

WAYS TO ACCESS THE LANDSCAPE, SOUNDSCAPE, AND LIFESCAPE OF
IRELAND IN THE POETRY OF W.B. YEATS

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This essay is premised on the necessity of having a sense of how Yeats's Ireland looks and sounds to engage adequately with his poetry. Admittedly, while the past tense might be more appropriate for those verbs "looks and sounds," much can be indicated, if not recaptured, through illustrated books, slides, recordings, films, and periodicals. If one has been fortunate enough to travel in Ireland, most certainly his or her own slides, postcards, etc. are aids to memory. I write as one who has been to Ireland twice; the first time was an eleven-day tour led by Norman and Jane Geske during a sabbatical in September of 1991.¹ Norman Geske is the retired Director of the Sheldon Art Gallery, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; his late wife, Jane, was the retired Director of the Nebraska State Library Commission. In their retirement years, they had a bookstore in Lincoln with an important collection of Irish literature. Recently, a week in Monasterevin, County Kildare, during the Gerard Manley Hopkins Summer School, which is also an international poetry festival—both directed by Desmond Egan—renewed my grounding in the landscape and brought the sound of Irish to my ears because of the local poets. One poet had scarcely been exposed to Irish before attending school. By her own choice, she composes poetry only in Irish and wins prizes. In another vein, Michael Davitt, a documentary film maker, recently published selections from his poetry in Irish with facing English translations as *Freacnairc Mhearcair: The Oomph of Quicksilver: Rogha Dánta 1970-1998*; the title is taken from his poem *Lúnasa* (August). Davitt's editor, Louis de Paor, writes of a "dynamic tension" between Davitt's "deference to words and forms which have survived the tyranny of imposed silence" and "a corresponding determination to sunder such links with traditional usage as might constrain his own contemporary imagination, to sully the essential purity of the language, as imagined by revivalist puritans and cultural conservatives, with the liberating blasphemy of new coinages stolen from English and elsewhere" (Introduction, *Oomph* x-xi). Although Yeats himself did not write poetry in Irish, such examples among contemporary poets demonstrate the commitment of "the indomitable Irishry" to the ancestral language of their island and the will to refresh its poetry.

Photographs from the past put one closer in touch with the history through which Yeats lived. On the cover of *Dress in Ireland: A History* is "Aran Boy on Rock, Inis Meain, Co. Galway," a photograph showing a boy of about six wearing a masculine flat cloth cap and a dress covered with an apron. As Mairead Dunlevy writes, "This custom of dressing young boys as girls survived . . . on the island of Inisheer, Co. Galway until the 1960s" (170). David Pierce provides an image of three boys dressed as girls in Connemara (39). *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine, and Emigration* by Robert James Scully has important images related to eviction practices in the nineteenth century. By way of book design, both Benedict Kiely's *Yeats's Ireland: An Enchanted Vision* and David Pierce's *Yeats's Worlds: Ireland, England, and the Poetic Imagination*

1. I wish to express my thanks to Carol Connor, Director of the Lincoln Public Libraries, for access to her extensive collection of Irish books and who persuaded me to join the Geske tour of Ireland.

provide photographs of the covers designed by Sturge Moore for Yeats's books published by Macmillan between 1916 and 1940 in addition to art by John Butler Yeats and Robert Gregory. These books also include important interiors such as those of Coole Park and Yeats's various dwellings. One also finds posters designed by Gordon Craig and Aubrey Beardsley in Pierce's book.

The places themselves, Dublin, for example, have many reminders of the comparatively recent rebellion against England and its "terrible beauty" set among what remains of the eighteenth-century Georgian row houses. The sun was shining during those September days in 1991, and though Ireland was having a drought, the fabled greenness of the land was evident. It was a revelation to see Ireland after years of familiarity with England. That what was then considered a poor country should be so clean came as a surprise. With the economic boom of the 1990s, prosperity is more in evidence. The physical beauty of people of all ages came as another. For that aspect I recommend the PBS production, "Faces of Ireland," which gives dramatic meaning to the expression "having the map of Ireland on one's face."

