenes on the apron, alternating with a remote pictorialism obtained from an upstage gauze scrim had helped the playwright define.¹⁵

Yeats's enthusiasm for the first Abbey production of 1911 ran so high that he compared the costumes and lighting to the early Craig's, and he thought the verse speaking the best ever done at the Abbey. Later he would reflect that the audience listened so intently because of the visual beauty: "it was their eyes that kept them listening."¹⁶ To Lady Gregory, in America, he also reported that the audience was moved to deep silence after the final curtain, partly in response to a recessionary keening that Monck had orchestrated by way of closure. But the silence was followed by enthusiastic applause, applause which (to Monck's indignation) a Trinity student, himself deeply moved, tried to hush. The student appears to have been a harbinger of the kind of ambiguity about applauding a theatrical yet religious performance that would later attend plays of the so-called religious revival, notably Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*.

In the weeks before the December 1911 performance of *The Countess Cathleen*, *The Interlude of Youth* and *The Second Shepherd's Play* were presented by the Abbey students, and Yeats began to scout the idea of a permanent, second Abbey company, dedicated to the performance of religious plays in Dublin and the provinces. With wondrous optimism, he even supposed that the Church might use its good offices in support of such a project. But his hope of reversing the old ecclesiastical opposition was a minor motive only. His main intention was to divert the energies of the Abbey from realist, prose drama into an alternative, mainly verse, mode. Edward Martyn approved the idea but also reported deep residual hostility to Yeats and his theater in clerical quarters.¹⁷ What Yeats called a cycle of religious plays was given shortly after *The Countess Cathleen*, and this further sampling of medieval and religious drama¹⁸ was respectfully received; though the use of incense to create atmosphere in the home theatre of *The Playboy of the Western World* was found passing strange.

Most critically, attendance was so poor as to effectively dampen all hopes for a new theatrical departure at the Abbey in the direction of religious drama.

Monck's Norwich production of *The Countess Cathleen*, early in 1911, had been the beginning of a two-year efflorescence of the play and radical revision of its text. In these years, it received a number of professional and amateur productions.¹⁹ It was translated into Polish and Italian,²⁰ and the rights to an operatic version were sold, with a view to a score by Carlo Leoni and a production in Convent Garden under Craig's direction.²¹ This project occasioned yet more textual revision, as did the Abbey and touring productions of 1911 and 1912. In terms of Yeats's career overall, this final, frenetic phase of work on *The Countess Cathleen* may be seen as the closing of the first period of his dramaturgical experimentation, which had begun in earnest with the first production of the play in 1899. The second period would open with his discovery, as he said, of his "first model ... in the Noh stage of aristocratic Japan," though Japanese drama was hardly such a novelty to him as this would imply.²² And, as for *The Countess Cathleen*, I propose that, in this final, major phase of its revision, Yeats attempted to re-affirm its not altogether well-founded claim to belong the "miracle play" genre that he had for a long time approached with great ambivalence.

II

As I've said, the version of *The Countess Cathleen* performed by the Clemson Players had emerged from the extensive revisions made in 1911, between Monck's Norwich and Abbey productions. And the effect of these revisions overall was to fashion a more conventional miracle play out of the highly idiosyncratic blend of folk-lore, myth, love story, political and personal allegory and saint-legend that Yeats had pounded together in his "Irish Drama" of 1892 and later versions. The losses in this process of revision were not light. Perhaps the most grievous of all was the excision of the lyric "Who Goes with Fergus?"—which so profoundly touched Joyce and which T.S. Eliot justly called "perfect [in its] kind."²³ This song, which epitomises the pagan values of self-fulfillment that Cathleen rejects, was sacrificed as part of a wholesale reduction of the mythological allusion that had characterised Cathleen's courtly realm. Along with the myth went the folkloric superstitions of the peasant characters, which had been the main machinery by which Yeats had attempted to link pagan with Catholic superstition, Christian theology with Irish mythology; a procedure which, incidentally, separated a folklore-abiding underclass from its myth-minding superiors. The original mix had included supernatural supernumeraries replicating the elaborate taxonomy of the folktale collection in which Yeats had first reprinted the "Countess Kathleen" story. These sowlths, thevishes, far darrigs and other faery folk (helpfully classified in the program notes) had been the unwilling slaves of the diabolical agents, working alongside tormented souls from hell. In 1911 the faeries were defolklorized into "Spirits" or "dancers" or (as they are also called) "girls."²⁴ The proper occupation of these Spirits is, indeed, simply to dance but no social context is provided either for that occupation or for their gender. They did not survive the 1911 version. In the scenographic dimension, a wood of oak, beech and hazel—the magic trees of Druid lore—becomes a suggestion of a missal illumination, a conversion deriving from Monck's Norwich production.²⁵ A Virgin's shrine no longer hangs on the cottage wall, ready to fall with heavy-handed and provocative symbolism. Oona, the old nurse, formerly a singer of