In addition to Dublin slides, I have those I took of Thoor Ballylee (Yeats's domesticated tower near Lady Gregory's Coole Park)—including the interior—and Coole Park itself though the house has been gone since 1941. Slides of Castletown with its elaborate plasterwork and the gardens at Powerscourt suggest the former power of the Protestant Ascendancy with its extensive and hereditary landholdings. The countryside, Celtic crosses, churches, ruined castles, towers, Dun Aengus (the remains of an ancient fort), the ocean, cliffs, and Inishmore itself reveal pre-Christian as well as Christian Ireland.

Being there corroborates Yeats's preoccupation with Ireland's continuation of pagan and/or folkloric life. Irish construction workers, for example, refuse to interfere with fairy rings or bushes. I heard the failure of Delorean's car factory ascribed to such interference while I was there in 1991 and again on National Public Radio on St. Patrick's Day, 1992. As Yeats wrote: "if some philosophic idea interested me, I tried to trace it back to its earliest use, believing that there must be a tradition of belief older than any European Church It was this search for a tradition that urged George Pollexfen and myself to study the visions and thoughts of the country people . . ." (*Autobiography* 178). Yeats also wrote that "the earlier we get," there was no history as it is now understood; "nobody described anything as we understand description. One called up the image of a thing by comparing it with something else" and was interested only in what could be expressed "by myth, by symbol, by enigma. . . . Imagination was all in all" (Gregory, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, Note). An indication of Ireland's involvement with its mythic past is Oliver Sheppard's statue, "The Death of Cuchulain" at the General Post Office, the site of the 1916 uprising (Raine fig. 94; Pierce 189). Ireland, notably has a heritage of imagery, sound, imagination, and respect for craft.

In "Sailing to Byzantium" Yeats wrote, "O Sages standing in God's holy fire / As in the gold mosaic of a wall." Photographs or, better yet, slides of the mosaics in Ravenna, especially from San Vitale, convey the idea of the Byzantine mosaic. When Yeats continues, "Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre" (*Poems* 193), this line is not highfalutin; it suggests a spiral in motion. Yeats was told that "perne" is a word for spool, but one might more dramatically imagine a spindle in motion. Bear in mind that these are tools of the craftsman or craftswoman.

"Irish poets, learn your trade. / Sing whatever is well made (*Poems* 327). Yeats, whose father was an eminent portrait painter, had once been an art student himself. Moreover, he,

like his countrymen and women, revered well-crafted objects which were often useful as well as aesthetic. "Quite apart from official interest in Irish arts and crafts it is clear that, except for [Sir Hugh] Lane's Municipal Gallery, the aspect of Irish art that came closest to the literary and language revivals, and had most support from all the people concerned, was applied art" (Sheehy 149). Irish art and culture had flourished in pre-Christian times, during the mis-named Dark Ages, and again during the Celtic Revival (1830-1930). Yeats's sisters were involved with the Dun Emer Guild with Evelyn Gleeson and the Cuala Press. (See Lewis, *Yeats Sisters*; Dun is "Fort"; Emer is Cuchulain's wife renowned for her needlework.) In 1918, Yeats's collection of poems *The Wild Swans at Coole* was printed on his sister Elizabeth Corbet ("Lollie") Yeats's hand-press at Dundrum, County Dublin. Lollie Yeats (1868-1940) had founded the Dun Emer Press, which was later called the Cuala Press. A photograph shows Lollie Yeats with her assistants working at the printing press and all wearing "long, rather 'aesthetic-looking' pinafores flowing loosely from square yokes or high waists" (Sheehy fig. 121, p. 146; 159). Prints from the Cuala Press, including "The Fiddler of Dooney," were offered until recently through *Cahill and Company: A Reader's Catalog*, which quoted Hugh Kenner's assertion to "serious book collectors" of the Grolier Club "that the most beautiful printing in modern times is being accomplished by a small Dublin firm called the Cuala Press" (Christmas 1988).

"I made my song a coat / Covered with embroideries / Out of old mythologies / From heel to throat" (*Poems* 127). Yeats's other sister, Lily, studied embroidery with May Morris, daughter of William Morris, and worked with the Dun Emer Guild. Lily Yeats and her assistants embroidered a significant series of twenty-four banners for Loughrea Cathedral (Dillon 43) in silk and wool on linen from 1902 to 1903 to designs primarily of Irish saints set by her brother, Jack Yeats, and his wife, Mary Cottenham Yeats (Sheehy 157).

One reads in Lady Gregory's account of Cuchulain that he insisted that "no woman should marry him but one . . . who was the best worker with her needle of the young girls of Ireland." But first he says that she whom he takes for wife must be "his equal in age, in appearance, and in race, in skill and hardiness (*Cuchulain of Muirthemne* 36). Cuchulain's insistence suggests that respect given handcraft approached that accorded the skill of the fighter-hero and corresponds to what our guide, an archaeologist, said at Newgrange, a Neolithic passage tomb near the River Boyne: the people honored by placement of their ashes inside the egg-shaped structure raised on the highest hill for forty miles around were artists, craftspeople, bards rather than rulers or the rich.

Consider Yeats's work, with Edwin Ellis, on an edition of Blake. Since Blake constructed an idiosyncratic system of myth, it is not unprecedented that Yeats did so as well. Kathleen Raine's book, *Yeats the Initiate*, is helpful in this regard and also provides relevant Blake illustrations. Indeed, Raine's book has illustrations of several works of art referred to in the poems, such as Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam." A picture of a stone carving from India of a dancer and a tree (Fig. 133 in Raine) suggests a facet of Yeats's lines: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" (*Poems* 217) While the complex subject of Yeats's involvement with esoteric and the occult is daunting, Raine's book also provides illustrations of occult materials as well as a personally committed commentary on the subject. See the judicious review of Raine's book by James Olney. See also Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos, *The Celestial Tradition: A Study of Ezra Pound's "The Cantos"* for helpful commentary on the occult tradition and Yeats's place within it.

To be fair to Yeats and Raine, one might consider Theodore Roethke's account of how

a dead poet helped him when he was going through “that particular hell of the poet: a longish dry period.” Still, the rhythm of the five-beat line had stayed with him. “[B]ut write it myself?—no: so I felt myself a fraud.” Without warning, Roethke’s poem, “The Dance,”

started and finished itself . . . maybe in the great part of an hour . . . I felt, I *knew*, I had hit it. I walked around and I wept, and I knelt down—I always do that after I’ve written what I know is a good piece. But at the same time I had . . . the actual sense of a Presence—as if Yeats himself were in that room. The experience was in a way terrifying, for it lasted at least half an hour. That house, I repeat, was charged with a psychic presence: the very walls seemed to shimmer. I wept for joy. At last I was somebody again. He, they—the poets dead—were with me. (Roethke 290-1)

To experience the sound of Yeats, one might begin with Siobhan McKenna reading the chorus of Yeats’s “I Am of Ireland” because it is especially melodious and haunting. That Yeats developed it “from three or four lines of an Irish fourteenth-century dance song someone [had] repeated” to him “a few years earlier,” suggests how poetry evolves. Since the poem is from the collection *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*, one is reminded of the ubiquity of spirals in Yeats’s poetry. Seeing a book with pictures of the winding stair in Yeats’s own domesticated tower leads into “To Be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee” (*Poems* 190) where we have Yeats’s statement about loving pride in what he had accomplished in providing a tower for his family to live in (Mac Liammóir 93). See also a color reproduction of the book cover of “The Tower” designed by T. Sturge Moore (Kiely 99). Consider that most people are intrigued by the thought of living in a tower. (See Ziolkowski 46-68 on Yeats’s tower and read further for treatments of Jung’s, Rilke’s, and Jeffers’s towers). Moreover, the poem has a masterful ring. Another vivid set of lines is Yeats’s epitaph in the context of “Under Ben Bulbin” (Raine Fig. 55; Mac Liammóir 128) to show how he saw the pattern of his life as having resolved itself. If one were to memorize the chorus of “I Am of Ireland,” the tower inscription, and Yeats’s epitaph, the melody of the lines will linger on as an after-image of Yeats in one’s auditory memory.