bardic lays, is now the rival to the poet Aeel not only for her mistress' affections but as an apologist for Christian orthodoxy. Aengus, god of love, survives in Aeel's visionary pantheon, perhaps because he had already been explicitly invalidated as one of the old gods, not to be mistaken for an angelic being. The Peasants who sell their souls now get a big break: first they are permitted to repent, and then they are actually redeemed as part of Cathleen's Faustian contract with the diabolical Merchants. And at the end of the play, the old gods no longer reconvene for the momentous sacrifice on the rood of time, in Aeel's vision of them. Instead, Aeel sees Miltonic devils battling God's angels. Yeats also abandoned the tableau of armed angels, standing on the rocky slope of a mountain in a vaporous, changing light, in favour of a single Angel passing across the stage "carrying a torch and sword ... with eyes fixed upon some distant thing." These last two changes—the depaganization of the reported vision and the elimination of the depicted tableau—Yeats lumped together, and grudgingly explained that they had been "made for no better reason than that audiences—even at the Abbey Theatre—are almost totally ignorant of Irish mythology—or because a shallow stage made the elaborate vision of armed angels upon a mountainside impossible."²⁶ But the two pragmatic considerations of audience awareness and theatrical feasibility are of quite different orders, and the presumed ignorance of the Irish audience raised old and prickly questions about the different cultural assumptions of that audience and the author.²⁷

In the earlier versions especially, but in the final reading text also, there is a certain bravura in having pagan gods and Christian angels consort together on the page or stage of a miracle play. Yeats had advised Monck, before the Norwich performance, that "It is any period you please in which it is possible to believe in demons and not to be too far from the old gods, while living in the midst of Christian fervour."²⁸ But over the next few months his text left the old gods behind quite rapidly. Nevertheless, the play remained divergent from the traditional miracle play, an aspect of Yeats's treatment that Walter Egk acutely seized upon when, in his 1955 operatic adaptation, he made Aeel's indoctrination by demons a central episode.²⁹ But why refer to *The Countess Cathleen* as "a miracle play" at all? After all, none of its printed texts does. The only subtitle the *printed* play ever bore was that of the first printed version, "An Irish Drama." But in its *theatrical* manifestations, beginning with the program for the first production, the play³⁰ was almost invariably labelled "a miracle play."

This curious fact that *The Countess Cathleen* is "miracle play" on the stage but not on the page is one odd feature in the relation between the play and the genre. Another comes out in Yeats's correspondence with, and about, Katherine Tynan, in the late 1880's and early 1890's. Here, Yeats maintains an unspecified but definite distinction between *his* authorship of *The Countess Cathleen* and, stemming from her profound and writerly Catholicism, *her* special fitness for miracle plays. But even as Yeats maintained the distinction between prospective miracle plays by Tynan and his own *Countess Cathleen*, he regularly juxtaposed his Irish play and the genre that beckoned her. Very early on, Yeats actually offered the Countess Kathleen subject to Tynan, for whom he thought it specially suitable, and she made a touching ballad out of it.³¹ On another occasion he urged her to write a miracle play with the suggestion that "A little play of the kind ... might even perhaps be acted for some religious purpose somewhere"—a prospect distinctly narrower than his own ambitions for *The Countess Cathleen*.³² He also proposed to Tynan a collaboration on a miracle play of the