While I like to read Yeats aloud myself, it is better to hear Irish voices. A cassette tape with Siobhan McKenna and Cyril Cusack is superb. As Theodore Roethke suggests, no poet surpasses Yeats for demonstrating the aural aspect of poetry. As Yeats wrote: “I wanted all my poetry to be spoken on a stage or sung . . . I have spent my life in clearing out of poetry every phrase written for the eye, and bringing all back to syntax that is for the ear alone” (*Essays and Introductions* 529). To that end, one might play an LP record with Yeats’s own voice reading and explaining “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” and “The Fiddler of Dooney” (Oct. 4, 1932). “It gave me a devil of a lot of trouble to get into verse the poems that I am going to read and that is why I will not read them as if they were prose!” Yeats’s explanation makes him seem less like a curmudgeon:

When I have read you a poem I have tried to read it rhythmically; I may be a bad reader; or read badly because I am out of sorts, or self-conscious; but there is no other method. A poem is an elaboration of the rhythms of common speech and their association with profound feeling. To read a

poem like prose, that readers unaccustomed to poetry may find it easy to understand, is to turn it into bad, florid prose. If anybody read or recites poetry as if it were prose from some public platform, I ask you, speaking for poets, living, dead, or unborn, to protest in whatever way occurs to your perhaps youthful minds

In that transcription of a recording Yeats made for the BBC in 1936, he also tells the story of an angry William Morris leaving a hall “where somebody had read or recited his *Sigurd the Volsung*. . . . ‘It cost me a lot of damned hard work to get that thing into verse.’” Yeats understood. So indeed he chants his poetry.

A fundamental element of Irish soundscape is the Irish language. Although Yeats never learned Irish, he worked with people who did, most importantly, Lady Gregory (1852-1932). Like her husband, she was a member of the Protestant landed classes. As a child she was the “best customer” of the local stationer for Fenian books; moreover, she had been “eager” to learn Irish: but “my asking, timid with the fear of mockery, went unheeded.” She regretted that a cousin “learned in the language” had fallen out of favor with her mother, for she felt that she had missed an opportunity that might have made her “a real Irish scholar, and not as I am, imperfect, stumbling.” After her marriage, she worked at Irish with the half-hearted help of a gardener. But it was her son Robert’s fancy “to learn a nearer language” than the classics he was to study at Harrow and “the gift of a fine old Irish Bible” from Edward Martyn, with simple lessons in Irish grammar written down by a young priest who had left Ireland to die in California, that made the difference for her (Gregory, *Kiltartan* 4, 8-9). (Meanwhile Dr. Douglas Hyde, who was to become Ireland’s first president, had founded the Gaelic League, which now has branches in the United States.) Although Robert Gregory did not maintain his interest, Lady Gregory continued to study. Her summer in Aran in 1898, spent there on Yeats’s recommendation, was fruitful. The elderly Mr. Paudeen Conneely, recollected to her biographer, Elizabeth Coxhead, memories of Lady Gregory’s “good spoken Irish—in contrast to J. M. Synge, who was there at the same time, and could hardly understand Irish at all” (Foreword, Gregory, *Visions and Beliefs* 6). Not only did Lady Gregory talk to old people in the workhouse at Gort, thereby gathering material for *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* (1920), but she also contributed to the theory and practice of translation. When she compiled her two works on Irish myth, *Cuchulain of Muirtheinne* (1902) and *Gods and Fighting Men* (1904), she used the speech patterns of the English-speaking Irish people of Kiltartan, the “townland” near her home at Coole Park. Their mode of speech, she realized because of her knowledge of Irish, was that of people consciously translating from Irish into English. “Tiltartanese” has been used as a pejorative term for what Lady Gregory chose to do; but she made a wise decision, especially when one compares the sound of lines in her plays with those of John Millington Synge whose lines often sound contorted in contrast to the suavity of hers. Consider, for example, these lines from Synge’s black comedy, *The Well of the Saints*, which occur in a scene of marital strife when Mary Doul says: “If it’s lies she does be telling she’s a sweet beautiful voice you’d never tire to be hearing, if it was only the pig she’d be calling, or crying out in the long grass, maybe, after her hens.” In Lady Gregory’s and Yeats’s *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, an old wife, Bridget, says in remonstrance to her husband: “If I brought no fortune I worked it out in my bones, laying down the baby, Michael that is standing there now, on a stook of straw, while I dug the potatoes, and never asked big dresses or anything

but to be working.”

Yeats himself admired the sound and subject of Lady Gregory’s work, as he wrote in an accompanying essay: “And everywhere that esoteric speech brings the odour of the wild woods into our nostrils.” In contrast to his own prose treatments of the myths, hers had a ring of authenticity. Yeats’s often have archaic but nonetheless linear propulsion unlike the spiraling repetitions and *tourneurs des phrases* (turnings of phrase) Lady Gregory wove into her accounts. I strongly recommend reading aloud from *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, on the courting of Emer by Cuchulain and the death of Cuchulain. The latter concludes with a reference to the earliest form of writing in Irish: Conall “raised the one stone over them [Cuchulain and Emer, who chose to join him], and he wrote their names in Ogham, and he himself and all the men of Ulster keened them” (265, 263).

It is essential to know of England’s treatment of Ireland and why hatreds run so deep. Photographs of the Peelers (police) evicting peasants and ramming their houses down to make them uninhabitable suggests something about the conditions in Ireland that made Maud Gonne and others so angry. Several of Synge’s photographs in a recent edition of his *The Aran Islands* (1907) show another method of eviction for debt which involved emptying the house of its “few trifles” and blocking the door with stones. Similarly, a photograph, “The Post Office . . . after the bombardment . . . 1916,” taken by an anonymous photographer, shows the scene of destruction from a vantage point looking downward at the missing roof with numbers of pedestrians reduced in size far below (Kiely 92). As Jan Morris observed in 1976: “For like it or not, whatever your opinions, the drums of tragedy still sound in Dublin, muffled but unavoidable, as they sound nowhere else on earth. For eight centuries the Irish struggled against the dominion of the English, and it takes more than fifty years to silence the echoes” (Morris 34). The zeal of Maude Gonne that Yeats castigates as well as memorializes in poems, scarcely to mention his idealization of her in a play as the Countess Cathleen, is otherwise baffling. Her height of six feet in a country where people remain relatively short compared with Americans, combined with her beauty and oratorical skills, make her presence in Yeats’s poetry about Irish history more accountable. If one sees pictures of the young Maud, as one should (Mac Liammóir 39, 47, 53, 90; Pierce 87), consider also a photograph taken in old age (Pierce 256) and the powerful Epstein bust. Here, she is a crone in the sense of wise woman or prophet. With her wimple, triply interwoven Celtic brooch, and lived-in face, we have an objective correlative of “the indomitable Irishry” (*Poems* 327).