Adoration of the Magi. They did not pursue this project but, in 1894, two years after the first publication of *The Countess Cathleen*, Tynan did publish her first miracle play and followed it up a year later with a small volume of six other examples of the genre. Yeats heralded this book with great enthusiasm and in terms implying that he himself would be quite unqualified for such work:

Her best and most popular book will probably be the forthcoming “Miracle Plays,” for her best inspiration has ever come from Catholic belief, and to give an excellent expression to the sacred symbols is to be for a delight and a comfort to many ardent and dutiful spirits.³³

There is no hint that he thought of religious drama as particularly appropriate for a *woman* writer though, in the event, the genre would develop that gender association. In any case, it is clear that Yeats was interested in miracle plays before he published *The Countess Cathleen*³⁴ but that the intended genre of this play was a more elaborate and specifically Irish one, with something of the scope of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, of which there is a clear echo in a very early draft.³⁵ The generic description was adduced only when the pressure of religious controversy made it strategically useful and not utterly preposterous for the play that had actually emerged.

A third curious feature of Yeats’s (and Tynan’s) interest in the “miracle” genre is that it germinated a whole decade before the event that is usually taken to mark the beginning of the theatrical revival of medieval religious drama and its modern analogues. This event was William Poel’s renowned, and financially very successful, production, in 1901, of the morality play *Everyman*, in which Nugent Monck had taken over a role.³⁶ Three years later came what is commonly supposed to be the first *modern* miracle play and was certainly one of the most successful ever, Alice Buckton’s *Eager Heart*. (Actually Laurence Housman’s Nativity play, *Bethlehem*, unsuccessfully produced by Gordon Craig in 1902, had preceded Buckton’s immensely popular work.) More intriguingly, this was also the year in which Lady Gregory drafted, with Yeats’s assistance, *The Travelling Man*, subtitled “A Miracle Play.” They ran into problems with it, which Yeats thought he had solved when he flushed out a resemblance between their Christ-figure and the god Pan.³⁷ But the project was abandoned until Lady Gregory rewrote the play and published it in 1909. She must have felt some chagrin at the consequence of the long delay, since its theme of a returned Christ coming in lowly guise to a humble house, already fully sketched out in 1902, had anticipated the renowned *Eager Heart* by two years, though it now looked like a belated borrowing from it.

Gerald Weales in his *Religion in Modern English Drama* cites a couple of “examples of a kind of tentative gesture toward religious drama before the turn of the century” but insists that “the Poel revival of *Everyman* is the first clearly generative production.”³⁸ Poel himself profoundly regretted this effect of his *Everyman*, which he had not presented as a religious play, he claimed, since religion was too real and personal to be acted and all such attempts were bound to be the most odious form of insincerity.³⁹ As a religious play, *The Countess Cathleen* is not without its insincerities and if it had led the way in the modern revival of the miracle play, it had done so uncertainly and ambivalently, strewing that path with symbolic roses. But that was long before Monck seized on the play for his Norwich production of 1911. By then, the revival of religious drama was well underway and held much promise,

especially as a verse genre. It was time for Yeats to confirm his leadership in the movement, despite the awkwardness of his being rather an outsider from the confessional point of view.⁴⁰

But Yeats's "miracle play"—if that's what it was—still violated common expectations of the traditional genre, and it still retained an ineradicable residue of the symbolist movement to which it also belonged. Yeats's really effective coming to terms with miracle plays would be in the generically transgressive *Calvary* and *The Resurrection*, in which there is none of the tender consideration of traditional Christian sensibilities and dogma that attended the writing and playing of *The Countess Cathleen*.