Eva Gore-Booth (1870-1938) and her sister, Constance Gore-Booth, Countess Markievicz, also captured Yeats’s imagination as “Two girls in silk kimonos, both / Beautiful, one a gazelle” (*Poems* 233). Yeats’s vision of the young Constance Gore-Booth is borne out in a mature portrait of her in evening dress painted by her husband, Count Casimir Markiewicz in 1927 (Kiely 118). In contrast, Gifford Lewis’s biography with illustrations offers a feminist approach to the life of Eva Gore-Booth. Yeats valued Eva and her sister, Constance, in ways different from how they valued themselves. This book is a useful corrective, providing as it does historical (and hard) reality; for example, Yeats apparently “saw her [Eva] at this stage ‘withered and skeleton gaunt’ and not realising that he was looking at a case of intestinal cancer went on to immortalise her in this condition as ‘an image of such politics’” (162). Yeats’s image is, nonetheless, powerful; but, having been named in the title of the poem, Eva’s actual condition also warrants naming. Seeing the picture of Constance in her Citizens’ Army uniform

with a revolver in her hand reifies how differently from Yeats she regarded herself and what she must do. As Lady Gregory wrote of the poems of Raferty, “It is hard to say where history ends in them and religion and politics begins; for history, religion, and politics grow on one stem in Ireland, an eternal trefoil” (Gregory, *Poets and Dreamers* 20).

Yeats’s aesthetic interests ranged beyond Ireland. Indeed, his poetry provides models of multi-cultural taste in art objects as when he praises the well-made sword by Sato and a Chinese carving of lapis lazuli (Pierce 214, 261). One can see throughout Yeats’s long life-time of writing that for him the poet too is a craftsman. By seeing pictures of the Japanese sword and Chinese carving given Yeats as well as photographs or videotapes of Noh performances, one can see the kinds of art that captured Yeats’s imagination and influenced his craft. When Yeats wrote his plays, he sought emotional intensity from the elegant severity of the Noh drama to which he had been introduced by Ezra Pound during their three winters together at Stone Cottage and through Pound’s edition based on Ernest Fenollosa’s translations. One should read Yeats’s play, *The Only Jealousy of Emer*. (An excellent recording was made of a performance at Reed College in the summer of 1949.) Yeats’s riveting essay, “Swedenborg, Mediums, and Desolate Places,” published with Lady Gregory’s *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* provides superb background. There we have not only a relatively clear statement of many of Yeats’s ideas but his reference to a Noh play, *Aoi no Uye* [*Aoi-no-ue*] that informs *The Only Jealousy of Emer*. Illustrations to a Japanese production of the Noh play show that a folded piece of brocade on the stage floor represents the Lady Aoi in torment. One can find illustrations in *Noh Plays* in addition to a particularly relevant one showing the Noh actor in contemplation before putting on his mask. Yeats’s use of masks and the idea of masks in his poetry are thereby enriched. Illustrations of Noh plays and performances of Yeats’s plays are found in Sekine’s and Murray’s *Yeats and the Noh: A Comparative Study*. Arthur Waley’s *The Noh Plays of Japan* (1921)—especially in the first Tuttle edition of 1976, with its accompanying reminiscence and poem by his widow, Alison Waley—is helpful as a collection of plays with some illustrations. A small book, *Noh*, in the Hoikusha Color Books Series, has excellent pictures.

These audiotapes should be available more easily than they may in fact be. Fortunately, films on videotape are more accessible to provide the reader with ways both to hear and see the lifescape of Ireland. Not only does *The Quiet Man* show the landscape, *Ryan’s Daughter* the seascape, and *The Dead* turn of the century Dublin, but also the vagaries of Irish character. *The Dead* addresses the Nationalists’ exhortations to political correctness and Gabriel Conroy’s resistance. Hence, Gabriel Conroy is derided as “a West Briton” for vacationing on the Continent, writing reviews for an English newspaper, etc. The moment when a guest recites until his memory runs out and then reads a translation from the Irish of an intense love poem² is one of the great moments of the film although it is not in Joyce’s text. Significantly, the translation was by Lady Gregory, who had heard it in Irish from an Aran man whose mother “had often sung him to sleep as a child” with that song, “The Grief of a Young Girl’s Heart” (Gregory, *Kiltartan* 23-26). Given her association with Yeats in the Abbey Theatre and her representing for him a state of ideal grace, the connection is sound and sure. Huston did well to include it.

2. “You promised me a thing that is not possible, that you would give me gloves of the skin of a fish; that you would give me shoes of the skin of a bird . . . My heart is as black . . . as the sole of a shoe left in white halls; it was you put that darkness over my life . . . [Y]ou have taken the moon; you have taken the sun from me; and my fear is great that you have taken God from me!”

It is more difficult, alas, to get hold of Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran* (1934). That film, however, dramatically presents the austerity of life on Aran and its condition before the coming of tourists. When Yeats accepted the Nobel Prize, he said that John Millington Synge and Lady Gregory should be standing with him. From Yeats's good advice that he should go to Aran, Synge wrote *Riders to the Sea*, and perhaps had a better idea of how to go about writing *The Playboy of the Western World*. If one sees a touring Abbey Theatre performance, the lines sound as if they are spoken too fast for the American ear to follow. It is essential to have read the play immediately before seeing it. Listening to a recording is a helpful substitution toward establishing the Irish soundscape.

If one becomes engaged with the idea of the Irish language, one might attend the summer school on Inishmore, the largest of the Aran Islands. For years, residents of the island have provided lodging for students attending the summer school. Irish students are thereby enabled to do better on their entrance exams to the university. One can also join American branches of the Gaelic League (Conradh na Gaelige of Ireland) such as the Gaelic League of Washington. Its newsletter carries notices of immersion programs in Irish in several American cities patterned on those held in the Gaeltachts (Irish-speaking areas) of Ireland. The Irish-American Cultural Institute, 1 Lackawanna Place, Morristown, New Jersey 07960 (1-800-232-ERIN, 973-605-1991, and Fax 973-605-8875), offers in excess of \$25,000 to the recipients of annual Irish Research Fund Awards; Irish Way, a five-week summer cultural and educational program in Ireland for American teenagers, and a one-semester visiting fellowship at National University. The Institute also publishes the scholarly journal, *Éire-Ireland*, and a newsletter for members, *Dúcas*. They have sponsored a program that provided an opportunity for its members to buy trees for what was the least forested country in Europe. The deforestation had military motives such as eliminating places for rebels to hide as well as commercial roots (See Dunne 22-23). The Irish government has now largely taken over this program.

The periodical, *Ireland of the Welcomes*, though commercial and aimed at promoting tourism, often has insightful articles and excellent photographs, some of which are historical. I have not seen an issue that didn't have useful information and illustrations for understanding Yeats's poetry, for example, Bairbre O'Floinn's article, "The Otherworld of the Sea," on the people of the Land of Under-the-Wave (32:4 [August 1983] 42-43). Typically, O'Floinn gives "the gist" of a story "told along the western coasts of Ireland"; then he uses and defines Irish words: "The people had a name for the inhabitants of this other world. They called them 'uaisle na farraige', meaning the noble people of the sea." He indicates, moreover, the complexity of the subject: "It was a good term, predictably flattering and suitable vague." The article is illustrated with a photograph of The Little Skellig from Skellig Michael, County Kerry and a stone carving of a mermaid with fish from Kilcooley Abbey, County Tipperary. From "The Song of Wandering Aengus" we read: "I dropped the berry in a stream/ And caught a little silver trout. / . . . It had become a glittering girl!" (*Poems* 59-60). Yeats explained in an 1899 note that "The Tribes of the Goddess Danu can take all shapes, and those that are in the waters take often the shape of a fish" (*Poems* 628, n. 48). Additionally, two boxes include a passage from the "Voyage of Bran" and information about the legends of the Blasket Islanders. Such commentaries are a corrective to the American celebration of St. Patrick's Day clichés of leprechauns, pots of gold at the end of the rainbow, green beer, etc. Without information closer to the source, the fearsomeness of the Sidhe, for example, is baffling. Another article connected with Yeats's poetry is "Clamorous Wings

(Swans),” with its title playing on “The Wild Swans at Coole” in the September-October 1986 issue.