III

Long after his brief attachment to the religious drama movement, Yeats reasserted the symbolist affiliations of *The Countess Cathleen* the revision of a lyric that had appeared in the first published version of the play but never as part of it thereafter. In 1892, this lyric had been a dirge, sung by the angels bearing off the corpse of Kathleen. In 1927, Yeats rewrote it as "The Countess Cathleen in Paradise,"⁴¹ making the only substantial change in the last stanza, which runs:

'Mong the feet of angels seven
 What a dancer glimmering!
 All the heavens bow down to Heaven,
 Flame to flame and wing to wing.⁴²

Yeats's own commentary on this was "I like the last verse, the dancer Cathleen has become heaven itself." In this apotheosis Cathleen has, indeed, become a Heaven—one that transcends all the bowing heavens. She constitutes an all-encompassing oneness like that of "the white breast of the dim sea / And all dishevelled wandering stars" at the end of "Who Goes with Fergus?" And, as her author remarks, she has also become (like the Spirits in the 1911 and later versions)—a dancer. And this leads me to my final very brief observation.

Yeats's principal means of reconciling symbolic figure and corporeal vitality in the later, Noh-influenced plays is the dancer, for the sake of whose art even words may be silenced for a while; not the *literary* figure of Yeats and other poets of his generation, not a noun or mere image, but a living person—an Ito, a Ninette de Valois or some other performer, who is able to combine, as the actors' speech and gesture also should, the mind's dream image and the theatre's corporeal energy.

NOTES

1. Special thanks are due to Professor Wayne K. Chapman, both as the organiser of the Tenth Annual Southern Regional Conference of Irish Studies, at Clemson University, and as my collaborator in our 1999 edition of the manuscripts of *The Countess Cathleen*. For help with the more recent research underlying this paper I particularly thank: Mr. Jack Hall who very kindly allowed me to read and copy his collection of letters from Yeats to Nugent Monck; Professor John Kelly for most kindly supplying texts of

unpublished letters by Yeats and for permission to quote from them; Mrs. Diane Arnold and the staff of the Reference Department, Birmingham Central Library; Ms. Jean Kennedy, County Archivist, and the staff of the Norfolk Record Office; Ms. Cathy Fahy, Assistant Keeper, Department of Manuscripts, and Mr. Tom Dermot, of the National Library of Ireland; Mr. Richard Landon and the staff of the Fisher Library, University of Toronto; Ms. Elsie DelBianco of the library of Trinity College, Toronto; the staff of the Stauffer Library, Queen's University; Ms. Diane Elizabeth Englot of the Department of Special Collections, Melville Memorial Library, State University of New York at Stony Brook; Ms. Cathy Henderson, Research Librarian, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin; and, for valuable suggestions, Professor Natalie Rewa.