One might also consider the “pocketscape” of Yeats’s Ireland, for under his chairmanship a Government Committee judged an international competition held in 1926. Yeats insisted on the exclusion “of outworn so-called national symbols such as the shamrock, the sunburst and the round tower” (Sheehy 175 n. 49). Nonetheless, the Trinity College, or Dalway Harp, was retained as well as the wolfhound “because it lent itself to noble and artistic treatment.” In sum, “The half-crown had a horse, the florin a salmon, the shilling a bull, the sixpence a wolfhound, the penny a hen with chicks, the halfpenny a pig with piglets, and the farthing a snipe” (Sheehy 175). The coins are aesthetic delights, particularly those in shiny copper.

Since Yeats thought that ideas gain access to minds beyond their originators and that they can travel in various ways, I hope that approaching his poetry through the landscape and soundscape of Ireland might be helpful to others in comprehending his greatness.

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ADDITIONAL SOUNDSCAPE SOURCES

Audio-Forum cassettes are available with relative ease. Actors from Dublin's Abbey Theatre, founded in 1904 with Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Edward Martyn as the early organizers "to provide a space for Irish writers to treat of Irish themes," recorded "Poetry, Stories, and Songs in Irish" \$14.95 (ABB003) and read in Irish from the legends of the Fianna \$14.95 (ABB005). Another tape features thirty poems by Yeats and thirty-three by Kavanagh \$12.95 (ABB007). "Learning Irish," on four cassettes playing four hours with a

336-page text for \$89.95 (#AFIR10), is a beginning level course of thirty-six lessons and features the Irish used by native speakers of County Galway. "An Droichead (The Bridge)" is a bilingual program that records on one cassette (one hour), in Irish only, the contents of a richly illustrated bilingual magazine of about forty pages, issued three times a year in Ireland, which covers history, music, art, and literature as well as book reviews, food articles, and cultural happenings. Each issue is \$19.95: Spring (#AFIR61), Summer (#AFIR62), Winter (#AFIR63). Grainne Ni Eigertaigh, Yeats's daughter-in-law, recorded Irish harp music and song on (#CIR001) at \$14.95. Audio-Forum, 96 Broad Street, Guilford, CT 06437; (203) 453-9794; FAX: (203) 453-9774. The toll free number is 1-800-243-1234.

MITCHELL RANEY

PIG HATS

Most pigs on the finishing floors are either lowlife pilligans or intellectuals. The remaining few are consummate musicians. This fact is elementary, universal, and not at all surprising if you have ever entertained

swine in your home after the evening water and feed. Pigs wear their hats well, and it is nearly impossible to tell the musician from the intellect from from the pilligan, because during the day they all lie on cold slabs biting tails

and rooting shit. Even the intellectuals are guilty of this. You may see a barrow at the gate with narrow hooves and a barrel chest and think, *I bet he can pound out Chopin's Nocturne in E flat Major. Or at least*

belt out a bar of "Rocky Mountain High." "But it doesn't work that way!

No, but this same pig may be able to snag your wallet as you stoop to rake a dead rat out of their feeder, or be able to discuss flat-rate investment strategies

over a savory glass of Chardonnay '56. The intellectuals and musicians are embarrassed, ashamed by the pilligans to be sure. It is also not wise to stereotype or generalize breeds. Not all Durocs watch pig porn or cheat on their 1040's,

and not all Chester Whites can speak at length on universal pluralism. Pigs live for their hats, except when it comes to market time. Take right now, for instance. The gooseneck trailer backs up to the loading chute, and a gaunt gilt nervously begins

"Ave Maria . . . virgo serena." The other musicians chime in. The intellectuals boldly criticize their tremolos, decrescendos, ritardandos, but notice the pilligans—they make no attempt to join in. They are calm, move well, and gracefully march

in a tight snout to tail row, up the inclined ramp. *What a shame*, they think. The pilligans understand their pig hat best.