2. Reinforced by Maire O'Neill in the title role.
3. Karen Dorn (1975, p. 117) incorrectly states that Yeats "took three old plays, *The Land of Hearts' Desire*, *The Countess Cathleen*, *The Hour Glass*, and produced them in the new scenery [Craig's scenes] (1911) before rewriting them." But the major revisions to *The Countess Cathleen* that Dorn refers to were made before the December 1911 production, not after it. Some additional but relatively minor revisions were made following the December 1911 production, for which see Yeats *Cathleen* 1999, pp. xxxi-xxxii). Dorn is also mistaken, I believe, in supposing that the Craig screens were, in fact, used in the 1911 staging of *The Countess Cathleen*. The limelight played on curtains, not screens. The sketch Dorn reproduces as Plate 8 probably relates to the 1912 rather than to the 1911 production of *The Countess Cathleen*. These errors are repeated in the reprinting of the 1975 article as a chapter in her *Players and Painted Stage* (1984). Miller (1977, p.171) is also mistaken about when the screens were used and very confused about whole process of *The Countess Cathleen* revisions, supposing, for instance, that the "missal" effect was a feature of the very early versions.
4. He was consulted thereafter, particularly in the matter of the installation of Craig's screens.
5. Holloway 1988, MS 1734, pp. 933-934.
6. Produced for the Old Girls' Association of Norwich High School, at the Old Assembly Rooms Theatre. See Hildy 1986, p.167
7. Letter from Yeats to Nugent Monck, 20 March 1911.
8. Letter from Yeats to Monck, 9 February 1911.
9. *In a Balcony* (Browning) and *The Dialogue of D'Alcarno* (Rossetti). See Hildy 1986, p.35.
10. *The Freeman's Journal* 24 November 1911, quoted in Hildy 1984, p.178.
11. There is some ambiguity about what Yeats means when he writes to Lady Gregory on 6 December 1911, "Moncks rehearsals are over powering things – today even I whose part was small feel worn out." His "part" may have been to call the lighting cues but everybody in the (second) company appears to have had a stage "part," whether in a named role or in one or more of the groups of peasants, spirits or angels.
12. Holloway 1967, pp.5-6 .
13. Rhodes 1913.
14. Letter from Yeats to John Drinkwater October 1913.
15. In a letter to Lady Gregory, dated 15 December 1911, Yeats writes, "The Countess Cathleen' was a series of the most lovely pictures.... The only defect was that one got a little too much an impression of a stately recitation. This, the result of my insistence on stillness & on fine speech, will pass off with practise & is right as a foundation. Costumes & lighting were lovely indeed I have seen nothing like them since the early Craig's.... We did the Angel at the end of Cathleen in a new way. The stage was like this (we needed depth at the back for the sake of the gauze that showed the spirits)." Yeats adds a sketch of the setting, showing black backcloth, proscenium, table, steps and projecting platform.
16. In a letter to Lady Gregory, dated 2 January 1913, Yeats writes, "I have come to realize from that performance of Cathleen in Dublin how much it depends for its effect on the beauty of the picture. It held people probably more as a picture that was beautiful every moment than as something to listen to. They listened as I think I have never heard them listen in the Abbey. For an hour and five minutes there wasn't a cough, but it was their eyes that kept them listening."
17. Letter from Yeats to Lady Gregory, 18 November 1911.
18. Including *The Annunciation* and *The Flight Into Egypt* in versions by Padraic Colum.
19. There are records of the following productions: 21 February 1911—Directed by Nugent Monck for the Old Girls' Association of Norwich High School, at the Old Assembly Rooms Theatre, Norwich; 14 December 1911—Directed by Nugent Monck at the Abbey Theatre; 18 December 1911—A benefit performance for the Finch School, New York; 7 February 1912—Abbey revival; 11 July 1912—By the Irish Players under the direction of Nugent Monck at the Court Theatre, London; 13 February 1913—By the

- Irish Players at Wallack's Theatre, New York; 29 March 1913 –Directed by John Drinkwater at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre; 26 April 1913 –A benefit performance for Mrs. Dow's School, New York, in the ballroom of Plaza Hotel.
20. See Wade 1968, pp. 368-70 for Polish and Italian translations published in 1912 and 1914.
 21. In a letter of 12 May 1911 to Lady Gregory, Yeats mentions Franco Leoni's project for a production of an operatic version of *The Countess Cathleen* to be staged at Covent Garden with designs by Craig. On 20 August 1912, A.P.Watt and Sons entered into a contract with Chappell & Co., giving the latter the operatic rights to *The Countess Cathleen* for one year (renewable) for a fee of £50 p.a. Thilliez reports that Chappell abandoned the scheme but Leoni proposed to pursue it himself. See Thilliez 1972, p. 283. From Yeats's letter to Allan Wade dated 18 October 1921 it appears that Leoni had still not given up the *The Countess Cathleen* project at that time. See Wade, *Letters* 1954, p.674.
 22. "Note on the First Performance of *At the Hawk's Well*," Yeats *VPI* 1966, p.415.
 23. Sung by Joyce (who thought it "the best lyric in the world") to his dying brother and again to his dying mother, recalled in *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*, and invoked at various critical moments in *Ulysses*. See Ellmann 1982, pp.67, 93-4, 135-6; Joyce 1961, pp. 9-10, 609; Joyce 1982, pp.225-26; and Eliot 1969, p. 254.
 24. See Yeats *Cathleen* 1999, p.706.
 25. In a letter to Miss E.M. Lister, dated 23 February 1911, Yeats reports that *The Countess Cathleen* "was staged by a man called Nugent Monck, like a page out [of] a missal. I was delighted with what I saw & shall now produce the play myself."
 26. Yeats *VPI* 1966, pp.173-76.
 27. See note 3 above.
 28. Letter from Yeats to Monck 9 February 1911.
 29. Patsch 1981, p. 270.
 30. Printed in the first issue of *Beltaine: An Occasional Publication*. Taking a hint from the obliging Father Barry, Yeats also compared his play with "an auto by Calderón" in the same issue of *Beltaine*. The subtitle "A Miracle Play" was also propagated by its very frequent appearance in the headlines of reviews of the play.
 31. See Yeats *CL1* 1986, pp. 107, 172, 220. Tynan's ballad, "The Charity of the Countess Kathleen," appeared in her *Ballads and Lyrics* 1891, pp. 45-50.
 32. Letter of c.18 May 1890, in which "the 'Miracle Play' I suggested to you" modulates into a proposed collaboration on "that little miracle play I suggested to you on 'the Adoration of the Magi,'" for which Yeats would make a prose sketch to be turned into verse by Tynan. Yeats *CL1* 1986, 218-19.
 33. "Irish National Literature, III," *The Bookman* September 1895; reprinted in Yeats *UPI* 1970, pp. 375-382.
 34. As, for example, in his letters to Fr. Matthew Russell of 13 July 1889 and to Katharine Tynan of 1 July 1890. See Yeats *CL1* 1986, pp. 172, 221.
 35. "The power of my master / could freeze your you in the / middle of block of ice and send / you floating with the wild sea / from cleenas kindly cove." Yeats *Cathleen* 1999, p.204.
 36. He took over the role of Fellowship in 1902. In 1913 he bought the scenery properties and costumes of Poel's production and revived it a number of times. See Hildy 1986, 34.
 37. See Yeats's letter to Lady Gregory, dated 18 November 1902. Yeats *CL3* 1997, p. 252.
 38. Weales 1961, p.94.
 39. In an interview in *The Daily Chronicle*, 3 September 1913, he asserted, "I do not believe in the future of religious plays. I have come to see that their tendency is dangerous. Religion can never be acted. It is too real and personal a thing. It is too precious, too sacred. A player may act another man's ambition, cupidity, passion or what you will, but cannot act another man's religion. An acted religion is of all insincere and odious things the most insincere, the most odious. And the tendency of such plays is towards sentimentalism and claptrap, which are blasphemous in conjunction with religion. Since the first production of *Everyman* there have been many religious plays, and all of them, I think, have been hateful and false. I did not myself produce *Everyman* as a religious play. As a religious play it is bad. Its theology is indefensible. One can very easily tear it to pieces in that respect. But the whole story, Eastern and not Catholic in its origin, is beautiful as a piece of art; it offers a hundred opportunities from the point of view of beauty, and it leaves an impression that is fine and chaste. I rejoiced to find it, I have love producing it but I am now moving away from it." Quoted by Speaight (1954, p.166).
 40. Cf. Yeats's letter to Katharine Tynan of 1 July 1900 in which he writes, "I hoped to send you some notes or perhaps an abstract of the little "Mystery Play" on the adoration of the Magi that I propose. I found

- however that I could not get on without knowing the Catholic tradition on the subject & so far I have not had time to look it up at the Museum.” Yeats *CL1* 1986, p. 221.
41. Letter to Olivia Shakespeare, October, 1927 [recte 1926?], Yeats *Letters* 1954, p. 731. “The Dream of a Blessed Spirit” was re-written as “The Countess Cathleen in Paradise.”
42. The play version had read: “She goes down the floor of heaven, / Shining bright as a new lance, / And her guides are angels seven, / While young stars about her dance.” Yeats *VPI* 1966, p. 125.

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